

## ***Book Review***

### **What Are Finnish Teachers Made Of? A Glance at Teacher Education in Finland Yesterday & Today**

**Authors:** Merja Paksuniemi, Satu Uusiautti and Kaarina Määttä (University of Lapland, Rovaniemi, Finland)

Finnish pupils are the best readers in the world—Thanks to their highly-educated teachers.

In their new book “What Are Finnish Teachers Made Of? A Glance at Teacher Education in Finland Yesterday and Today,” by Merja Paksuniemi, Ph.D, Satu Uusiautti, Ph.D, and Kaarina Määttä, Ph.D, creditably describe the Finnish school system and teacher education all the way from year 1866. Already in the 1920s, Finland understood that teachers had to be educated for the need of the whole country, and therefore, teacher education was also started in the Teacher Training College of Tornio, in North-Finland. Today, the University of Lapland in Rovaniemi educates teachers in this region.

Finnish pupils’ success in international PISA comparisons startled not only the Finns but educators and authorities across the world at the beginning of the 21st century. Especially, their reading skills were the top of the world. I worked as the Minister of Education of Finland for four years starting from 1999. I had to often think about answers to the pleasant questions of where these fine results come from and what the secret of Finland is.

Paksuniemi, Uusiautti, and Määttä’s book gives the answers. An important step was to establish a teacher training college in the far north, too. The basic ideology in Finland is to provide education for all, regardless of the place of residence, economic or social status, gender, age, or talent.

Teachers’ work and education have always been respected in Finland. The most talented youth have pursued and become selected in the teacher’s profession. Earlier teachers were, indeed, called as “the whole nations’ enlighteners.” Still today, those so-called straight-A girls often become teachers.

The most important goal of the teacher’s work and basic education is to teach children to read, write, and do math, raise them into good citizens and hopefully into happy people, too. Finnish teachers have adopted this goal, and according to the international comparison studies, the goal has been reached when it comes to the core subjects. In addition, health education is an independent school subject at every school level in Finland enhancing learning of personal health-related knowledge and skills.

Education in the beginning of the 20th century aimed at teetotalism, discipline, and decency. Today, teachers’ work is directed by the joy of learning and pedagogical love. I recommend the book for everyone interested in finding out reasons behind the good success of Finland in PISA comparisons year after year.

*Review provided by Dr. Maija Rask, PhD, former Minister of Education, Finland*