

*Hong Kong Subsidized Primary Schools Council*

# Subsidized Primary Schools Council Principals' Finnish Educational Trip 2019





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# Foreword

Principals are the key to quality education. It is said that ‘As is the principal, so is the school.’ The standard of school leaders is a determinant of quality education. In research on the impact of principals’ leadership of schools, scholars and experts have unanimously indicated that the competence of principals is crucial to raising the quality of education. Promoting the professional development of principals is a global trend. In recent years, the Hong Kong SAR Government has been very supportive of professional school leadership training activities. Principals, as the leaders in school education and facilitators of educational reform, play a pivotal role in the operation, advancement and development of schools. Their leadership has a profound influence.

The Committee on Professional Development of Teachers and Principals (COTAP) has proposed ‘Professional Standards for Principals of Hong Kong’ with the following key objectives:

1. Ethical Enablers of All-round Growth and Balanced Advancement
2. Versatile Architects of Vibrant Learning Organisations
3. Visionary Edupreneurs of Educational Transformation and Continuous School Improvement

To be Visionary Edupreneurs, education leaders should make developing an international mindset and inspiring innovative thinking their top priorities. Rapid globalisation makes it difficult to forecast the social situation that students will face twenty years from now. Exchange tours contribute to the development of a global mindset, enhance educational excellence and allow greater understanding of the latest social development trends. Ultimately, this creates the foundations needed for nurturing the learners of today and preparing them to be the leaders of tomorrow.

The principals’ exchange tour to Finland organized by COTAP received an overwhelming response and was a fruitful and stimulating journey. COTAP has started the ball rolling for future excursions to widen our horizons. We would be glad if the government considers organising more study tours for school leaders to gain insight and knowledge into other world-leading education systems.

Overseas exchange tours are beneficial to the implementation of school-based management in Hong Kong. The experience they provide enables principals to shoulder their responsibilities for cultivating cultures and promoting education reform. The professional development of the entire education sector will be vigorously promoted not only by exchange tours, but also by on-campus study programs for principals, leaders, teachers and even student teachers.

So Ping Fai  
Chairman

# Editorial

## Finland Overview

Our trip to Finland and our visits to schools clearly made a very strong impression on all those who participated. It is always interesting to spend time in other schools and to learn how things are done in different systems of education. But our Finland mission gave us more than that. The Finnish system has such a strong and distinctive ethos and is different from its Hong Kong counterpart in so many ways that we were inspired to think afresh about our approach to the education of the students in our care.

These articles give a definite sense that we saw something new and different in our school visits and that the general impression was overwhelmingly positive. As one article puts it, 'The experience truly opened our eyes and inspired us in many ways'. Phrases such as '... consistent and high quality learning ...', '... greater happiness and self-confidence ...', '... promote equality, trust and life-long learning ...', '... flexible and responsible learning ...', 'respect for students and understanding of their unique needs ...' are seen in every article and they exemplify the participants' upbeat and constructive response to what they saw and learned.

Of course, this is not to suggest that Finland's educational system is perfect or that it would be appropriate for all other countries. The way in which a country educates its young is shaped by that country's history, society and many other factors, and reflects the country's values, traditions and requirements. Finland is a distinctive country, dissimilar in many ways to its European neighbours, and certainly very different from Hong Kong.

Geography and population alone ensure that many aspects of Finnish education would be impossible to implement in Hong Kong. Finland's average population density of 17 inhabitants per square kilometre, one of the lowest in Europe, means that it has plenty of open space. This offers exciting and accessible possibilities for environmental education. Low-rise schools with a lot of external space around them make outside play breaks every 45 minutes entirely practical. Hong Kong is at the opposite end of the scale, with an average of 6,300 people per square kilometre - and many more in the areas where most schools are situated.

Some other aspects of the Finnish system might be difficult to replicate in Hong Kong. Finland's relaxed, informal approach, with its strong emphasis on learning from play and self-discovery, focus on life skills and the relative unimportance of regular testing, is quite a contrast to our results-



# Editorial

oriented system with highly organised classes, a rigid curriculum and frequent assessment by examination. Even the lack of school uniforms might seem radical to those immersed in the Hong Kong system.

But much of the thinking that underlies Finnish education is very attractive and could be applied in Hong Kong. The concept of taking a highly inclusive approach to education that combines academic learning with an emphasis on social skills and positive interaction with the widest possible range of people seems to be an effective way of preparing students for the fast-changing world in which they will grow up. This approach is shown in the active teaching of diversity, to encourage students to be accepting and open-minded, and in the inclusion of students with special educational needs in mainstream classes.

Another very positive aspect of the Finnish system is its people-centred approach, in which teachers are highly trusted and respected, and teaching focuses on the interests and ability of each student. Teachers have a high degree of autonomy, which gives them the space to develop a teaching methodology that takes students' needs and choices into account. It seems clear that when students feel their interests are being effectively addressed, they will not only be content and self-confident, but also more motivated as they learn.

The inspiration we received on our trip to Finland can perhaps be summed up by a powerful statement from one of these articles. 'We are determined to give a higher priority to students' voices and their choices in their learning, out of respect for their diverse gifts.'



# Delegation

Delegation Leader: Ms Lau Tit Mui

Deputy Delegation Leaders: Mr Chau Sui Chung, Ms Fong Pik Yin, Sikkie

School	Name	Position
Alliance Primary School, Whampoa	Ms Josephine CHOI Yuen-ying Ms Lo Shuk Han	Principal Computer Subject Panel Head
Aplichau Kaifong Primary School	Ms Po Wai Fong Ms Chiu Wai Chun Ms Chan Mei Sheung	Principal CD EPC
Baptist Rainbow Primary School	Mr Fung Yiu Cheung, Fielie Mr Wong Wing Hong, Henry	Principal / Vice CD chairman / Drama education
Canossa School Hong Kong	Ms Fong Pik Yin, Sikkie	Principal
Caritas Lok Kan School	Ms Chung Shuk Han Ms Ng Sin Mei	Principal Assistant Principal
Chinese Methodist School, Tanner Hill	Ms Chui Yuen Pik, Tracey	Principal
Christian and Missionary Alliance Sun Kei Primary School	Mr Cheng Kin Man, Kenneth	Principal
Christian and Missionary Alliance Sun Kei Primary School (Ping Shek)	Ms Au Wing Yan, Samantha	Principal
CPC Yao Dao Primary School	Ms Chung Wing Yan, Vivian Ms Chan Wing Yan Ms So Wing Yin	Principal Vice Principal School Librarian
Diocesan Preparatory School	Ms Yim Chi Ki	PSMCD
ELCHK Faith Love Lutheran School	Ms Chiu Kim Mei	Principal
Gigamind English Primary School	Mr Law Yue Kwan Ms Li Tsz Tung Ms Wong Siu Ying	Principal Vice-Principal Senior Teacher
Hing Tak School	Ms Siu Lai Shan, Yvonne	Principal



# Delegation

HKKKWA Sun Fong Chung Primary School	Ms Lo Sau Chee Ms Choi Wai Yee	Principal Vice Principal
Hong Kong And Macau Lutheran Church Ming Tao Primary School	Ms Chan Kwan Ho	Principal
Hong Kong Red Cross Hospital Schools	Ms Francesca Sin Dr Kenson Wong	Supervisor Principal
Hong Kong Student Aid Society Primary School	Ms Cheung Ching Han Ms Yu Tak Chi	Principal PSMCD
The Hong Kong Sze Yap Commercial and Industrial Association San Wui Commercial Society School	Mr Wong Kwun Wa	Principal
Kowloon Tong School Primary Section	Ms Yeung Mee Kuen	Principal
King's College Old Boys' Association Primary School No.2	Ms Lam Shuk Fong Ms Leung Sze Yan	Principal ASWO
Lok Sin Tong Leung Kau Kui Primary School	Ms Chen Yuen Ting	Principal
Lok Sin Tong Leung Kau Kui Primary School (Branch)	Ms Lau Tit Mui Ms Cheung Ching Sze	Principal PSMCD
Man Kiu Association Primary School	Ms Yip Shuk Ting, Ivy	Principal
Marycove School	Sr Yuen Hoi Fung Mr Choy Chi Chung, Joseph Ms Leung Wan Ming, Lesley	Supervisor Principal Senior Teacher
Methodist School	Ms Lam Wai Sheung, Maria Ms Kwan Man Ying, Jenny Ms Chan Lai Fong, Candice	Principal PSM APSM
Pak Tin Catholic Primary School	Ms Tse Chi Mei	Principal

# Delegation

Po Leung Kuk Grandmont Primary School	Mr Lui Cheuk Kuen Ms Ng Ka Wai, Klari Ms Chu Wing Kum, Ada	Principal SPSM PSMCD
Po Leung Kuk Gold and Silver Exchange Society Pershing Tsang School	Ms Lau Choi Yuk, Karen	Principal
Po Leung Kuk Leung Chow Shun Kam Primary School	Ms Wan Wai Fan	Principal
Pui Kiu Primary School	Ms Ng Kai Kwan Ms Wong Wing Sze Ms Man Po Shan	Principal English Subject Panel Head Mathematics Subject Panel Head
Pui Tak Canossian Primary School	Ms Chiu Koon See, Cecilia	Principal
Pun U Association Wah Yan Primary School	Dr Tan Kang, John Mr Chow Ping To, James	Principal Senior Teacher
Rhenish Church Grace School	Mr Tse Hing Sang	Principal
Shun Tak Fraternal Association Wu Mien Tuen Primary School	Ms Ip Man Ting Ms Ng Wing Sze	Principal PSM
SKH St. Andrew's Primary School	Mr Chau Sui Chung	Principal
SKH Kei Yan Primary School	Mr Lee Man Kit	Principal
SKH Ling Oi Primary School	Mr Tse Si Chuen	Principal
SKH Yan Laap Memorial Primary School	Ms Yee Yan Yan Ms Li Siu Fan, Iris	Principal PSMCD
Tai Po Old Market Public School	Ms Cheung Lai Chu	Principal
Tai Po Methodist School	Ms Lee Yee King, Yuky Ms Ng Yuet Ching	Principal Prefect of Studies
Taoist Ching Chung Primary School (Wu King Estate)	Mr Cheng Chi Ming	Principal



# Delegation

The EdUHK Jockey Club Primary School	Mrs Shirley Duthie	Principal
Tsuen Wan Chiu Chow Public School	Ms Hui Kam Chu, Sandy	Principal
Tung Tak School	Mr Wong Wai Lap	Principal
TWGHs Ma Kam Chan Memorial Primary School	Ms Fung Yuk Yi	Principal
TWGHs Yiu Dak Chi Memorial Primary School (Yuen Long)	Ms Lo Sin Yee, Sera	Principal
Yuen Long Long Ping Estate Wai Chow School	Ms Sung Wai Yi Ms Wan Yuen Seung, Eva	Principal Vice Principal
Yuen Long Po Kok Primary School	Ms Tam Wai Ping	Principal





# Tour Itinerary

## **28<sup>th</sup> April, 2019**

Sibelius Park and Monument  
Tuomiokirkko  
Old Market Hall  
Arkki School of Architecture  
National Museum of Finland



## **29<sup>th</sup> April, 2019**

Simonkallio Day Care Centre  
Sharing with Finnish Educational Officers



## **30<sup>th</sup> April, 2019**

Taimon Koulu Primary School  
Tokkisten Koulu Primary School  
Logomo Culture and Art Centre for Finnish Education

## **1<sup>st</sup> May, 2019**

Nuukio National Park – Haltia Natural Centre  
Suomenlinna Fortress Island and Musuem



## **2<sup>nd</sup> May, 2019**

Jokiniemi Primary School

## **3<sup>rd</sup> May, 2019**

Upper Secondary School of Olari

## **4<sup>th</sup> May, 2019**

Temppeliaukio Church  
Heureka Science Centre with Workshop



## **5<sup>th</sup> May, 2019**

Professional Sharing Among the Participants  
Departure



# Reflections on the Finnish Education System

## Preschool Education

### *Simonkallio Early Childhood Education Centre*

*Aplichau Kaifong Primary School*

*ELCHK Faith Love Lutheran School*

*King's College Old Boys' Association Primary School No.2*

*Pak Tin Catholic Primary School*

*Pui Tak Canossian Primary School*

Simonkallio Early Childhood Education Centre (Kindergarten) opened in September, 2016. The building uses wood and concrete and has a large area of glass, offering both a positive balance of energy through the building envelope, and sufficient daylight to reduce the need for artificial lighting.

The school incorporates open-plan principles, exchanging traditional walled-in classrooms and rows of desks for a more flexible and informal open layout. There are lots of small group spaces for different kinds of activities, a separate dining room and a large gym. Attractive, colourful, quiet and relaxed learning environments help create a low-stress experience.

The arrangement is really good for kids. Safety, cleanliness and protective furniture do not explicitly suggest “education” in the formal sense but the promotion of the health and wellbeing of every child.

There are eight different groups for 140 children aged between one and seven years old. For every seven children above 3-year-olds, there must be one qualified teacher or care worker. One qualified worker must be present for every four below 3-year-olds. It is also legally required that there must be one preschool teacher for every three qualified workers. The ratio of teachers to that of 3-to-7-year-olds is 1:7. Teachers are totally responsible for students’ learning and free time activities. The salaries of teachers in Finland are similar to those in Hong Kong.

We found that instead of explicit teaching methods, daycare centres in Finland seem to focus more on integrating theories and teaching methods into children’s daily school life. Teachers introduce the concept of mindfulness to children in Simonkallio, which helps them to express their emotions daily and learn how to regulate their emotions via cartoon cards. Students learn through the phenomenon-based approach, where the questions asked and issues covered are naturally anchored in real-world phenomena. The information and skills learned can be directly applied across borders between subjects and outside the classroom in situations where they can be used in practice. An example of this concept of natural transfer is young children deciding their dress code and the belongings to bring for outdoor activities, to cope with the current weather situation. Children are also encouraged to discover through an experiential learning approach.

Daycare centers in Finland seem to take more account of qualitative indicators than quantitative metrics. Teachers tend to communicate with parents informally about their children's daily school life, rather than giving the parents quantitative developmental growth reports. Besides, teachers are not required to do much administrative work or attend administrative meetings. They do not even need to be appraised by the centre director and therefore have more time to spend with the children and to plan teaching themes with their colleagues.

Children do not need to follow a standard curriculum but have their own individual learning plans. One teacher is responsible for each child's plan during the child's life in the daycare centre. As a result, that teacher has a deep understanding of the child and can provide a tailor-made personal development programme.

Teachers and parents believe in the power of play. Children need lots of time to play on a regular basis, as it benefits cognitive, social, emotional and physical development. Every corner in the centre is a learning place. Students enjoy a great deal of freedom and independence. They walk the hallways, serve themselves food and are excited to be in school on their own. Teachers seem comfortable providing students with ample freedom, to encourage creativity, and they nudge students to develop stronger critical thinking skills.

What can we try at our own school?

In Chinese culture, students' negative feelings are generally ignored. Students are not allowed to show negative feelings, such as anger, fear and sadness. After this visit, we think we should learn to listen to, accept and understand students' feelings so that we can help them to build up positive minds.

Teachers could provide students with opportunities to choose what they would like to learn, how they would like to learn and how they would assess their own learning. In this way, teachers can help develop students into active learners and enable them to learn independently and effectively.

We are deeply impressed by this inspiring lesson. It reminds us the usefulness of student-centred learning in which teachers are facilitators of learning rather than dominators. During our future teaching planning, we should put students' interests and learning styles first by acknowledging students' voices and needs as the centre of our teaching. We should also help build students into self-motivated-life-long learners. Developing good teacher-student relationships will help students enjoy their school lives.





*CPC Yao Dao Primary School  
Yuen Long Po Kok Primary School*

We visited Simonkallio Early Childhood Education Center on 29 April 2019 and were impressed by the educational beliefs demonstrated there. Simonkallio was founded in 2016. A key objective is to promote children's every child's growth, development, health and wellbeing in ways that are age-and development-specific.

The teachers provide various ways for the kids to learn, for example, the forest group and authentic environment. They use the natural environment in their teaching. The forest group goes to the forest every day, even when it is cold or rainy. The daily two-hour outdoor activity provides ample meaningful play time.

Playing is a very powerful way of motivating kids to learn. Play is often a full body activity that helps them develop skills they will need later in life. Such activities as running, dancing, climbing and rolling all foster muscle development and help fine-tune motor skills.



# Preschool Education

## Simonkallio Early Childhood Education Centre



By providing a flexible learning environment, we can maximize kids' creativity and facilitate their self-learning skills.

We feel that the teaching team is very generous, devoting themselves fully to every single child and trying to meet special needs. We also feel that trust is a key factor in the Finland Education System. Parents, children, teachers, even the government have strong bond of trust among them.

Apart from trust, resources allocation, socio-economic status and cultural differences are factors that must be considered. We believe that we can take a gradual approach in our own schools. We should make good use of our existing advantages such as diligent teachers, energetic and curious students, a supportive Education Bureau, caring parents etc. We should commit to providing a varied learning experience for our students, to ensure balanced development and continuous enhancement. This will create people who can contribute to the future well-being of themselves and society.





### *Kowloon Tong School Primary Section Pui Kiu Primary School*



Taimon Koulu Primary School is located in Nantali, a beautiful town surrounded by amazing nature. There are huge sports grounds around the school and some students were playing baseball when we arrived. The students were playing enthusiastically although they were not very skillful. We were told that the main aim of PE lessons is that nobody is ranked by ability, only by their attitude to learning. Thus students feel comfortable and learn autonomy. We gained firsthand experience of the concepts of “learn from playing” and “play is the highest form of research” that Finland is advocating and implementing in its education system.

The principal welcomed us and presented the school’s key policies to us. Their “No Bullying” policy impressed us most as the school carries out surveys twice a year to investigate and stop any bullying and also ensure that the students enjoy their school life. Another policy covers teaching technical IT skills and how students can make good use of them in daily life. The school arranged for some students to show us their assignments on iPads. They also helped us make our own pieces of work by using some apps. It was easy and an interesting experience.

The teachers and students were especially friendly to us and we were even invited to observe and take part in a science lesson. The students had been assigned to present information they had found in the forests near their homes or on the internet relating to the topics they were learning in science lessons.





A warm and supportive learning atmosphere was observed and the teacher was very welcoming. She demonstrated hospitality to her students as she kindly translated the students' presentations into English for the visitors. This was done simultaneously and naturally so it allowed us to witness a teacher of high quality in action.

While we were walking around the sports grounds, some students actively approached us and used their few words of English. The Finnish school system is well-known for nurturing students who produce consistent and high quality learning results. Education professionals in Finland are extremely well educated and well qualified and it was fascinating to see all of this taking place right in front of our eyes.



*The EdUHK Jockey Club Primary School  
Baptist Rainbow Primary School*

### Our Experience

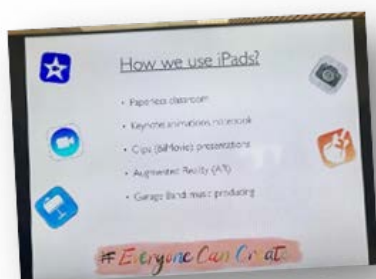
#### **Strong Trust among Stakeholders in Education**

- Finland genuinely believes in education for all and focuses on working in an effective partnership with schools and parents to bring up students as understanding people who accept differences.
- Emphasis is put on equality, respect, choices, happiness and a positive approach.
- A flat school organization structure with no promotional posts and no built-in appraisal system and ESR so that teachers enjoy professional autonomy and adopt an open and proactive mindset for professional development.



#### **Student Centred Curriculum** to cater for diversity with flexible teaching methods.

- Blended learning using new technology and e-material to promote students' thinking on top of hands-on experiential learning.
- Adoption of 1:1 iPad for G4 – 9 and use of apps to cultivate students' creativity and motivation. Coding education is provided for senior forms.
- Teaching assistants, social workers, educational psychologist and nurse to support educational needs of students.



#### **Emphasis on Sports** with boys and girls playing different games. Most students cycle to school and are proud of their own Finnish style baseball.

- Long recess and lunch break allowing time to play and mingle with friends.
- Self-service buffet lunch in canteen with good choices of healthy food.
- Shorter school hours for G1 – 2.





**Big Open Playgrounds and Fields** with nice and airy classrooms. Lots of windows to allow in sunlight and nature.

- Classroom set up with smart boards, whiteboards, blackboards and projectors displaying abundant students' work.
- Different types, shapes and functions of classroom furniture to facilitate students' learning.
- Activity room for early arrivals and after school activities.



### Reflections

- The success of the Finnish quality education is multi-dimensional and there are many contributing factors. The system tries to address students as individuals with different characters and learning styles.
- We might need to think more about the core value and function of education and how we approach education in the Hong Kong context.
- What will happen in Hong Kong schools if we do away with homework, tests, paper and pencil assessments, grades and rank orders in elementary education?
- Can there be a balance between trust and accountability when we run schools in Hong Kong?
- Can we offer our students more autonomy and choices in their learning?

### Possible Actions

- We could consider working with stakeholders to formulate pledges for students, parents and teachers.
- We could explore shorter school hours for P.1 – 2 students.
- We could consider bringing more nature and life experience into our school curriculum.
- We could create inviting classrooms filled with students' work.
- We could make better use of school spaces to provide more hands-on experience for students, eg STEM corners, Maker corners.....
- We could give students longer recess time to rest, play and interact with schoolmates, to boost our student's energy.

### As a teacher I respond that...

- ▶ I am polite and friendly to all pupils.
- ▶ I will support every pupils and help all of them with their individual challenges.
- ▶ I help pupils to find their own strengths and rejoice their performances. I give a safe environment to grow up and learn.
- ▶ I give information to the parents regularly about the school performances of their child.
- ▶ I always wish the parents welcome to visit our school.





*SKH Kei Yan Primary School*  
*SKH Yan Laap Memorial Primary School*

Stepping into the campus of Taimon Koulu Primary School for the first time during our visit to Finland, we were extremely impressed by the open campus and the overall appearance of the school. What floored us the most was the immediate realization that Finland had developed an advanced education system that provides

huge benefits to learners. Even though this school only has around 300 children, we were able to see the evident successes of Finland's education system from all the students, teachers and staff across campus.

The major impression we gleaned from this visit was the positive, trusting, encouraging environment the school offers its students. In classrooms, students' personal achievements were always acknowledged and their work displayed, regardless of its quality. Stepping into classrooms, we could see posters pasted on all the walls, enabling students to display their work and fostering an atmosphere in which the students are co-owners and stewards of their environment. Even the sanitary facilities portrayed a comforting, home-like image. Combined with a Student Activity Room that served as a playground and meeting place for children, students were always able to support one another in a loving, motivational context.

During the visit, we learned that this primary school has implemented the "home-based" system in classes: teachers teach all the subjects for a particular class and have full control over the design, layout and atmosphere of the classroom. We were told that some teachers had even brought furniture from their own homes to decorate their classrooms, showing their devotion towards their students. We also noticed that the classrooms were extremely clean and tidy, probably a result of the aforementioned "co-ownership" mindset which incentivises students to fulfil their obligations even at a young age.





Although we were unable to sit in on actual lessons, we were able to witness the professionalism of teachers in all their interactions with students. All teachers were confident in the pacing and quality of their materials and clearly put a lot of effort into preparing them. Phenomenon-based teaching was frequently implemented, together with cross-curricular teaching and learning, enabling students to learn different subjects in a connected manner. All students have regular lessons in arts and crafts, giving them a hands-on opportunity to express their creativity. There is no hierarchy among the teachers or students, and those who have learning difficulties are assigned one-on-one classes with other teachers, further emphasising the educational principle in Finland that all individuals have an equal right to receive and benefit from education.

This environment has a significant impact on the students. When visiting the school, most students actively approached us and even tried to greet us in Mandarin, showing their impeccable manners, but also their high self-confidence. Students had also been trained to clean up after themselves after meals and to arrange their belongings. The school evidently prioritises self-management in its teaching, resulting in the students having strong skills in this area. Moreover, students always had a large amount of free time, enabling them to go to student activity rooms and engage in their preferred activities. It was gratifying to see that students are emotionally

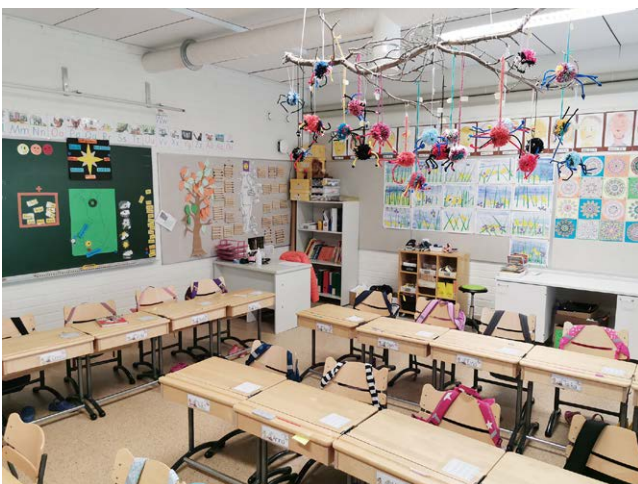


healthy and comfortable with their school environment. The school clearly cares for students' mental health by offering a relaxing, care-free timetable and curriculum.

After this visit, we were able to reflect on Hong Kong's education system from a different perspective. First, from the management level: in order to maintain a higher level of student mental health, the curriculum and school timetables must include more time for breaks and free sessions. This approach has proved highly successful in improving the psychological health of Finnish students. Giving Hong Kong students more autonomy to decide their pace and content of learning can reduce stress levels. Students can learn to find innovative and insightful ways to solve their learning problems.

Second, most Finnish teachers believe in their professionalism and are confident that they can manage the curriculum and teach it to students. Most Hong Kong teachers, on the other hand, tend to rely on textbooks. They seldom put any emphasis on developing their understanding of curriculum guidelines or their professional knowledge of designing related learning and teaching materials for students with different learning needs. Hong Kong schools should therefore provide more training and resources, to increase teachers' confidence and stimulate their growth, upgrading teaching quality in the long term.

From the level of primary, foundational education, Finland has been raising its children to be positive, confident, self-assured individuals. Finland is seen by the international community as the pioneer of a new era of education in upgrading its educational system and providing more enhanced, supportive learning opportunities for its students. There are many lessons for Hong Kong to learn from this loving, encouraging nation of active, dedicated learners.





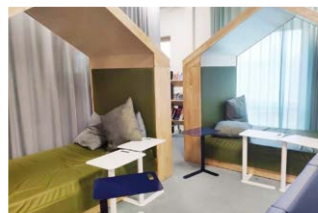
### *Hong Kong Red Cross Hospital Schools*



Having moved to new premises in late 2018, Tolkkisten Koulu is a well-designed primary school aiming to provide pupils with the finest learning experience. The school has a flexible layout and classrooms are equipped with all kinds of teaching aids and furniture such as Wobble Chairs, Reading Hut and Clever Board, to serve pupils with different learning needs. The flexibility also extends to the outdoor area, where there is no official gate to the premises. Pupils are responsible for their own safety, which encourages them to take ownership for their own learning and the environment.

We are impressed with how pupils are willing to show their uniqueness and be proud of their own characteristics. Pupils' artwork is displayed in every corner of the school; many look great but some are less refined. We see that pupils have been taught to appreciate their own efforts rather than the outcome. Moreover, they can learn about their own style through their everyday dress, since they are not required to wear uniform. This encourages pupils to truly embrace who they are and develop their strengths without being constrained by how society defines beauty.

Many people are exploring Phenomenon-based Learning, as they see this is what makes Finland's education system a success. A lot of schools that we visited do embed Phenomenon-based Learning in their curriculum but they still have individual subjects. We see that success does not only lie in the strategy but in the mindset of the leaders. They promote equality, trust and life-long learning. When decisions are made from love, results are guaranteed.



### *Pun U Association Wah Yan Primary School*



Tolkkisten Koulu is a primary school with new premises opened in late 2018. Its policies reflect the importance of students' voices, hence their choices, in Finnish education. Before moving, the school asked its students what kind of furniture they would like to use when reading in the new school. Their mainstream choice of a house-shaped reading lounge with cushions (Fig.1) was selected by the Principal, while other preferences of high-back café seats (Fig.2), chairs with wheels (Fig.3), stools with adjustable heights and similar desks (Fig.4) were also provided.

In this school's Design & Technology lessons (Fig.5), students can choose what kind of crafted products, e.g. wooden, they would like to make.

Students' choices reflect their interests, and they can choose whether their learning is assessed in writing, speaking or doing. When their interests are

catered for, learners are more motivated and generally experience greater happiness and self-confidence. As we witnessed later in an upper secondary school, such happiness and self-confidence cultivate the resilience and perseverance students require after junior secondary. Upon our return to our school, we are determined to give a higher priority to students' voices and their choices in their learning, out of respect for their diverse gifts received from God, and to seek to develop those gifts.





### *Alliance Primary School Whampoa*

Tolkkisten Koulu is a socks school where everyone must take off their shoes when they enter. We felt at home when we first entered Tolkkisten Koulu. When they first set foot in the school, students and teachers can see a glorious view of the sea surrounded by lots of green trees. The beautiful blue and green colours create a calm and peaceful ambiance which aligns with the theme colours across two different levels.



Students in Tolkkisten Koulu do not have their own classroom or a long-term seat. Each student has a locker to put their belongings in and they go to different classrooms to have different lessons, like handicraft, woodwork, etc. Students learn to organise their own belongings and tidy the room once they have finished using it. Every 45 minutes, students must go outside to run around and play with their friends. This encourages students to stretch, recharge and refresh themselves after periods of concentration. In the open areas and corridors, there are a lot of sofas for students to sit and relax. The design of the sofas allows students to have some personal space to focus in a peaceful and quiet area.

In each classroom, there are different kinds of chairs for teachers and students to sit on. Some of them are wobble chairs, which encourage active sitting and allow students' knees,

hips and back to find comfortable and ever-changing positions. The continuous movement increases students' secondary focus. If students do not want to sit, however, they may stand or jog to increase blood circulation. A teacher pointed out that students may wobble a lot in the beginning because the chairs are new to them. Students get used to the wobble chairs over time and they are able to sit still, only wobbling when they want to.





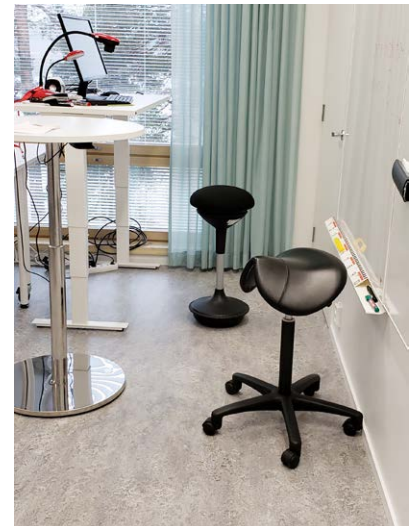


There is another open learning area where two classes can join together. In this open area, students can choose to sit in a group or individually behind a table or even in the reading house. Students can choose the most comfortable sitting position and the way they feel they can learn best. Teachers usually use that open area for co-teaching sessions. It is a great idea for teachers to co-teach when they feel it is beneficial for the students and their learning.

Furthermore, there is a small room next to the open area where teachers or assistants can take students for small group activities. Sometimes, when students have tests, teachers or teaching assistants can take students who need extra help there. Students do not need to have tests on a table. They can lie down on a bean bag or sit on the floor to do a test. They can choose their own way and their own pace.

In each classroom, the height of the tables is adjustable to suit all teachers and students, either sitting or standing. All classrooms and learning areas have a digital white board for teachers to interact with the students, find information on the internet and use other e-learning tools. As role models for students, teachers do not have their own seat. They have lockers like the students and work wherever they feel comfortable. They show students how to be flexible and responsible learners.

After the visit, we think that Finland's education system is very flexible. It is up to the teachers to choose the best way to help students learn. Teachers learn to respect their students and understand their unique needs to create a comfortable and flexible learning space. From the facilities of the school, we felt the love and care from the government. In the digital environment of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, people may not have their own space to work in. Everyone may need to carry their devices and work anywhere they feel comfortable. In Tolkkisten Koulu, students and teachers are preparing for their future from a very early age.





A teacher displaying teaching resources for students with special learning needs



A tailor-made booklet with many symbols as a communication tool made by speech therapists

*Diocesan Preparatory School  
Po Leung Kuk Gold and Silver Exchange Society Pershing Tang School  
Po Leung Kuk Grandmont Primary School*

### Learning for all - Inclusive Education in Finland

We visited Jokiniemi Primary School on 2<sup>nd</sup> May. It has 800 students in Grade 1 to Grade 9, 56 teachers and 40 teaching assistants, including therapists and nurses for students with special educational needs. This school visit provided us with a unique opportunity to look at how schools in Finland have made inclusion a reality. The experience truly opened our eyes and inspired us in many ways.

The Finnish education system aims to provide equal opportunities for all children in three ways so Jokiniemi Primary School offers a “three-tier support structure” model for students with special educational needs, which includes General Support, Strengthened Support with pull-out sessions and Special Support with personal education plans. In the school, there are 28 mainstream classes and seven classes for autistic students and others with different needs. Most students with special needs attend mainstream classes. Those with more severe needs have separate classes in groups of six. Each of them has a special education teacher or a medically-trained assistant who supports them in their classes. Compared with that of Hong Kong, the higher teacher-student ratio effectively helps teachers to discover students’ strengths, build their confidence and cater for their special needs.

The separate classes are placed alongside mainstream classes and students do activities like art and sports together. The natural learning atmosphere allows students to learn to cope with all kinds of people. In Jokiniemi Primary School, students are friends with one another regardless of their abilities. Teachers evaluate the students on their progress every day. They value each individual, but



A photo of Group D with the deputy principal of Jokiniemi Primary School

not the outcome or their grades. The principal emphasized that it is beneficial to develop students' collaboration, social skills and social sensitivity in class and to teach students about diversity because the world they enter after school has all kinds of people. It is of the utmost importance that children learn how to interact fruitfully with learners with different abilities, to build a harmonious society together. Educators in Finland strongly believe that children will succeed if they get along with different kinds of people because they are open-minded and accepting of others rather than just book-intelligent. The strong belief that educators share is impressive.

A teacher shared a story about one of her students with special learning needs, who struggled to communicate with others. Instead of adopting traditional methods, she tried a different approach. She focused on improving the student's communication skills as she felt that the student would benefit more. Teachers in Finland are highly respected and trusted by society. The teachers, most of whom hold master's degrees, are able to decide how best to teach their students autonomously. They also believe that subject knowledge and life skills are equally important so in Jokiniemi Primary School every student has cooking or ironing lessons three times per week. Other than the knowledge of different subjects, students are well equipped with these basic skills so they can take care of themselves and of others, and eventually become grown-ups with a sense of social responsibility. As educators in Hong Kong, we should think more deeply about how to prepare our students for tomorrow's world. This should include what we can do to equip our students with the skills they need for effective learning, instead of simply asking them to memorise things.

We believe that the Finnish education system has achieved the three levels of "education equality", a theory introduced by James S Coleman. The three levels of equality of education are the equality of basic educational conditions, the equality of the educational process and the equalization of educational outcomes. We now have a deeper understanding of "people-oriented" education. Students will become proactive learners when they are granted more freedom and choices, and their learning experiences will surely be more meaningful.



*Inclusive classroom settings*



*HKKKWA Sun Fong Chung Primary School  
Tai Po Methodist School*

The school has about 800 pupils in Grade 1-9, grouped in 28 mainstream classes and seven classes for autistic and disabled students. There are 56 teachers and 40 assistants who work closely with other professionals in educating the students and supporting them in learning.

The school strives to offer equal learning opportunities for all students. Every student is entitled to general support in the everyday teaching and learning process. Intensified support and special support based on assessment and learning plans are provided for SEN students.

The inclusive approach to education emphasises social skills, social sensibility and interaction with others, so the school includes students with special educational needs in mainstream classes. Special teaching in small groups is provided in some subjects when necessary.

### 1. Education for all:

- Train leaders for tomorrow to build society together.
- The belief is shared by all stakeholders

### 2. Inclusive education policies:

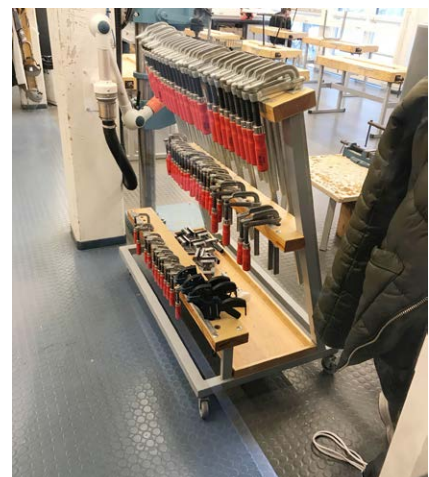
- 3 level support
- Assistants are well prepared and equipped with skills and knowledge
- Inclusive education for different needs:
  - Culture (18 languages) and Religion
  - Learning styles (kinesthetic, auditory or visual)
  - Learning needs (SEN)



Cookery lesson



Religion room



Woodwork room

### 3. Assessment

- Assessments are for learning, not to assess students
- Formative assessments are conducted daily during lessons

### 4. Facilities

- Specially designed rooms to meet students' needs
  - ◆ Different chairs/sofas/stools/desks
  - ◆ Allow students to choose

### 5. Students' well-being

- Cultivate life skills (cooking, ironing, woodwork, etc)
- Interact with others (learn to play, inclusive for SEN)
- Interact with the environment (learn to appreciate the outdoors)

### 6. Our reflections on limitations:

- Culture for inclusive education is not well established
- Training for school professionals (principals, teachers, assistants) and parents is inadequate



Book for speech therapy



Jokiniemi Koulu



# Secondary Education

## Olari Secondary and Upper Secondary School

### Methodist School



Having fun with classmates at lunch time

The visit to Olari Secondary School on May 3 was purposeful and inspirational.

Olari School is composed of secondary and upper secondary sections with a total of 600 students. In contrast with primary students, who learn to solve real-life problems by drawing on relevant subject areas, secondary school students follow a similar curriculum to that in Hong Kong. Why then do the students there still look

so happy? They enjoy their school life even though they have to study more than ten subjects and deal with assessments and homework. Why are more students in Hong Kong suffering from emotional problems and failing to show interest in learning?

During the visit, we were impressed to see that students were free to surf the internet. Many were seen using social networks and playing online games. These activities are not permitted during school time in Hong Kong. Students in Olari are given total autonomy in what they do. They are raised to trust and be



Crocheting and listening to music in the basement during lunchbreak



Students have their own electronic devices

trusted by others. Teachers are trusted and highly regarded as professionals. The culture of trust is built on their professionalism. We teachers in Hong Kong are also well-trained and specialized in our teaching subjects but our professional status is not so highly regarded. Recently, we have been receiving more complaints from parents and students are increasingly failing to show us respect. How can we build a culture of trust? What can we do to



promote an effective learning atmosphere and nurture our students with confidence and trust?

Our students have a similar learning environment to that in Finland and they face identical global challenges. It's time for us to think about what we can do to train them as future leaders. The teaching of traditional knowledge should be aligned with moral education. Our students should be taught to be humble, confident and fair. They should learn how to show appreciation and respect to others. Last but not least, it is vital for everyone to work on developing relationships based on trust and understanding.



**Students are free to surf the internet and use social networks during free time**





# Secondary Education

## Olari Secondary and Upper Secondary School

*Marycove School*

Olari School is situated in Espoo, 15 km from Helsinki, the capital of Finland, and offers both secondary (Years 7-9) and upper secondary (Years 10-12) education. 245 students are enrolled in the secondary school and 365 students in the upper secondary school.

Upper secondary schools in Finland are divided into specialized domains of study, providing a variety of programmes for students to take during their upper secondary years. It is common for students to learn three languages (Finnish, Swedish and English) and they must complete a required number of credits before graduating.

In Upper Secondary School of Olari, 100 students specializing in mathematics and science take more courses in those fields. Other students have a variety of programmes to choose from. The class sizes range from 10 to 36, depending on the number of students taking each course.



After finishing their upper secondary school education, students take the matriculation examination. Depending on the grades they receive in this exam and the choices they have made, students have the opportunity to continue their studies at universities or polytechnics. Upper secondary schools are where students first feel the pressure of public examinations.

IT is used extensively as a learning tool at Olari School. Many students take their own laptops and iPads to the classroom. Upper secondary students are also expected to be more independent by managing their own learning schedule and free time. While we were visiting, we saw students having their breaks in different areas of the school, such as staircases, corridors and activity rooms. As in other Finnish schools, students at Olari receive a free lunch every day. When we visited the school cafeteria, we found students enjoying their time eating and socializing with their friends.

Another thing that impressed us was that all students wear casual clothes. There are no school uniforms in Finland! Perhaps we could try this in Hong Kong and see what happens.



Another brilliant aspect is that students have a say in the school's development. Olari School has its own board, on which students, parents and school staff are represented. Students can give their opinions on facilities, school activities, teaching and learning, as well as the curriculum and the school's annual plan. What a remarkable idea!

In general, Olari School does a lot to foster individual autonomy regarding course choices and the expression of personal ideas. It is certainly a good place for teenagers to ponder their future academic or career path.





# Secondary Education

## Olari Secondary and Upper Secondary School



*Christian and Missionary Alliance Sun Kei Primary School*

### Background

Olari School offers both secondary and upper secondary schooling. The secondary school has about 250 students aged 13-16 in grades 7 to 9. In addition to the regular classes, there are Maths, Natural Sciences and Special Needs Education classes. The upper secondary school has 365 students in grades 1 to 3, with each class following the regular national curriculum. The upper secondary school also offers specialised classes in Maths and Natural Sciences. Every teacher has a master's degree and they all show great enthusiasm in their teaching.

Olari School is well equipped, with excellent facilities that create an atmosphere for learning and personal growth. These facilities include a library, study corner, laboratories, meeting rooms, cafeterias, football pitch and playground among others.



### **Upper Secondary Programmes**

After completing nine years basic education, students can choose either vocational education or upper secondary school. Olari upper secondary school provides three years of general upper secondary education, with a strong emphasis on science and mathematics. Before graduation, students are required to pass 75 courses, each of which comprises approximately 38 classroom lessons plus related activities. Each student must select at least four subjects to study in the final year, before taking the nationwide matriculation examinations by which university entrance is decided. To attain the national standards, the school participates in many nation-wide projects, such as an immersion programme in Germany, and provides a wide range of courses, not only related to the science and mathematics curriculum, but also in languages, social sciences and other subjects.



### **Students learning**

The students in Olari School are active, friendly and confident. They speak fluent English even though they only start learning the subject in grade 4. They are eager to learn, love reading and enjoy taking part in discussions. They often hand in their assignments in digital format. In general, they seem to feel less pressure than Hong Kong students.

### **Reflection**

Finnish education has a strong focus on equal opportunity for everyone, from the smartest students to those with special needs. The inclusion programmes are particularly successful in catering for SEN students. Another important element of the education system is trust. Based on trust, there is no appraisal system and few complaints from parents. Teachers can pay more attention to pedagogies and curriculum design, and spend more time motivating students and facilitating their learning.



# After School Learning Programmes

## Arrki School of Architecture

### Caritas Lok Kan School



Arrki is a school of architecture offering long-term programmes, workshops and courses for children and young people. It believes that architecture is a form of art bridging the humanities and sciences. As a discipline, it enables students to develop key competences in complex problem solving, creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration.

During this visit, we gained firsthand experience of Arrki. The CEO, Ms. Pihla Meskanen, encouraged us to play a little game, using gummy candy and toothpicks to build triangles and quadrilateral shapes, and test the structures. The game was simple and fun. We all had a good time and experienced learning by doing.



In our experience of Arrki, we had the same impression as with our visits to different educational institutions. The Finnish education system focuses on the participation of students, learning from play and hands-on learning. There is a strong belief that the foundation of all learning is one's own interest and desire to learn. This means that children are encouraged to make discoveries by themselves, instead of being given answers by adults. The focus of learning is on actively trying and doing things, and finding the joy of discovery. This led us to think about the differences between the Hong Kong and Finnish education systems. What is the difference between Hong Kong's expectation of education and that of Finland? What we can do to support our children in becoming life long, happy learners?





## *Rhenish Church Grace School*

The Arkki School of Architecture was founded in Finland in 1993. Arkki education empowers children and young people by providing them with advanced innovative skills. It holistically blends the cognitive, behavioural, functional and technical aspects of education. Arkki's objective is to enable

its students to become innovative influencers of the future through architectural education that supports inter-disciplinary learning about a wide range of different phenomena. Arkki International Ltd. is now licensing the Arkki education concept and offering Finnish educational know-how and learning solutions globally.

The school believes that play is a vital way in which children explore the world and learn naturally. One of the main goals of architectural education is to enable children to observe and





# After School Learning Programmes

## Arrki School of Architecture

evaluate their surroundings. The main teaching focus is on encouraging students to discover and learn on their own by active, personal and three-dimensional materials. Through play and study, children obtain answers to the questions puzzling them. Their experiments and successful achievements generate a strong interest in their surroundings.

These pictures show one of our activities in Arkki School, designed to illustrate the concept of learning by doing. As Confucius put it, "Tell me and I forget. Show me and I remember. Let me do and I understand". We believe that an effective education is not just about the outcomes, it is also about the process.



# The Finnish Education System

*Hing Tak School*

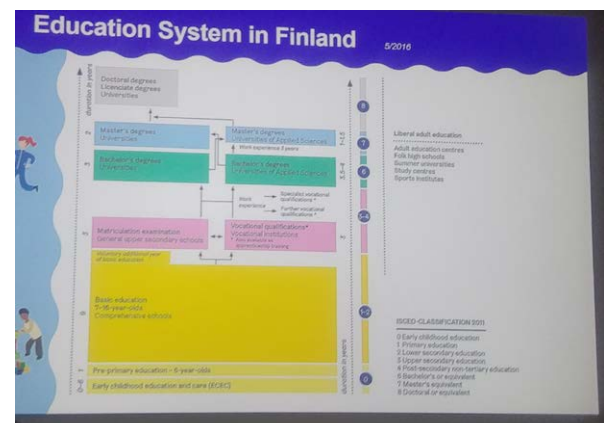
*S.K.H. Ling Oi Primary School*



The Finnish education system is composed of a compulsory nine-year basic education, catering for all between the ages of 7 and 16 years. Its goal is for everyone to have an equal opportunity to receive high quality education. It also provides adequate, on-time support to students with special needs. The focus in education is on learning rather than testing.

The only national examination, the matriculation examination, is held at the end of general upper secondary education.

The education system includes early childhood education, preschool education, comprehensive education, upper secondary education and higher education. Preschool education to upper secondary education is free of charge, as is higher education for the most part.



## Early childhood education

Early childhood education is organized in day care centres and family day care and includes a lot of playtime and outdoor activities. Children receive at least 20 hours of early childhood education per week, more if their parents are working or studying. The goal is to support children's development and well-being.

## Preschool education

Children must attend preschool education for one year before compulsory education begins. Preschool education usually starts when the child is six and is organised from Monday to Friday, four hours a day.

## Comprehensive education

Comprehensive education includes nine grades and normally starts during the year the child turns seven. It ends when the child has completed the entire comprehensive education syllabus or ten years from the beginning of compulsory education.



# The Finnish Education System



## Upper secondary education

The most common options after comprehensive school are upper secondary school and vocational education. Upper secondary schools provide all-round education for two to four years, depending on the student. Students usually take the matriculation examination at the end of upper secondary school and are then eligible to apply to universities, universities of applied sciences or upper secondary

school based vocational education.

## Higher education

In Finland, higher education is provided by universities and universities of applied sciences.

## Finnish education and Hong Kong education

Finnish people have high degree of trust in teachers. Greater autonomy gives teachers space for their teaching. In Hong Kong the trust between schools and government is much weaker and the government uses a lot of measurements to monitor schools.



Teaching in Finland is based on the interest and ability of every child. Considerable emphasis is placed on preschool learning and teachers listen to children to understand what they like and how they learn. Students have choices in their learning. In Hong Kong, all students study a similar curriculum and their ultimate goal is always to get good results.



Finnish people believe that less is more, e.g. for homework, school hours and examinations. On the other hand, Hong Kong people believe that more is more. Some believe that learning is about work and not for fun.

# The Finnish Education System

*Tai Po Old Market Public School*

*Tung Tak School*

## Finnish Education Strives To Build Trust

The Finnish education system does not seek to create an environment of competition. The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture trusts the schools and the work they do leads to a wide and shared sense of confidence. The ministry does not undertake inspections of schools. Principals don't use lesson observations to evaluate teacher's performance because they believe that it's the culture for teachers to provide quality education. Teachers are professional. They don't compete against each other since there are no rankings of teachers. They love their jobs and their schools. Moreover, there is only one school in each region which reduces competition between schools. They have no stress in recruiting students. In this atmosphere of trust, all teachers and schools show enthusiasm for teaching every student.



## Equal Opportunities For All

When we visited different schools in Finland, we did not hear about the theory of the Happy School. In Finnish education, students are provided with equal opportunities. One of the principals in Finland told us, 'When there is equality in education, students will be happy.' Finnish education is not only about a fair admission process but also about how students can be treated with equity through the learning process. Each one of them can make different choices in terms of learning styles, ways of assessment and the curriculum. Students, therefore, have opportunities to achieve what they want, with regard to their potential and personal values. No child is left behind in this education system. As one of the Finnish principals says, 'The aim of Finnish education is to allow students to pursue meaningful lives.'

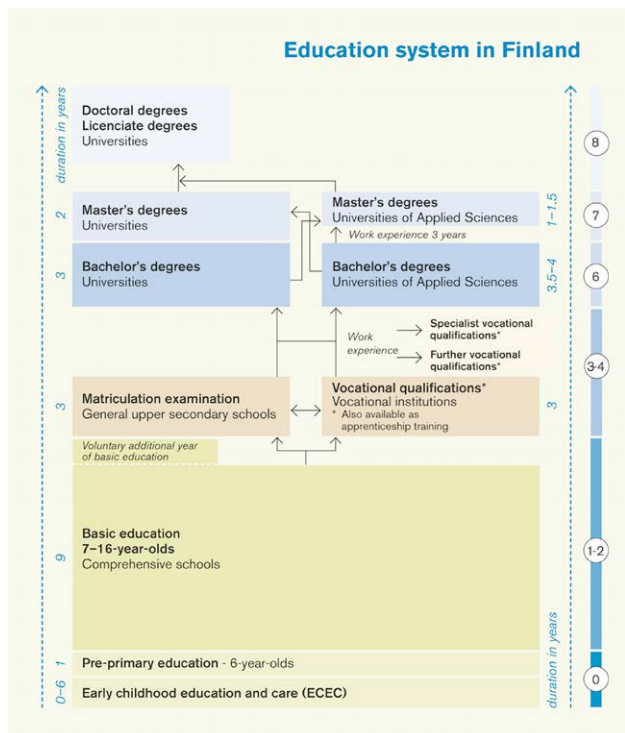


# The Finnish Education System

## An Education System That Nurtures Creativity

In the field trip, we could see that Finnish education provides many hands-on subjects, such as Visual Arts, Music, Home Economics and Fashion Design. Other parts of the curriculum, like Forest Education and Life Skills, are implemented in order to help students live their own meaningful lives. Students in Finland finish school at two o'clock and can then make use of the time to explore their surroundings and read. Learning in Finland is stress-free as there is only one examination each year for students below the age of fifteen. Students feel safe in trying to put what they have learnt into practice. All in all, it is clear to us that Finnish education

helps students prepare for the world. With this as a goal, the Ministry of Education in Finland has created an educational system that develops everyone's potential by teaching them life-long skills, community skills and creativity. Students can therefore be more active and confident in the future.



To take a broad view of education in Hong Kong and Finland, the humanistic culture, geographic settings, social lives, and educational atmospheres are different. This field trip provided us a valuable opportunity to rethink and re-evaluate what education is.



# Reflections on general aspects of Finland

## Finnish Culture



*C & MA Sun Kei Primary School (Ping Shek)*

*HKMLC Ming Tao Primary School*

*Man Kiu Association Primary School*

Without a doubt, we thoroughly enjoyed our recent exchange trip to Finland with the Subsidized Primary Schools Council. We have come to an understanding of why Finland is ranked as the world's happiest country in a United Nations report published this year.

### Uniqueness of Finnish

Finland is one of the most ethnically and culturally homogeneous countries in Europe. In spite of this, Finns have been quick to incorporate ideas and impulses from Russia, elsewhere in Scandinavia and continental Europe, particularly in the arts, music, architecture and the sciences. In each case, however, these influences have evolved into a form that is typically Finnish. Despite having strong neighbours to both east and west, Finland has remained distinctively different. The Finnish language is part of the Finno-Ugric language group. It belongs to the Uralic language family which makes it quite unique since most European languages are part of the Indo-European language tree.

### Experiencing Nature

It is easy to enjoy nature in the Land of a Thousand Lakes, as the country holds the record for having the most lakes and islands. The Finns feel so strongly about spending time outside in a way that does not harm nature or others that they have created "everyman's rights" (jokamiehen oikeudet), a set of rules that actually form an integral part of Finnish culture and legislation. According to "everyman's rights", Finland is one of the best places in the world for spotting the aurora borealis.





# Finnish Culture

## Experiencing Culture

There are many cultural opportunities in this vast country, including theatre, cinemas and museums. There are approximately 1,000 museums in Finland, though 700 of them are open only in the summer. A museum's focus can be art, history, nature, a certain individual or a speciality field. During the summer, people have the opportunity to visit the country's many open-air museums and more expansive museum areas that include entire buildings, like a traditional Finnish farm house.

Saunas are a way of life in Finland, where they were invented over 2000 years ago. They can be found in apartments and summer houses, in public swimming pools, gyms and hotels, on boats and buses ... even inside Parliament. There are more saunas than cars in Finland.



## Trust and Respect

Finland has one of the lowest levels of corruption in the world. It has a high degree of social trust, and respect for agreements and keeping one's word are deeply rooted in the culture.

Words cannot express how much we learned both personally and professionally through this trip. We were especially impressed by the importance of Trust, Respect and Peace in Finland.



# Finnish Culture

*Po Leung Kuk Leung Chow Shun Kam Primary School  
Taoist Ching Chung Primary School (Wu King Estate)*



Labour Day is an annual holiday to celebrate the achievements of workers. Labour Day has its origins in the labour union movement, specifically the eight-hour day movement, which advocated eight hours for work, eight hours for recreation, and eight hours for rest.

For most countries, Labour Day is synonymous with, or linked with, International Workers' Day on 1 May. Other countries celebrate Labour Day on different dates, often with special significance for the labour movement in each country. Labour Day is a public holiday in many countries.

Every year on April 30 and May 1, Finland seems to go crazy as people celebrate May Day. We roamed the Finnish capital to record the boisterous celebration in pictures.

May 1 is Labour Day in Finland but the Finns also see it as a chance to celebrate the arrival of spring. Numerous festive student traditions are also associated with this date. In fact, just about everyone gets in on the action – May Day and the preceding evening represent the biggest party of the year.

April 30 and May 1 are called Vappu in Finnish, which is an official language in Finland. The English name is Walpurgis, referring to the feast of Saint Walpurga. All over Finland, people dust off their white, secondary-school graduation caps and wear them around town, while the parks are filled with picnicking revellers of all ages.





# Pallas-Yllästunturi National Park

*Chinese Methodist School, Tanner Hill  
Tsuen Wan Chiu Chow Public School*

## 1. Background

- There are 40 national parks in Finland. The Pallas-Yllästunturi National Park is the third-largest, covering 1,020 square kilometres (394 square miles), and is by far the most popular park in the country.
- A total of 3.2 million people visited the national parks in 2018.
- This national park was established in 2005 and is located in the Lapland region, in the municipalities of Enontekiö, Kittilä, Kolari and Muonio.
- Most of the park consists of primeval forests and various types of muskeg.
- In 2016, the park's air quality measurement station reported that it had the cleanest air on the planet.



## 2. Feelings after visiting the National Park

- After visiting this park, we felt that the Finnish government has made a big effort to conserve the natural environment.
- The government also attaches considerable importance to the sustainable development of the country park.
- The country's citizens love their motherland's natural resources. They try not to destroy the environment.





# ***Pallas-Yllästunturi National Park***

## **3. Limitations in Hong Kong :**

- As we know, Hong Kong is a much smaller place. There are no national parks, only country parks and playgrounds. It is difficult for teachers to organise life-wide learning activities for students outside school, because country parks or open areas suitable for outside learning activities are inadequate in Hong Kong.
- The facilities in country parks are limited when compared with those in Finland. We found that the government does not do much planning on how to conserve the environment. The management of the country parks is not perfect.
- For example, the Shing Mun Reservoir Country Park is a good place for hiking and sight-seeing. But nowadays, problems with the large numbers of monkeys make visitors reluctant to go there. Teachers would not take students since they may be scared by the hungry monkeys.
- We hope our students learn to conserve the environment and enjoy, respect and coexist effectively with nature.







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