

A photograph of the Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights) in shades of green and blue, dancing across a dark sky. Below the lights, a sunset or sunrise is visible over a body of water, with a dark silhouette of a forest on the left. The text is overlaid in white.

The Finnish Education System

-

Less is more



Finland

Population 5.5 million

Surface 390 908 km²

GDP per capita 40 638 EUR



Finland has

187,888
lakes



Finland is the **happiest country** in the world



Finns use the **most mobile broadband data** in the EU at

11 GB
per month



Finns **consume the most coffee** in the world :

12.2 kg
per person a year



FINLAND

THE HAPPIEST COUNTRY
IN THE WORLD - AGAIN!

TRUST
LUOTTAMUS

FREEDOM
VAPAAUS

NATURE
LUONTO

MINÄKÖ
ONNELLINEN?*)

EDUCATION
KOULUTUS

EASY
DAILY LIFE
HELPPO ARKI

*) ME,
HAPPY?

EQUALITY
TASA-ARVO

SISU

NO
JOO.*)

HONESTY
REHELLISYYS

SAUNA

*) WELL,
YES.

HEALTH CARE
TERVEYDENHUOLTO





High performing Finland

High performing Finland

| | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Best governance in the world #1 (2020) <i>The Legatum Prosperity Index 2020</i></p> | <p>Low corruption #3 (2020) <i>Corruption Perceptions Index 2020</i></p> | <p>Gender Equal country #3 (2020) <i>Global Gender Gap Index 2020</i></p> |
| <p>Primary education and health #1 (2017) <i>The global competitiveness Index 2017</i></p> | <p>Higher education & Training #1 (2018) <i>The global competitiveness Index 2018</i></p> | <p>Pisa results in the top 10 since 2003 <i>Better Life Index: Education</i></p> |
| <p>Equality among children #2 (2016) <i>Unicef - Fairness for Children Index 2016</i></p> | <p>Mothers' and children's well-being #1 (2015) <i>State of the World's Mothers 2015</i></p> | <p>Most secure childhood in the world #3 (2020) <i>End of Childhood, Report 2020</i></p> |
| <p>Happiest country in the world #1 (2022) <i>World Happiness Report 2022</i></p> | <p>Digital Skills # 1 (2020) <i>Global Innovation Index 2020</i></p> | <p>Best country for business # 4 (2020) <i>Best European countries for business 2020</i></p> |

History of the Finnish education system



Until 1970 – a strongly centralized & inequitable education system with highly variable teachers



1970 – 1980 – Redevelopment from the bottom up & centralized reform of the comprehensive school system with highly educated teachers (entrance exams for teachers!)



1980 – 2000 – Decentralisation of the comprehensive school system with large autonomy for the local authorities to organize schools and education processes (end of inspection!)

History of the Finnish education system



2000 - 2010 – Reform with more emphasis on development goals, pupils' rights and responsibility



2010 - 2022 – A student-oriented and flexible system based on empowerment (student counselling, tutoring and special needs education).



Equal and qualitative comprehensive education at relatively moderate costs (5.3% GDP in 2017)

Government expenditure on education, total (% of GDP) - Austria, Germany, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Italy

UNESCO Institute for Statistics (uis.unesco.org). Data as of September 2021.





Central Steering
vs
Local decisions

Central steering

Ministry of Education and Culture

- **Education policy**
- **Preparation of legislation**
- **State funding**

Finnish National Agency for Education

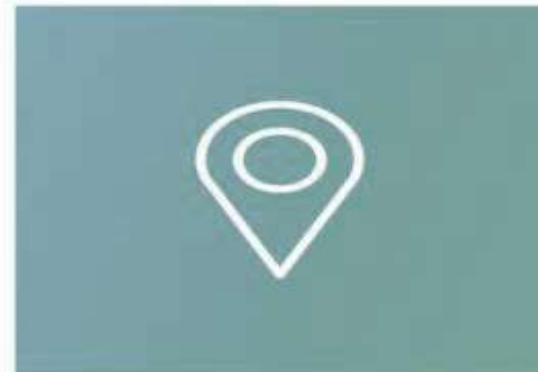
- **National development agency**
- **National core curricula & qualification requirements**
- **Support for evidence-based policy-making**
- **Support for reform and development**
- **Services for learners**

Central steering and local decisions



Central / national

- Educational priorities
- Minimum time allocation
- National core curricula
- State subsidies



Local / municipalities

- Educational priorities
- Local curricula
- Allocation of subsidies
- Class size
- Recruitment



Education is
publicly funded

Expenditure in Education per student

- Pre-primary education 6285 EURO
- Basic education 9607 EURO
- General upper secondary 7939 EURO
- Vocational upper secondary 10443 EURO

Education developed in partnerships

National
authorities

Local authorities

Teachers' union


Social partners

Parents

Pupils and students

Research
institutions

Relevant
stakeholders



The basic principles of the Finnish Education System

Trust and
Responsibility

Free
education
at all levels

High
Educational
Autonomy

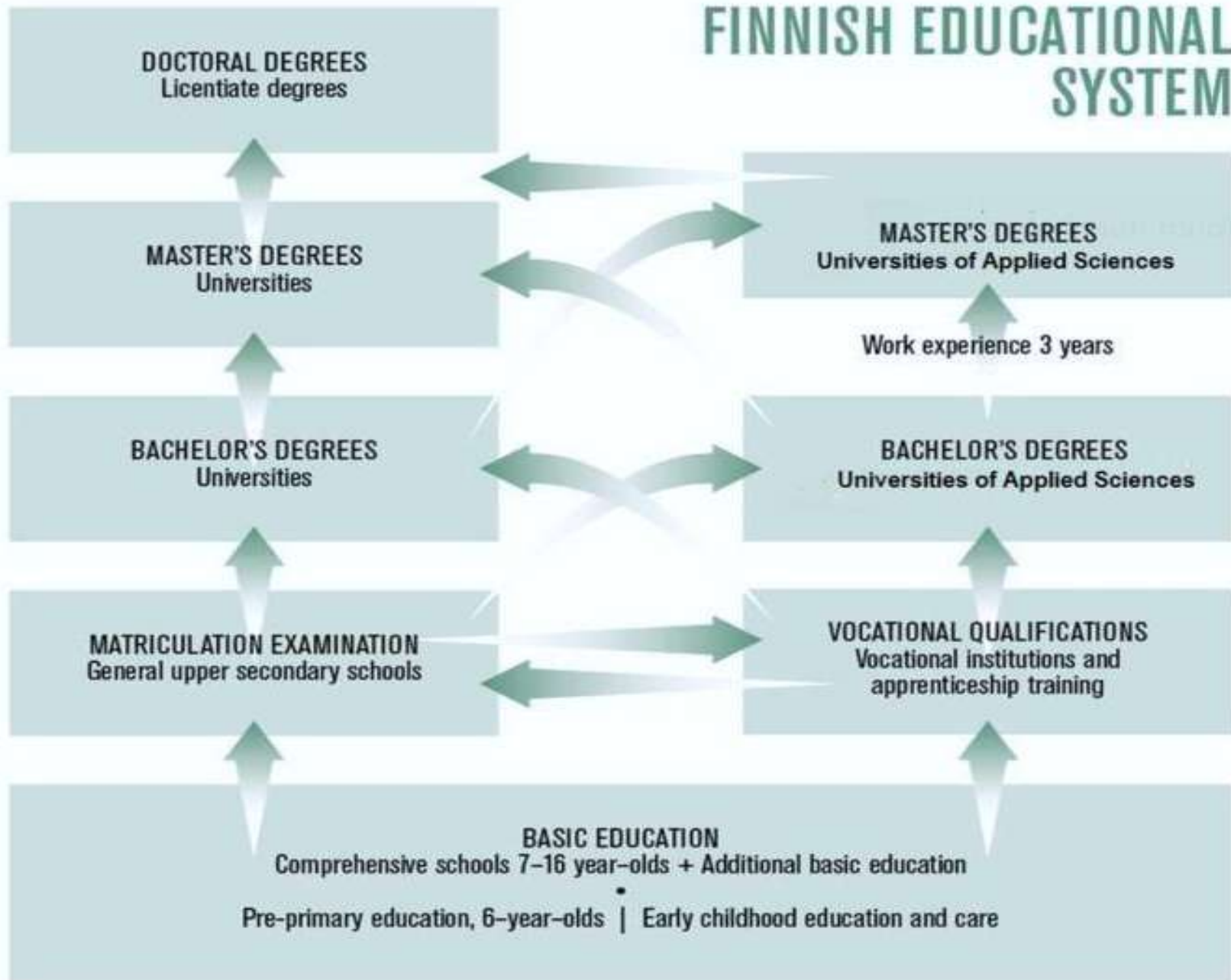
No national
testing &
No ranking

Flexibility

Highly
educated
teachers

Equality &
Support

FINNISH EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM



NO BIGGIE,
BUT IF HE
MISSES PROBLEM 9,
WE'LL PULL YOUR
ACCREDITATION AND
YOU'LL BRING SHAME
ON YOUR COMMUNITY...

NO PRESSURE,
BUT IF HE
MISSES PROBLEM 9,
YOU'RE OUT
OF A TEACHING
JOB!!

DAVID,
IT'S PROBLEM 9!
YOU KNOW
PROBLEM 9!
RELAX!
RELAX!!

THE
JOY OF
LEARNING



Comprehensive School education

- a nine-year comprehensive curriculum for the whole age group (school year is the same everywhere, but timetable varies)
- teaching is provided by schools near the home (no competition and non-selective)
- there are no national tests, no degrees and no ranking; a final certificate will be given for completing the nine years.
- teaching, textbooks, teaching materials, school transport and school meals are all free = equal access to high quality education
- Educational support and student wellbeing is extremely important. Low drop-out rate (0,3 %).

No child
left behind

IS THIS THE
TEST TO TEST
US FOR THE TEST
TO SEE IF WE
ARE READY FOR
THE TEST?

“Less is More”

- Less instruction hours (3-5 lessons of 45min) and more breaks -> Means more time for reflection
- Less testing (assessment is part of the daily work) -> Means more time for learning
- Less topics in the curriculum -> Means more in-depth learning
- Less homework -> Means more free time to explore
- Less students in a classroom -> Means more care and individual attention

Comprehensive School Education

Lessons per week at different grades

| grade | lessons per week |
|-------|------------------|
| 1 - 2 | 19 |
| 3 | 22 |
| 4 | 24 |
| 5 - 6 | 25 |
| 7 - 8 | 29 |
| 9 | 30 |

their 9-year basic education. It is more than 1100 hours less than the OECD average. ●

Comprehensive School Education

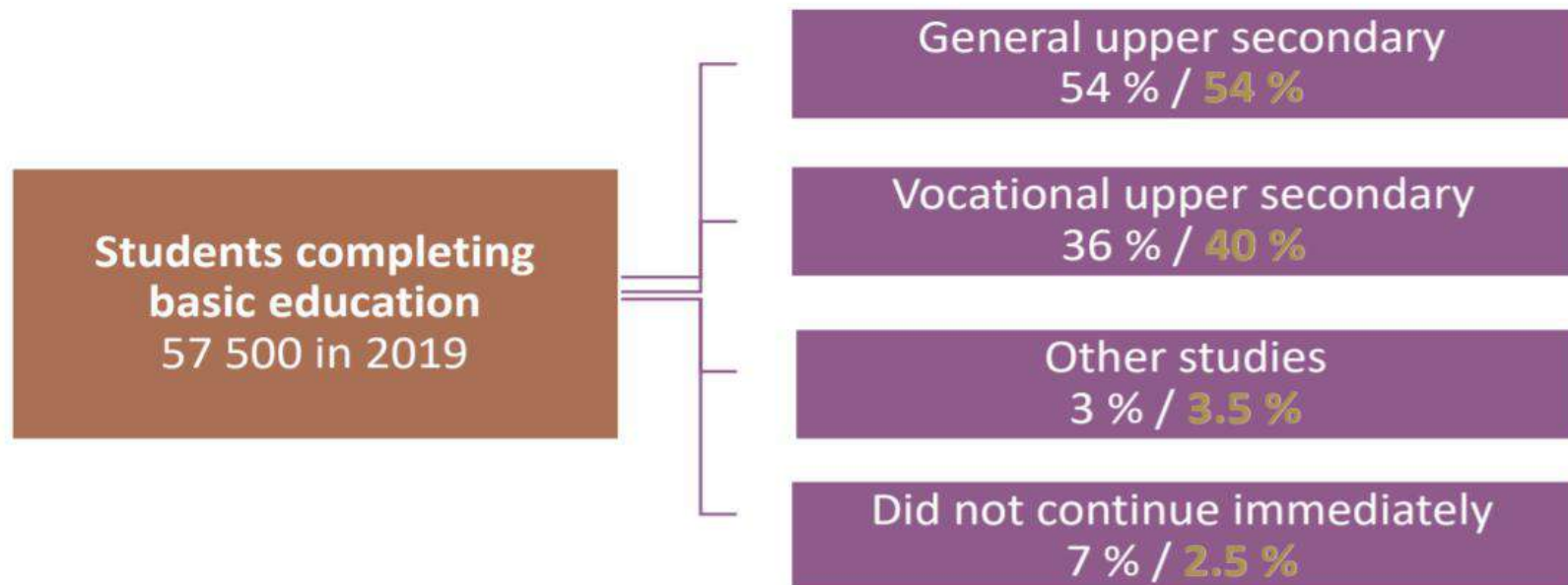
National minimum time allocation sample of subjects (annual weekly lessons¹)

| Forms | 1–2 | 3–6 | 7–9 | Total |
|------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| Mother tongue & literature | 14 | 18 | 10 | 42 |
| Mathematics | 6 | 15 | 11 | 32 |
| A language (1st foreign language) | 2 | 9 | 7 | 18 |
| B language (2nd national language) | – | 2 | 4 | 6 |

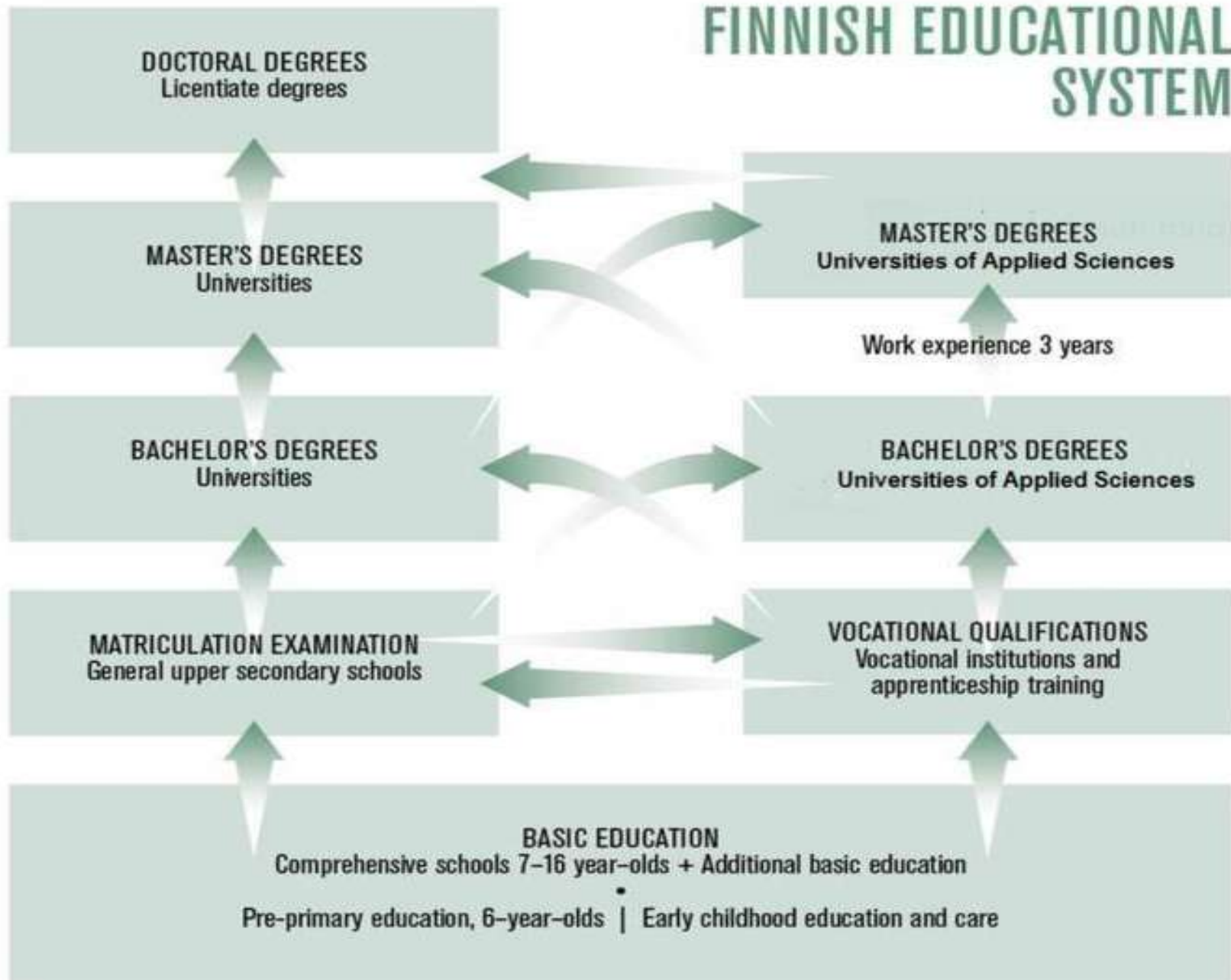
| Forms | 1–6 | 7–9 | Total |
|----------------------------------------------|-----|-----------|-------|
| Environment and science | 14 | 17 | 31 |
| History & civics | 5 | 7 | 12 |
| Arts, crafts & sports | | | 62 |
| ¹ Total annual no of lessons x 38 | | Total min | 224 |

Comprehensive School Education

What happens immediately after compulsory education? 2001 / 2019



FINNISH EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM





Upper Secondary School Education

Upper Secondary School Education

About 54% of students go to upper secondary school (grade marks-based admission criteria – high competition especially in the cities)

3-years personalized and flexible program leading to Matriculation Examination (individual curriculum for all students, everyone studies according to his/her own study plan)

| | |
|-----------------------------------------|-------|
| Compulsory courses | 47–51 |
| Minimum total of specialisation courses | 10 |
| Minimum total number of courses | 75 |

Upper Secondary School Education

| Subject | Compulsory courses | Specialisation courses |
|------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Mother tongue & literature | 6 | 3 |
| A-language | 6 | 2 |
| B-language | 5 | 2 |
| Other languages | | 8+8 |
| Mathematics | 6-10 | 2-3 |
| Environment & science | 5 | 16 |
| Humanities & social sciences | 11 | 14 |
| Arts, crafts & sports | 4-6 | 7 |

Upper Secondary School Education Matriculation Exam

Minimum 4 tests

Mother tongue (Finnish or Swedish)

Foreign Language

Mathematics

General studies (humanities)

One or more tests possible (biannual)

-> Important to get to university



Vocational School Education

Vocational School Education

About 40% of students go to vocational school education

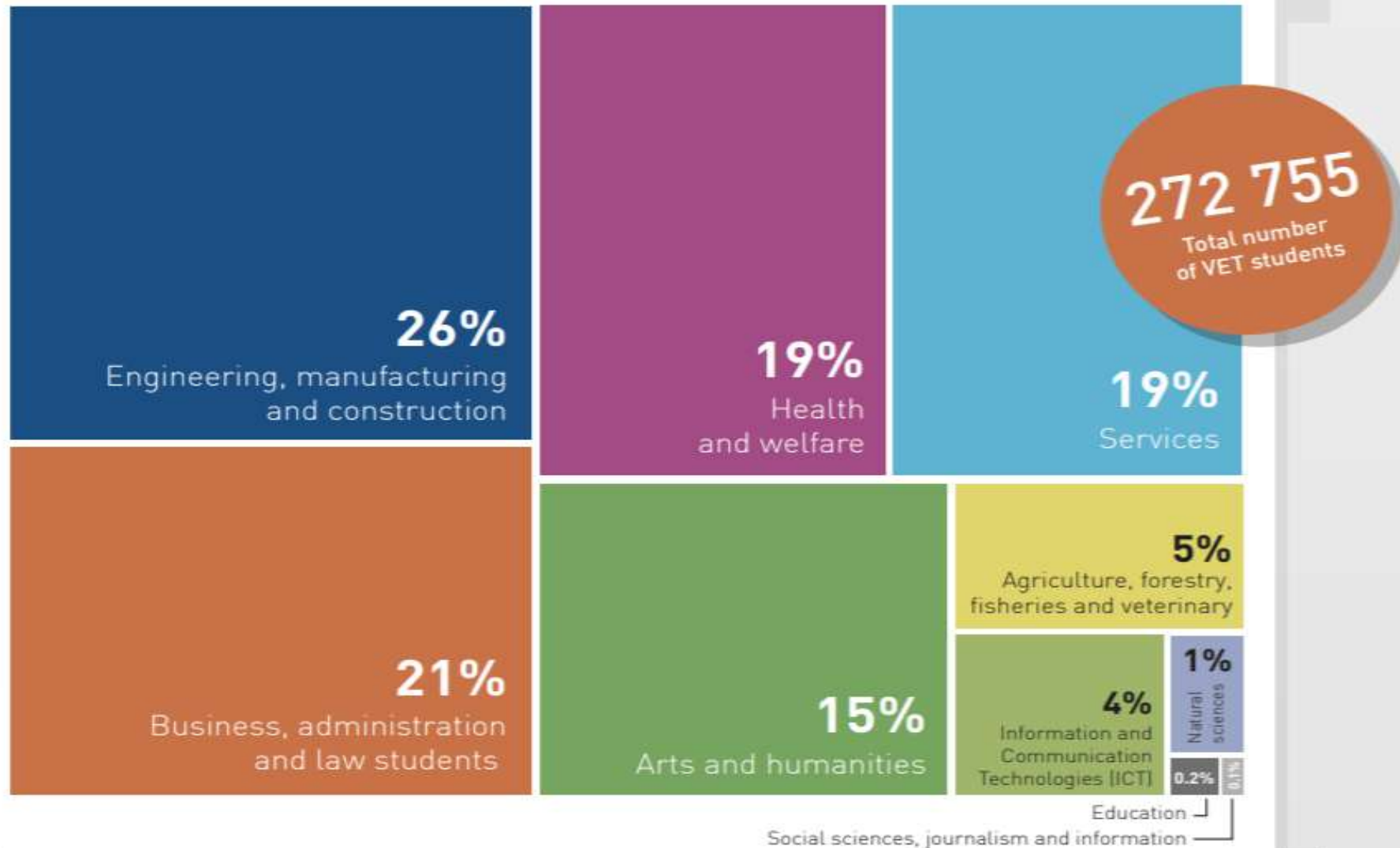
- ✓ A 3-years flexible and personalized work-based program leading to a vocational qualification (NO matriculation exam) in close cooperation with the labor market.

Individual curriculum for all students, everyone studies according to his/her own study plan (total 180 units):

- ✓ 35 units general or common studies
- ✓ 145 units for specific studies and internships

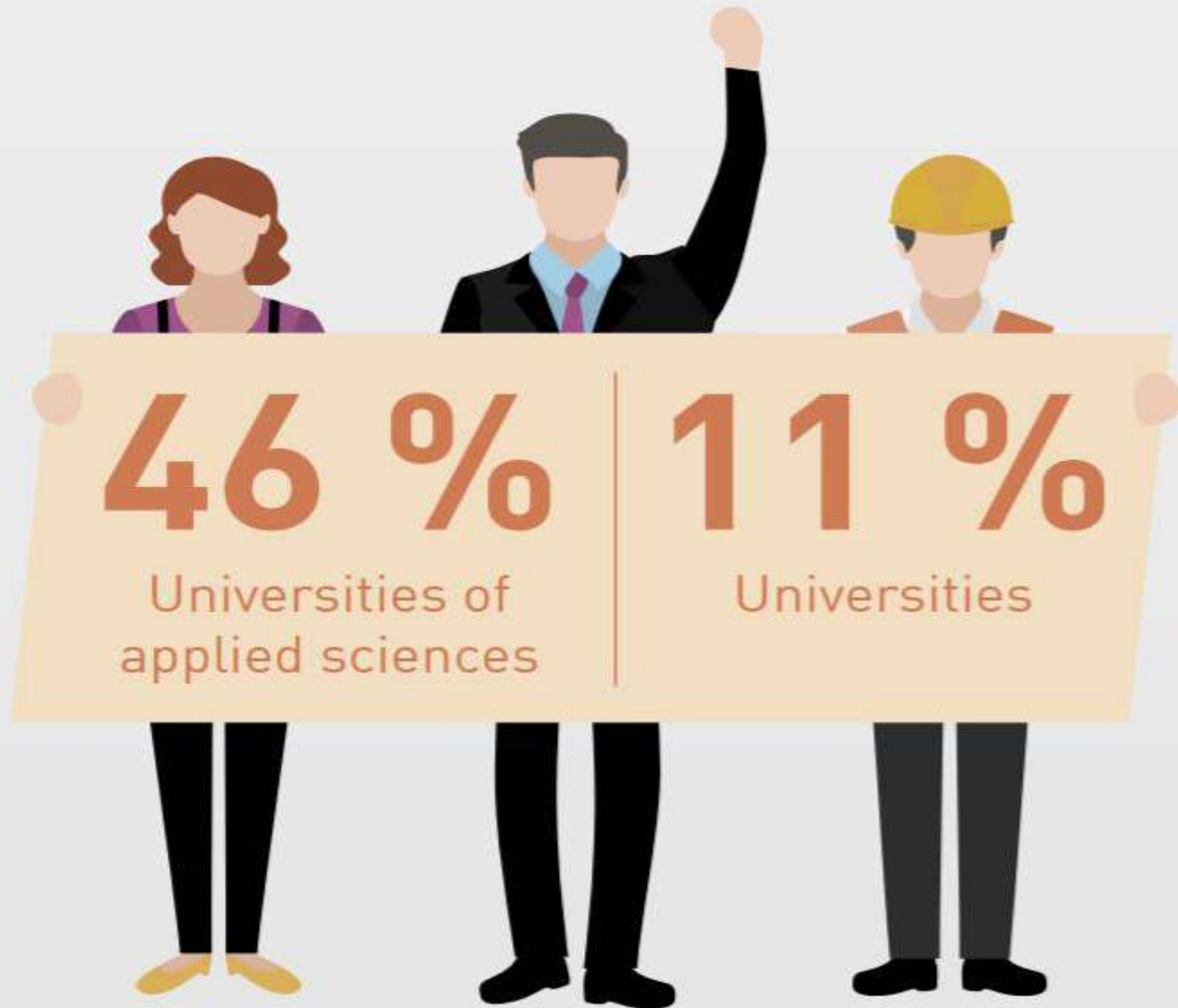
Free for all students, except books and materials

Distribution of VET students by field of study 2017 (%)



Open pathways from VET to higher education

The proportion of new student with a VET background in 2017



Finnish teachers are trusted professionals

Admission rate to teacher education in 2016:



Number of applicants to teacher education in 2016

Vocational teacher
education

4 100



Kindergarten teacher
education

3 000



Class teacher
education

6 800



Finnish teachers are trusted professionals

Kindergarten teachers
180 ECTS (3 years)

Class teachers
300 ECTS (5 years)

Subject teachers
300 ECTS (5–6 years)

**Teachers
of vocational
studies:**

**Master's , Bachelor's
+ work experience+
pedagogical studies
of 60 ECTS**

(1 year)

Principals:
teacher education
+ e.g. certificate
in educational
administration

Finnish teachers are trusted professionals

- Highly qualified and competent teachers & principals -> Everyone has a masters' degree in basic and upper secondary school education.
- Teachers and principals are highly respected as practitioners and researchers
- Teachers and principals enjoy a high amount of educational autonomy and freedom in the classroom (own teaching methods, teaching materials, student assessment and NO inspection)

Finnish teachers are trusted professionals

Salary is not the reason to become a teacher

Average actual monthly salary in the municipal sector 3 200 €

* lower secondary subject teacher
Source: Statistics Finland



Finnish teachers are trusted professionals

Teacher and principal salaries in Finland

(permanent contract, average actual gross salaries per month 2018)

- kindergarten teacher 2 700 €
- class teacher, primary education 3 700 €
- subject teacher, lower secondary 4 100 €
- subject teacher, general upper secondary 4 600 €
- vocational studies teacher (VET) 4 300 €
- principal, basic education 5 800 €
- principal, general upper secondary 6 000 €

Average salary in the municipal sector in Finland 2018: 3 200 €

Finnish Education in international comparison

**Instruction
time low**

**Differences
between schools
small**

**Girls outperform
boys**

**Moderate
costs**

**Socio-economic
effect moderate**

**Teachers feel highly
valued**

Finnish teachers are trusted professionals

Teachers' statutory teaching hours (45-minute lessons)

| | |
|----------------------------------|-------|
| Class (primary) teachers | 24 |
| Lower secondary subject teachers | 18-24 |
| Upper secondary subject teachers | 16-23 |

More information

Check out more via the official website of the Finnish agency for education

<https://www.oph.fi/en/statistics-and-publications/publications>



Thank You!