How Far Can We Learn Anything Practical from the Study of Foreign Systems of Education? Finland and the Pisa Model

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Abstract

Following Michael Sadler's interpretation of education as a complex cultural institution, this paper attempts to offer some thoughts on the success of the Finnish educational system in PISA, but also for its average standing in the IEA examinations. It focuses on the scale of reading comprehension and provides a pedagogical and cultural account for the outstanding performance of Finnish school, while it also examines the role of school autonomy and community support as a factor of achieving better learning outcomes.

In its final section the paper puts forward an overall critique of PISA methodology and rationale from a comparative perspective arguing for its political rather than pedagogical character.

The following quotation of Sir Michael Sadler's speech in 1900 is a must in every course book of comparative education.

In studying foreign systems of education, we should not forget that the things outside the schools matter even more than the things inside the schools, and govern and interpret the things inside. We cannot wander at pleasure

among the educational systems of the world, like a child strolling through a garden, and pick off a flower from one bush and some leaves from another, and then expect that if we stick what we have gathered into the soil at home, we shall have a living plant.

(Sadler, 1900)

Sadler's message is clear: education, formal education included, is a cultural institution (in the sociological meaning of the word). It is an impossible, even a dysfunctional attempt, to try to implant foreign systems whatsoever in one's own cultural environment. But we can get fresh insights and new ideas from them to better understand our own systems (Raivola, 1984). However, many politicians in countries, which did not do too well in 2000 and 2003 measurements of PISA, are ready to make hasty political conclusions concerning the innovation of their school systems. Finland, Korea or Hong Kong seem to be promised lands of education to be imitated as far as possible.

As we can see in the table, the achievement of the Finnish teenagers in reading comprehension was excellent. Comparing the fifth percentiles of the mean scores proves that the good result is not produced at the expense of slow learners; or the other way round: at the expense of the brightest students: the mean of the top five percent is third highest among the participating countries. The conclusion is that it is not necessary to make a choice between high quality or equality for the basic philosophy of the education system. Both are possible at the same time.

FIGURE 1

Mean score and variation in student performance on the reading scale.

Country	All students				Percentiles			
	Mean score		Standard deviation		5th		95th	
	Mean	S.E.	S.D.	S.E.	Score	S.E.	Score	S.E.
OECD Countries								
Australia	525	(2,1)	97	(1,5)	352	(4,8)	673	(3,1)
Austria	491	(3,8)	103	(2,3)	313	(7,5)	646	(4,7)
Belgium	507	(2,6)	110	(2,1)	300	(8,4)	662	(2,6)
Canada	528	(1,7)	89	(0,9)	373	(3,1)	663	(2,5)
Czech Republic	489	(3,5)	96	(2,4)	320	(9,5)	636	(4,0)
Denmark	492	(2,8)	88	(1,8)	338	(6,6)	627	(3,9)
Finland	543	(1,6)	81	(1,1)	400	(4,8)	666	(2,5)
France	496	(2,7)	97	(2,2)	320	(7,7)	641	(3,3)
Germany	491	(3,4)	109	(2,3)	295	(6,0)	652	(3,9)

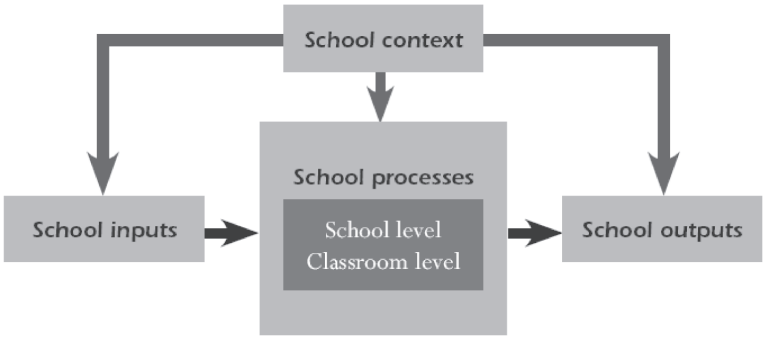
Greece	472	(4,1)	105	(2,0)	288	(6,2)	631	(5,4)
Hungary	482	(2,5)	92	(1,8)	324	(6,0)	625	(5,0)
Iceland	492	(1,6)	98	(1,4)	316	(6,4)	640	(3,6)
Ireland	515	(2,6)	87	(1,7)	364	(7,3)	647	(3,3)
Italy	476	(3,0)	101	(2,2)	295	(8,6)	627	(2,6)
Japan	498	(3,9)	106	(2,5)	310	(7,3)	652	(4,7)
Korea	534	(3,1)	83	(2,0)	393	(6,0)	660	(5,0)
Luxembourg	479	(1,5)	100	(1,0)	302	(3,8)	627	(2,7)
Mexico	400	(4,1)	95	(1,9)	238	(6,1)	552	(5,5)
Netherlands	513	(2,9)	85	(2,0)	369	(6,4)	645	(4,2)
New Zealand	522	(2,5)	105	(1,5)	338	(6,2)	682	(3,4)
Norway	500	(2,8)	102	(1,8)	321	(6,1)	656	(3,9)
Poland	497	(2,9)	96	(1,8)	330	(6,3)	645	(4,4)
Portugal	478	(3,7)	93	(2,1)	311	(6,6)	617	(3,9)
Slovak Republic	469	(3,1)	93	(2,0)	310	(5,7)	613	(3,5)
Spain	481	(2,6)	95	(1,5)	313	(5,8)	625	(3,1)
Sweden	514	(2,4)	96	(1,9)	349	(6,0)	660	(3,6)
Switzerland	499	(3,3)	95	(1,9)	330	(5,8)	643	(5,0)
Turkey	441	(5,8)	95	(4,1)	291	(6,1)	608	(19,4)
United States	495	(3,2)	101	(1,4)	319	(6,6)	651	(4,5)
OECD total	***488***	***(1,2)***	***104***	***(0,7)***	***305***	***(2,2)***	***646***	***(1,3)***
OECD average	***494***	***(0,6)***	***100***	***(0,4)***	***318***	***(1,4)***	***646***	***(0,7)***
Partner Countries								
Brazil	403	(4,6)	111	(2,3)	214	(7,3)	581	(6,9)
Hong Kong-China	510	(3,7)	85	(2,7)	355	(9,9)	630	(3,0)
Indonesia	382	(3,4)	76	(1,8)	254	(5,3)	506	(6,1)
Latvia	491	(3,7)	90	(1,7)	335	(6,4)	632	(4,6)
Liechtenstein	525	(3,6)	90	(3,4)	365	(15,0)	661	(14,3)
Macao-China	498	(2,2)	67	(1,9)	381	(6,2)	601	(4,3)
Russian Federation	442	(3,9)	93	(1,8)	281	(6,9)	588	(4,7)
Serbia	412	(3,6)	81	(1,6)	274	(5,0)	542	(5,9)
Thailand	420	(2,8)	78	(1,5)	293	(4,9)	550	(5,3)
Tunisia	375	(2,8)	96	(1,8)	216	(4,7)	530	(5,5)
Uruguay	434	(3,4)	121	(2,0)	224	(5,8)	628	(6,1)
United Kingdom[1]	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m

1. Response rate too low to ensure comparability
(Pisa Database 2003)

Of course it has been wonderful, especially for Finnish politicians, to pose in the sunshine as a promised land of education. But in the 40-year history of IEA, another famous comparative school achievement project, Finland has never stood on the podium. And on the other hand, many

national systems that were prize winners in IEA surveys found themselves just average performers in PISA. Harold Noah (1984) reminds us that in 1980's Japanese mathematics and science education was an envied model, especially for Americans. Sputnik shock made them ask earlier in the 1950's what Ivan knows that Johnny doesn't. So if you live long enough, you will see everything happen at least twice, the second time opposite of the first. A naked truth is that you cannot find easy solutions abroad for complex problems at home.

FIGURE 2
The model for variable construction

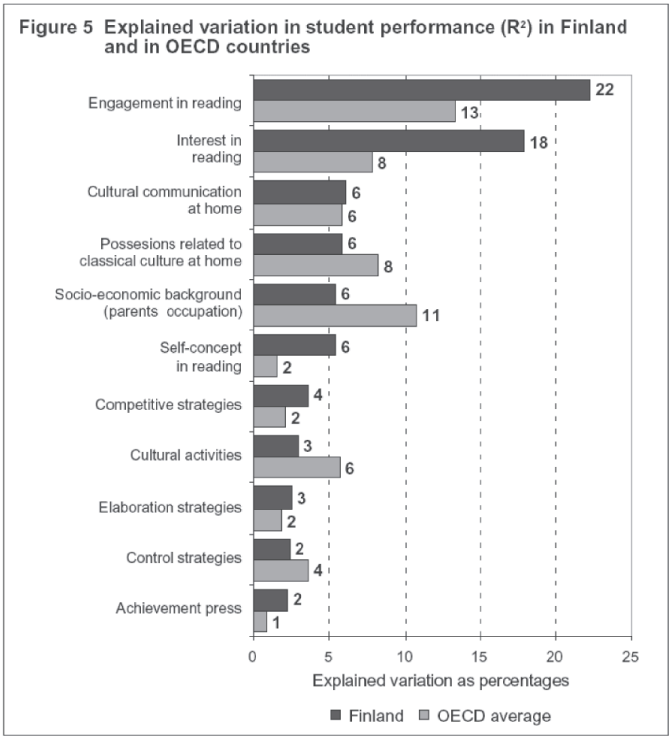


This simple input-throughput-output model is used to group PISA variables and explain connection between them. But in the analysis variables are taken separately, as given measured entities without providing them with cultural and ecological meaning. School context is understood very narrowly as an administrative structure and decision-making power of teachers. To me context is a very wide concept: it includes aspirational and utilitarian attitudes of communities, peer group pressures, history and tradition connected with the idea of education, linguistic and cultural homogeneity of a nation etc. All these factors act as a superstructure giving interpretations to what kind of economic and non-economic resources are provided to schools, how processes are organized, and what kind of outputs and outcomes are expected from schools, in other words, what is thought important in a given culture. Just to give an example, let us look at factors that explain the differences in literacy achievement.

Explanations to the good literacy achievement

There are, of course, several organizational, ideological and operational factors explaining the overall functioning of a school system. But because spoken and written language is the main tool of formal education, let's concentrate on reading comprehension.

FIGURE 3
Variables explaining differences in literacy achievement



The analysis shows that three variables dealing with literary activities explain 46 per cent of students' performance differences in Finland compared to 23 per cent average in OECD countries. These are not, of course, the only explanations for the result. Rather, the successful performance of Finnish students seems to be attributable to a combination of interrelated factors having to do with comprehensive pedagogy, stu-

dents' own interests and leisure activities, the structure of the education system, teacher education, school practices and, in the end, Finnish culture.

Finnish students, together with students from the other Nordic countries, read highly diverse materials. They read newspapers, magazines, comic books as well as e-mails and Web pages more frequently than do their fellow students in the other OECD countries on average. Finnish students' engagement in reading is supported by a comprehensive network of municipal libraries, which generally also have separate departments for children and youth. No wonder, Finnish students tend to use libraries more often than students from the other OECD countries. Results show that in Finland 44 per cent of students borrowed books from a library at least once a month, compared to the OECD average of 26 per cent. The Finnish PISA researchers believe that the result is an indication that the Finnish comprehensive school has managed to arouse students' interest in reading and, hence, to even out the impact of socio-economic background. The researchers feel that optional subjects combined with a flexible school curriculum play an important role in encouraging students to take up and keep up their own interests, not least as it concerns reading. The explanation is not, however, that simple.

A brief summary of Finnish history and geography is needed to render the Finnish education system comprehensible. For 600 years Finland was under Swedish domination, and for most of this period was a part of the kingdom of Sweden. The language of administration and high culture was Swedish. The schools were Swedish-speaking. Thus the children of ordinary Finnish peasants and workers were compelled to learn Swedish on starting school. The first secondary school with Finnish as the language of instruction was established as late as 1858, although by the end of the nineteenth century the number of Finnish-speaking schools and Finnish speaking pupils was greater than that for Swedish.

Martin Luther's ideas and the Reformation were adopted eagerly in all Nordic countries. The idea of Luther that each Christian should be able to read the holy scriptures was taken literally in the work of the church. As early as the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries peripatetic schools and occasions when the reading skills of the populace were put to the test had ensured a distinctly widespread literacy. Holy matrimony was the Church's greatest weapon. No marriage could be solemnised

unless those concerned could prove that they could read and had mastered the rudiments of Christian doctrine.

At the time of the Napoleonic wars, Russia took Finland from Sweden and annexed it in 1809 as an autonomous grand duchy. Towards the end of the period of autonomy the Russian administration embarked upon an aggressive policy of Russification and a reduction in the degree of autonomy, also linguistic, in Finland. This manifested itself in the schools in the compulsory study of Russian, with extremely bad results, as in many schools it became a point of honour not to do well in studies.

The fight for the right to use the language of the majority was cultural and economic during Swedish regime and political during Russian regime. Together with Lutheran church it, however, built a strong literary culture in the country newspapers, magazines, and leaflets as their means. This was emphasized by the sparse population (there still are less than five people per square km in half the country), which made more social activities difficult to arrange. In towns every household gets its daily newspaper or many of them every morning before six in the mailbox and even in the remotest areas before noon. Yes, the Finns, not just the PISA sample, are heavy readers. (See the Finnish education system: Raivola, 2000.)

One could say that Finnish is an easy language to read, because it is extremely phonemic spelling: one sound - one letter. Many children can already read when they start the school at the age of seven. There is an ample supply of foreign films on television provided with Finnish subtitles instead of dubbing. While watching television, children have to read, developing a quick reading routine.

All three scales used in PISA 2003 were literacy tests. They did not measure the content of curriculum: knowledge of literature, grammar, richness of vocabulary, orthography or knowledge of mathematical concepts or scientific laws. So the tasks used in PISA were extremely well suited to the Finnish culture and curriculum. We can with reason ask, whether it is school or society at large to praise for good literacy scores.

What if in those countries which did not too well in PISA, school or community libraries would be established and youngsters made to read either by stick or carrot? Would achievements be better in the next PISA? Probably not, because you cannot adopt the centuries old literary culture just over night.

Autonomy or democracy?

The correlations also reveal that the higher the local (school) responsibility for deciding which courses are offered and the more equitable the distribution of learning opportunities are the better learning achievements. And also, the lower the degree of stratification (i.e. late selection and weak institutional differentiation) the higher the national mean in all PISA scales. Now it seems that the less there are social divisions in the society and the more decision power is decentralized the better the result. But the question is not just the locus of power. The question is about democracy. You cannot import democratic principles into the classrooms and at the same time leave the rest of the society to do without it. Schools can rise no higher than communities that support them.

In the Nordic countries equality and social justice have a long tradition. Serfdom never existed in Finland. Yeomen were autonomous decision makers in local affairs. Franchise was given to women among the first in the world (1906). When it proved problematic to establish state girls' schools (the first came in the 1840's), the American tradition of co-education was eagerly adopted. Since the 1880's girls have been eligible to take the matriculation examination and thereafter to seek admission to university. Primary education has always been, since the establishment of public school system in 1860's, under the surveillance of local authorities. The system got rid of inspectorate system in 1980's, there are no national exams (except the matriculation exam at the end of upper secondary school) and parents interfere very seldom in teachers' freedom and autonomy. Teachers are trusted as professionals and they are educated well. Already in 1860's Finland had a co-educative four-year seminar for primary school teachers, as early as in 1930's some elementary school teachers were trained in higher education and since 1980 all teachers are trained in universities at master's level. They work in a culturally homogeneous environment: only 1,8 per cent of the Finnish population is foreign-born. That means that almost every student answered PISA tasks in their mother tongue.

However, Ludger Wößmann (2005) from University of Munich – Ifo Institute has shown, that if the education system has no central exams, then school autonomy has a negative impact on student performance in those decision making areas which offer incentives for opportunistic behaviour (teacher influence on curriculum, textbooks, school budgets or teacher salaries). School autonomy must be accompanied with accountability. Finland seems to be an obvious exception of this relationship.

Conclusion

National systems of education are extremely complex, heterogeneous agglomerations of students, teachers, schools, administrators, curricula and syllabi, parents, school books and materials, resources of different kind, values, labour market expectations, national economy etc. Measured causal determinants of achievement vary by level of education and subject matter. Measured reality is just a tiny part of the whole reality and indicator reality only a small part of measured reality. It is impossible to predict causal relation of variables out of their cultural context. One problem in surveys like PISA is the aggregate level of measurement: individual student is the provider of information, i.e., the unit of measurement, but national systems are the unit of analysis. One of major findings was that achievement varies less among schools in Finland than in other countries. But inside school variance can be greater than between school variance. It is teachers that make the difference, not schools as an entity. Comparing IEA and PISA we see how unstable the results are. Learning always takes place at micro level. It is situational and deeply individual. It is an ecological fallacy to claim that standardized achievement scores are not only a measure of how much individual pupils know but also an index of the quality of schools and even national systems. Another ecological fallacy, more political in nature, is to draw conclusion and make high-stake decisions affecting local schools on the basis of international test results (see Theisen et al., 1983).

Peter Lukács (2002), General Director of a Hungarian research institute, criticizes heavily the rationale of PISA. He points out that Hungary succeeded well in IEA surveys and Finland did not. IEA measured the traditional knowledge and the content of curriculum. PISA is more like an American Scholastic Aptitude test. A handful of experts in OECD say what young people have to master in order to adapt to society. A few people seem to know better than hundreds of teachers, curriculum experts, researchers and national boards of education (who designed the IEA measurements) what the needs of the young are. IEA's approach was pedagogical and curricular; PISA's approach is political. Although people in OECD/CERI deny it, they are obviously trying to bring about the world curriculum, what OECD member countries have to teach to the new generation. It has compelled national governments and even the EU to react according to the OECD's value system.

There is an obvious threat, that it is not only WTO and GATS which are the main practical and political tools for globalizing services, educa-

tion included, but also projects like PISA. They knock on your backdoor, because front doors are guarded by the EU's subsidiarity principle and national sovereignty. What is to be taught and how it should be taught is less and less a business of a sovereign state.

FIGURE 4
PISA – the Leaning Tower of the Finnish school system?

I would go back to sir Michael. He would, after all, have been delighted at PISA. It is exactly what he meant by systematic, empirical information production for comparative purposes. But much less enthusiastic he would have been about political conclusions drawn from achievement lists. In another speech (1902), the founding father of comparative education warned us of the eulogistic attitude towards foreign systems. Every education system has its strengths and weaknesses. So has the Finnish system. Pupils are not happy at school according international comparisons. In fact, they are the unhappiest among students in Europe. Truancy and bullying are common among them. Six per cent of students do not continue their education after compulsory schooling. Girls outperform boys in every subject. Teachers feel burn out. The teachers union says that new obligations are continuously loaded on teachers without tools to perform them. They are deprived of disciplinary tools to control classrooms. Their salaries are not competitive in international purchasing power. In the country dozens of schools are closed every year and pupils are taken to bigger school units by bus or taxi. That means that their school day may lengthen by 2-3 hours. Pedagogical criticism points out that the good result in the cognitive domain is brought about at the expense of creativity and emotional and social development of the pupils. There are very few hours for practical subjects and arts subjects in the curriculum. In that sense PISA is a perfect model of Finnish education: it is like the Leaning Tower of Pisa, leaning towards knowledge and information producing one-sided personalities.

PISA is technically as good as paper and pencil tests and survey methodology can produce at the moment. Finnish education has undoubtedly many strengths but also many weaknesses. To conclude: statistical cognitive measures can disclose only a small fraction of educational reality. Finnish education is by no means a universal model of perfect education. But maybe, after extremely careful scientific and cultural analysis of, e.g., Greek and Finnish PISA results and their contextual factors, the Finnish system can offer some ideas to understand and maybe to improve some practices in Greek education – and the other way round.

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Περιληψη

Μπορούμε να αντλήσουμε πρακτικής χρησιμότητας γνώσεις από τη μελέτη των ξένων εκπαιδευτικών συστημάτων;
Η Φινλανδία και το μοντέλο της PISA

Η κλασική για τη Συγκριτική Εκπαίδευση ρήση του Sadler ότι «όσα συμβαίνουν εκτός σχολείου έχουν μεγαλύτερη σημασία, διέπουν και εξηγούν αυτά που συμβαίνουν μέσα στο σχολείο» μπορεί να αποτελέσει μια χρήσιμη υπενθύμιση στους πολιτικούς που βιάστη-

καν να εξαγάγουν εύκολα συμπεράσματα από τις υψηλές επιδόσεις χωρών, όπως η Φινλανδία, στο διεθνή μαθητικό διαγωνισμό PISA του ΟΟΣΑ.

Οι επιδόσεις της Φινλανδίας στην έρευνα PISA για τον αναγνωστικό αλφαβητισμό ήταν πράγματι αξιοθαύμαστες. Όχι μόνο λόγω της υψηλής θέσης που κατέλαβε στην κατάταξη των χωρών που συμμετείχαν, αλλά και γιατί η απόσταση μεταξύ των υψηλότερων και των χαμηλότερων βαθμολογιών των Φινλανδών μαθητών ήταν από τις μικρότερες, ενισχύοντας με τον τρόπο αυτό τα επιχειρήματα όσων υποστηρίζουν ότι η (εκπαιδευτική) ποιότητα και η (κοινωνική) ισότητα δεν είναι απαραίτητα ασύμβατες έννοιες.

Τα αποτελέσματα του PISA διαφέρουν σημαντικά από εκείνα αντίστοιχων διαγωνισμών της IEA των τελευταίων 40 χρόνων, στους οποίους η Φινλανδία δεν κατέκτησε ποτέ υψηλές θέσεις. Οι δύο έρευνες ακολουθούν διαφορετικές προσεγγίσεις. Το PISA αντιλαμβάνεται το συγκείμενο της εκπαίδευσης μάλλον περιοριστικά. Δε λαμβάνει επαρκώς υπόψη του παράγοντες όπως η ιστορία και η παράδοση, η πολιτισμική και γλωσσική ομοιογένεια μιας χώρας και οι αντιλήψεις των ποικίλων ομάδων συμφερόντων για το ζητούμενο από την εκπαίδευση. Τα στοιχεία αυτά προσδιορίζουν τις προσδοκίες που κάθε εθνική κουλτούρα έχει από τα σχολεία της και η ανάλυσή τους μπορεί να εξηγήσει διαφορετικά την υψηλή απόδοση των Φινλανδών μαθητών.

Τα αποτελέσματα του PISA έδειξαν ότι οι Φινλανδοί μαθητές αφιερώνουν μεγάλο μέρος του χρόνου τους στο διάβασμα (βιβλίων, εφημερίδων, περιοδικών, ιστοσελίδων κ.τ.λ.), ενώ στην τάση αυτή δρα ενισχυτικά το ευρύ δίκτυο των δημοτικών βιβλιοθηκών. Σύμφωνα με τους ερευνητές του PISA, το σχολείο είναι εκείνο που έχει καταφέρει να διεγείρει το αναγνωστικό ενδιαφέρον, το συμπέρασμα αυτό ωστόσο είναι ιδιαίτερα μονομερές.

Μια ανασκόπηση της φινλανδικής πολιτικής και θρησκευτικής ιστορίας μπορεί να ερμηνεύσει πιο σύνθετα τη σχέση που έχουν οι Φινλανδοί με την ανάγνωση. Η χώρα υπήρξε για εκατοντάδες χρόνια υπό σουηδική και ρωσική κυριαρχία, με επίσημη γλώσσα της εκπαίδευσης άλλη από τα φινλανδικά, και μόλις περί το τέλος του 19ου αιώνα τα σχολεία που χρησιμοποιούσαν τη φινλανδική γλώσσα αποτέλεσαν την πλειονότητα στη χώρα. Ο εθνικός αγώνας –πολιτικός, οικονομικός αλλά και πολιτισμικός– εναντίον της ξένης κατοχής ταυτίστηκε εν πολλοίς και με τη διεκδίκηση του δικαιώματος γνώσης και χρήσης της μητρικής γλώσσας.

Από την άλλη, οι ιδέες της θρησκευτικής μεταρρύθμισης είχαν ιδιαίτερα ισχυρή απήχηση στη Φινλανδία και η άποψη του Λουθήρου, ότι κάθε χριστιανός όφειλε να είναι σε θέση να διαβάζει τις Γραφές, οδήγησε πρακτικά στην υποχρέωση των πολιτών να μαθαίνουν την εθνική γλώσσα. Έτσι, οι εθνικοί αγώνες και η λουθηρανική εκκλησία συνέτειναν στη δημιουργία μιας ισχυρής αναγνωστικής κουλτούρας σε μια ιδιαίτερα αραιοκατοικημένη χώρα, με εκ των πραγμάτων σπάνιες κοινωνικές εκδηλώσεις.

Το ίδιο ισχύει στο θέμα της ισότητας και της δημοκρατίας στα σχολεία. Στις σκανδιναβικές χώρες οι αρχές της ισότητας και της κοινωνικής δικαιοσύνης έχουν μακρά παράδοση. Η χωρίς παρελθόν δουλείας Φινλανδία ήταν από τις πρώτες χώρες στον κόσμο που αναγνώρισε δικαίωμα ψήφου στις γυναίκες, ενώ υιοθέτησε από πολύ νωρίς τη μικτή εκπαίδευση αγοριών και κοριτσιών. Οι επιθεωρήσεις στα σχολεία καταργήθηκαν από το 1980 και οι εκπαιδευτικοί όλων των βαθμίδων αντιμετωπίζονταν από την αρχή ως επαγγελματίες υψηλού κύρους, απολαμβάνοντας κατάρτιση πανεπιστημιακού επιπέδου.

Η έρευνα PISA φαίνεται ότι ξεχνά πως τα εθνικά συστήματα εκπαίδευσης αποτελούν ετερογενείς και πολυπαραγοντικές συσσωματώσεις διαφορετικού τύπου αξιών και προσδοκιών, και εξάγει τα συμπεράσματά της αγνοώντας το πολιτισμικό συγκείμενο. Συγκρίνοντάς τη με το διαγωνισμό της IEA, η προσέγγισή της είναι περισσότερο «πολιτική», σε σχέση με την κλασική «παιδαγωγική» της IEA. Και, παρότι οι ειδήμονες του ΟΟΣΑ αρνούνται ότι έχουν τέτοιες προθέσεις, δεν μπορεί να παραγνωριστεί ότι το «σύστημα αξιών» που το PISA επιβραβεύει μοιάζει να αποτελεί πρότυπο για πολλές εθνικές κυβερνήσεις αλλά και την ίδια την ΕΕ.

Το φινλανδικό σύστημα έχει, όπως όλα άλλωστε, τις αδυναμίες του: μαθητές που δυσανασχετούν με το σχολείο, αδικαιολόγητες απουσίες και φαινόμενα βίας, εκπαιδευτικοί που διαμαρτύρονται για τις αυξανόμενες υποχρεώσεις και τους χαμηλούς μισθούς τους, πρόγραμμα που υποτιμά τη δημιουργικότητα και την κοινωνική ενσωμάτωση κ.ο.κ. Ως εκ τούτου, το φινλανδικό σχολείο δεν μπορεί σε καμιά περίπτωση να θεωρηθεί ένα είδος οικουμενικού μοντέλου. Η χωρίς προκαταλήψεις επιστημονική ανάλυσή του είναι δυνατόν να προσφέρει ιδέες για την καλύτερη κατανόηση ή και τη βελτίωση πτυχών της εκπαίδευσής άλλων χωρών – κάτι βέβαια που ισχύει και αντιστρόφως.