Arleta Suwalska
Uniwersytet Łódzki

High-trust to teachers’ job in Finland after 1970s

Teaching is an attractive profession in all high-performing countries. Teachers are praised for what they do. They are seen as builders of their nation.

Andy Hargreaves, Michael Fullan
Students must first be well, in order to achieve well.
Andy Hargreaves

Introduction

In my article, I am going to reveal the beginnings of change in education policy of Finland after 1970s, so called Alternative Reform Movement and the high-trust of teaching. I will pay attention to first steps in reform of teaching and to The Fourth Way Change. I am going to present how to select the best school leavers, let them work together in collective responsibility for the curriculum. I want to follow useful ways of building professional capital helpful for high-trust in this profession. As Samuel Johnson said: „Great works are performed not by strength but by perseverance”.

The first steps in reform of teaching

The biggest reform in Finnish education started in November 1963. There was a rapid migration level to the city centers in Finland and Sweden. The Agrarian Party and the leftists prepared the new rules and the most important consensus in education. Finnish society wanted good education for all and that is why their rules were positively perceived by society.

---

1 S. Johnson, Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia, in: http://www.online-literature.com/samuel-johnson/rasselas/13/ (access date: 24.11.18).
The first phase of educational change started in 1980s. It was based on criticism of teacher-centered methods of teaching previously used at Finnish schools. As a result, Finns rethink not only theoretical, but methodological foundations, too. In this light, in Finland there was introduced new conception of knowledge and new conception of learning. According to Erno Lehtinen:

„It was supported by a new curriculum and different methods of teaching. Moreover, students started to have an access to the highest-quality education and it was not related to students’ place of living, richness or annual income. In Finland "equity means having a socially fair and inclusive education system that provides everyone with the opportunity to fulfill their intentions and dreams through education".”

After retirement of older teachers, the presented educational change was fully accepted by society and teachers. Furthermore, Finland got rid system of external inspection. Finland introduced strategies to develop the quality of teachers’ work. They wanted to trust teachers and schools more. In this time and after that in Finland „changes have occurred in the international rhetoric of educational policy”

The characteristic feature of reform were political compromises. This political consensus was based on „the legacy of liberated peasants, the spirit of capitalism and the utopia of socialis. Equality, efficiency and solidarity” 4. Finnish education policy is highly praised due to the high-trust to teachers’ job. As Anthony Giddens said in 1990:

„Trust may be defined as confidence in the reliability of a person or system, regarding a given set of outcomes or events, where that confidence expresses a faith in the probability or love of another, or in the correctness of abstract principle”

It means not only the highest level of responsibility which is given to teachers, but it is also a high level of autonomy given to them in their

---

2 P. Sahlberg, *Finnish lessons, What can the world learn from educational change in Finland*, Columbia University, New York 2015, p. 44.


4 Sahlberg, *Finnish lessons, What can the world learn from educational change in Finland*, Columbia University, New York 2015, p. 149.

schools. Moreover, in Finland there is the lowest „wage inequality” in the EU. Teachers in Finland have an unfettered flexibility in how and what they want to teach. Furthermore, Finland got rid system of external inspection. They introduced development discussions with school leaders. Discussions include feedback on a teacher’s own assessment with his or her strengths and weaknesses. There are not expected detailed plans, too. In this light, T. Gmerek’s claim seems true that „education is an integral part of complex social processes and phenomena”.

Trust-based responsibility in Finland is related to a culture of „responsibility and trust within the education system.” Municipalities in Finland usually help than count money in their budgets. Head teachers in Finland are considered priceless. There is undisputed that Finnish society trust their teachers and heads of schools.

„We trust the expertise of our principals and teachers. We respect that expertise and we try to understand what is happening in the everyday life of schools and what questions have to be worked with, and we try to combine that with issues, interests and needs of the future at the national level”. If school has problems, the head of local municipalities ask: “How we can help the school? What were the things that went wrong? The knowledge (of how to solve the problem) is in the school and we have capable principals. You have to trust. Trust is the first thing”.

Finns claim that teachers „could be trusted to monitor themselves and would no longer be in need of external inspection”. As a result, Finland used self-correcting system of assistance and support due to the government wants to help, not intervene, because there is used statement that „people are

---

7 T. Gmerek, Szkolnictwo wyższe w krajach skandynawskich, studium z pedagogiki porównawczej, Wydawnictwo Wolumin, Poznañ, 2005, p. 226.
8 P. Sahlberg, Finnish lessons, What can the world learn from educational change in Finland, Columbia University, New York 2015, p. 149.
9 P. Sahlberg, Finnish lessons, What can the world learn from educational change in Finland, Columbia University, New York 2015, p. 149.
acting in good faith but need assistance and support to be more effective”¹¹. In Finland there is no need to identify good and bad teachers.

According to Väljärvi et al., Lie et al., „Finland’s high achievement seems to be attributable to a whole network of interrelated factors, in which students’ own areas of interest and leisure activities, the learning opportunities provided by schools, parental support and involvement as well as social and cultural contexts of learning and of the entire education system combine with each other”¹².

**High-trust to teachers’ job in Alternative Reform Movement in Finland**

According to Pasi Sahlberg educational change in Finland was based on some clear factors: „collaboration among schools, personalized learning, focus on the whole child, trust-based responsibility and equity of outcomes”¹³. The high-trust and the highest quality of education are closely related to *collaboration between schools* in Finland. There is omnipresent the use of networks to share ideas how to teach and solve school problems between schools.

According to K. Tirri we observe „a holistic approach to school pedagogy that includes educating for a growth mindset in learning and allows challenges and creative ideas to blossom in the classroom”¹⁴. Moreover, according to Jouni Väljärvi, PirjoLinnakylä, Pekka Kupari, Pasi Reinikainen and Inga Arffman „In Finnish culture, the profession of teacher has been seen as one of the most important professions of society, and a lot of resources have consequently been invested in teacher education”¹⁵.

In this light „schools collaborate, they help one another and help teachers create culture of cooperation in their classrooms”¹⁶. Moreover,

---

¹¹ Ibidem, p. 65.


¹³ P. Sahlberg, *Finnish lessons, What can the world learn from educational change in Finland*, Columbia University, New York 2015, p. 149.


¹⁶ P. Sahlberg, *Finnish lessons, What can the world learn from educational change in Finland*, Columbia University, New York 2015, p. 149.
in the context of mentioned *personalized learning*, schools are engaged in creation the best solutions to personalized learning which exist in the frames of Finnish national goals. As a result, students with special educational needs have prepared plans of individualized learning, too. Furthermore, teachers in Finland *focus on the whole child*. They pay attention not only to moral character, they want to develop each student personality, skills and talents.

 According to Sahlsberg in Finland there is high *equity of outcomes*, in which „Basic premise is that all children should have equal prospects for educational success in school”\(^\text{17}\). Finland is proud of its self-correcting educational system. Moreover, it is linked to the process of school self-evaluation, due to the fact that it is involved in country’s evaluation. Furthermore, the self-correcting educational system is matched to collective professional responsibility. As a result, if there are weak signals the system is informed immediately.

 In all cases, whereas there is need of training, support and assistance at schools, help is led by the local municipality and other schools. All problems are solved „by broad participation and constant interaction rather than through public exposure and top-down intervention”\(^\text{18}\). High-trust, high quality and collective commitment are part of self-correcting system of Finland’s education.

 All clear factors of Alternative Reform Movement unable to develop loose standards and individualized teaching. There is observed that schools create the best learning opportunities to students. There are set up according to clear and flexible national goals. Moreover, teachers plan their own curriculum considering the local problems.

 **Fourth way teachers in Finland**

 The Fourth Way change is „a set of evidence-informed philosophies and political stategies”\(^\text{19}\) that are different from The Third Way of change. The Fourth Way teachers is about valuing the teachers’ profession according to collaboration and authonomy level. It starts at the leaders and policy makers level. There are visible signals of it how leaders describe teachers.

---

\(^{17}\) Ibidem., p. 149.


\(^{19}\) Ibidem, p. 200.
Fourth Way leadership starts with leaders „showing up, so feel the pulse of learning that is beating in their system’s classrooms and schools”

The Finnish Way of educational change was presented in the following citation by Hargreaves Andy and Shirley David (2009):

“The Fourth Way is a way of inspiration and innovation, of responsibility and sustainability. The Fourth Way does not drive reform relentlessly through teachers, use them as final delivery points for government policies, or vacuum up their motivations into a vortex of change that is defined by short-term political agendas and the special interests with which they are often aligned. Rather, it brings together government policy, professional involvement, and public engagement around an inspiring social and educational vision of prosperity, opportunity, and creativity in a world of greater inclusiveness, security, and humanity.”

Fourth way is some form of „excellence is the state that never quite reaches perfection”. From presented perspective it is not an astonishment that teachers are involved in community work to take responsibility for local municipalities. All teachers are able to realistically plan their careers, especially when „education with its mission, objectives, and methods of implementation fits in with the current of global trends” and influence on the quality of life.

High-trust and becoming teachers in Finland

A climate of trust creates variety of beneficial situations in schools. Trust directly influences on organizational effects and leads to successful collaboration. It is tightly related to trustworthy which is demonstrated according to Megan Tschannen-Moran by „benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty and openness.”

---

Trustworthiness means that a person must be „as predictable as possible, speak carefully, especially when making commitments, treat premises seriously, and never deceptive”\(^{25}\). Teachers and headteachers who are able to create genuine forms of collaboration may benefit a lot. Their relations influence on collaboration between parents and teachers, too.

People with a „high trust are like to disclose more accurate, relevant, and complete data about problems, as well as their thoughts, feeling and ideas”\(^{26}\). All of them, during their studies, are taught how to cooperate to each other. There is observed the highest level of cooperation between the National Board of Education, municipalities, teachers and headteachers.

There is the highest sense of collective responsibility, too. We observe in Finland the constant level of discussion and consultation, which, for sure, stimulate the best solutions in education. In this light, there is observed in this country the highest autonomy level among teachers which builds their careers paths. „People in the field don’t hate in this (Ministry of Education) building. It is more cooperative. It’s an informal way of distributed leadership”\(^{27}\).

As Samuel Johnson said: „Great works are performed not by strength but by perseverance”. There are also undisputed factors which influence on the selection of Finnish teachers. As a result teachers come from „the very top tiers of the secondary school graduation range”\(^{28}\). During selection process at universities school leavers of secondary schools are tested not only their emotional intelligence, but their moral commitment to teach, too. Moreover, they are interviewed. Their studies, at nine Finnish universities, are really hard and demanding. They works are deeply incorporated into extended school practice, which is based on research in educational projects. Furthermore, they are able to use „cognitive science of how children learn”\(^{29}\).


\(^{28}\) Ibidem, p. 49.

There is the tendency that „half the teachers in primary schools have mathematics or science as their major or minor subject at university”\(^ {30} \). To become a teacher means to overcome a lot of obstacles, it is „a long and complex process” \(^ {31} \). The new teachers, step by step, create their own identities containing a „continuing struggle”\(^ {32} \) which is a part of a cultural space in which they work. During their early years teachers work on professional identities and emotions. According to M. A Flores and C. Day teachers are each day involved in „emotional labour and emotional work”. As a result they are obliged to find a balance between „a range of diverse motivations, personal stories and learning capacities”\(^ {33} \).

**Professional and human capital of teachers in Finland**

There are some useful ways of building professional capital helpful for high-trust in teachers’ profession. Finnish teachers are named as professionals because they are able to use the highest standards of teaching. In other words these system of work with widely shared moral responsibility is the main part of **social capital** of Finnish teachers. It is reinforced by habits of cooperation among teachers and among schools with the highest level of perseverance and feelings of trust. They are significant for organizations which are linked to each other by moral responsibility. „In short, well-qualified and highly-respected teachers do interesting work with trusted colleagues in conditions that support and do not constantly interfere with their efforts”\(^ {34} \).

On the other side, there are the other four kinds of professional capital: „human, moral, symbolic and decisional”\(^ {35} \). Firstly, **human capital** tells not only about individual knowledge and skills, but about teachers’ qualifications, capabilities and lifelong teaching training which influences on individual’s teaching ways. Moreover, as Sahlberg\(^ {36} \) claims Finnish teachers are not only

\(^ {30} \) Ibidem, p. 49.


\(^ {35} \) Ibidem, p. 49.

\(^ {36} \) Ibidem, p. 50.
the best secondary school leavers, but they are checked according to their emotional intelligence which is one of conditions during entry interview.

In this light, it makes sense to underline that Finnish teachers do not have curriculum delivered by the bureaucratic system, they are taught how to use the set of values and beliefs and create their own curriculum taking into account main direction of local municipality. This hard and demanding work on curriculum development enrich all teachers and help them to build human capital. As a result teachers invest time into teaching and “master what it involves because they engage together in its development. This is where human capital meets social capital”

Furthermore, they know well their subjects of teaching due to reading literacy, science and mathematics which are the main core of teachers preparation at universities.

Social capital of teachers in Finland
There is observed the highest level of cooperation between the National board of Education, municipalities, teachers and headteachers. There is the highest sense of collective responsibility, too. We observe in Finland the constant level of discussion and consultation, which, for sure, stimulates the best solutions in education. Teachers meet together to consult and discuss all arising school problems. In this light, there is observed the highest autonomy level among teachers which builds their careers paths. All of them, during their studies, are taught how to cooperate to each other.

Cooperation is seen on curriculum level but also on work level, too. The presented above social capital is omnipresent at all levels of education. The highest level of trust between teachers, trust between teachers and students correlate to each other with the highest expertise work and produce better school results. There is a matter of teachers’ habit to cooperate in Finland. It refers how:

„quantity and quality of interactions and social relationships among people affects their access to knowledge and information, their sense of expectation, obligation, and trust and how far they are likely to adhere to the same norms or codes of behavior.”

---


38 Ibidem, p. 90.
Moral and symbolic capital of teachers in Finland

Finnish teachers serve education taking into consideration „a spirit of equity, care, and justice for everyone”\(^\text{39}\). There is no the profit motive like in corporations, there is a sense of educational service towards students. Furthermore, teachers in Finland have time to solve students’ problems and to serve them effective teaching. They teach not only geniuses but they lift up the level of each student. There is the main goal of Finnish education and teachers which strongly corresponds to moral capital. „No social exclusion, so that nobody is forgotten”\(^\text{40}\).

In presented light it is important to mention that every student in Finland is special. As a result, Finns claim that is better to response to student’s learning difficulty than to spend a lot of money on children separation. According to Sahlberg „Because of this broad and flexible definition of special education, by the time they leave upper secondary school, more than half of all young people will at some time have received special tutoring or support services”\(^\text{41}\). This inclusive approach to students stops the stigma related to being a student of special educational needs. Furthermore, Finland saves a big sum of money which country should pay for expensive „medically based legal intereventions later on”\(^\text{42}\).

Teachers in Finland are succesful, but they are not overwhelmed by work. They are not focused on „test scores, spradsheets and data warehouses that are increasingly common in other countries”\(^\text{43}\). Teachers build professional and strong relationships in classrooms with clear sense of collective responsibility which exist between colleagues. They share not only professional but personal knowledge which supports innovation and improvement of schools.

The positive symbolic capital of teachers is reinforced by highly accepted status of Finnish teachers. They are not only trusted and respected, they are admired, too. Finnish teachers „feel they have high status and are accorded widespread respect”\(^\text{44}\). As a result teachers’ positive symbolic capital is strongly reinforced by media and politicians due to the „whole society is respecting teaching and society”\(^\text{45}\).


\(^{40}\) Ibidem, p. 52.

\(^{41}\) Ibidem, p. 52.

\(^{42}\) Ibidem, p. 52.

\(^{43}\) Ibidem, p. 53.

\(^{44}\) Ibidem, p. 54.

\(^{45}\) Ibidem, p. 53.
Decisional capital of teachers in Finland

The are many aspects of decisional capital of teachers in Finland. They are innovative when work together and in ways how their cooperation influences on their school work. Moreover, they are innovative in creative development of students according to broadly tailored curriculum. They are respected in Finnish society, but teachers prefer „pedagogical conservatism”\(^{46}\).

According to Hargreaves and Shirley\(^{47}\) during lesson students listen to teachers. Students work individually or are involved in whole class questions-answers activities. Teachers quite often categorize students according to multiply intelligences or learning styles. Moreover, teachers claim that they evolve students in a holistic way.

It is a result of abolishing the streaming in the mid-1980s and not only policy makers, but teachers” adopted the principles that all children can learn, that children have different kinds of intelligences and that must find ways to cultivate these different aspects in balanced way\(^{48}\). It is conducted with sufficient time and in unharrassed way.

Finnish teachers have time to: „plan, teach, diagnose, execute and evaluate”\(^{49}\). Teachers in Finland teach about 600 hours, i.e 800 lesson of 45 minutes, whereas in the USA teachers teach 1080 hours, so 5 or six lessons per day. It is related to the factor that „teaching in Finland is not a temporary engagement. It is a permament-commitment- a job for life”\(^{50}\). It is worth to mention that in Finland teachers participate in „deeper lessons that could lead to lasting improvements in teaching”\(^{51}\). It influences on teachers’ decisional capital, too.

\(^{46}\) P. Sahlberg, *Finnish lessons, What can the world learn from educational change in Finland*, Columbia University, New York 2015, p. 15.


\(^{48}\) P. Sahlberg, *Finnish lessons, What can the world learn from educational change in Finland*, Columbia University, New York 2015, p. 168.


\(^{50}\) P. Sahlberg, *Finnish lessons, What can the world learn from educational change in Finland*, Columbia University, New York 2015, p. 149.

Teachers are school leaders

Finnish teachers’ identity and sense of teachers „belonging to highly-regarded profession” has rapidly changed since 1979 in Finland. As a result teachers could be more autonomous and responsible for curriculum planning and students’ assessment and there is different professional context of teaching comparing it to another European countries. In this light in Finland is omnipresent that effective teachers work a school leaders.

To fulfill these dreams teachers and headteachers create their own sets of values and beliefs and incorporate them into curriculum. They devote not only their time, but they cooperate to each other, too. There is only one aim they want to write successful curriculum. As Ministry of Education officially stated about teachers “If You give resources to them, they find a way to solve the problem”.

Moreover, there is observed that goals and visions of Finnish education are shared by teachers and school leaders every working day. Furthermore, there is observed intensive cooperation between all teachers, head teachers and the National Board of Education. They meet together, consult and discuss current problems. It is common that teachers, head teachers and directors of local municipalities work together in many seminars.” While our values are quite similar, we have freedom in how we organize”. Furthermore, according to H. Simola, the politically and pedagogically progressive comprehensive school reform is apparently being implemented in Finland by politically and pedagogically rather conservative teachers. According to T. Gmerek there is need to ask the questions asked by H. Simola „what will happen to teaching and learning in Finnish schools when teachers no longer believe in their traditional mission to be model citizens and transmitters of knowledge, but rather see themselves as facilitators, tutors and mentors”.

On the other side, in the era of social reforms in Poland, especially of Education System Reform, introduced in September 2017, according to T. Gmerek, „it is worth considering the challenges related to this professional
group in Finland, because they can provide excellent implications for the sphere of education and teachers’ professional development in Poland.57

Summary
After taking into account national needs and revealing the beginnings of change in education policy of Finland, so called Alternative Reform Movement, Finns introduced educational change. It was reinforced by the Finnish society (politicians, media, teachers and parents) and helped built the high-trust of teaching.

In the light of educational change (The Fourth Way Change) the best school leavers were selected to study at public universities. Academics allowed them to work together in collective responsibility for their future curriculum. Furthermore, Finns perfectly used professional capital which as a helpful tool supports high-trust in this teaching profession. As a result, of all revealed above factors, Finnish teachers „enjoy trust of the general public and also of the political and even economic elite, which is rare in many countries”58.

Finnish educational achievements are related to Finnish unhurried consideration of what should be adapted and whose pedagogical experiences should be used. As a result of Finnish perseverance country has developed the highest quality of teachers’ work along with high-trust to this profession at every level of education.

Bibliography:
Gmerek T., Szkolnictwo wyższe w krajach skandynawskich, studium z pedagogiki porównawczej, Wydawnictwo Wolumin, Poznań 2005.


Wysoki poziom zaufania do pracy nauczycieli w Finlandii po 1970 roku


Słowa kluczowe: zmiana edukacyjna, czwarta droga, wysokie zaufanie do pracy nauczycieli, alternatywny ruch reform, kapitał ludzki, kapitał społeczny, kapitał decyzyjny, kapitał symboliczny.

High-trust to teachers’ job in Finland after 1970s

The main research aim of article is to reveal the beginnings of change in education policy of Finland after 1970s. It is closely related to an analysis of related factors- so called -Alternative Reform Movement and the high-trust of teaching. The author pays attention to first steps in reform of teaching. She is going to present how to select the best school leavers, let them work together in collective responsibility for the curriculum. There will be presented the ways of building professional capital helpful fot high-trust in this profession.

Keywords: educational change, Fourth Way, high-trust to teachers’ job, Alternative Reform Movement, human capital, social capital, decisional capital, symbolic capital.