

communicate without leaving your home. Learning a second language will always be difficult, but I hope this article gives you some ideas of how to improve some areas and give you the confidence to get out there and learn more.

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G. Spachmo

RESPONSIBILITY MANAGEMENT, MANAGEMENT AND POLITICS IN SCHOOL. WHAT NOBODY IS TELLING YOU ABOUT FINNISH SCHOOLS. FROM A NORWEGIAN PERSPECTIVE.

School Politicians and school leaders from many countries have in recent years been looking towards (and traveled to) Finland to understand why Finnish students score consistently well in the "World Championship for schools." (It's called PISA and is an international test for 15-year-old school students).

In January, I attended a conference organized by the Foundation "Rings in water", imaginatively enough called "Rings in water conference, 2015," and here I was so fortunate to hear more good speakers. Among other things the organizers had invited Ollie Mättä who works in the Finnish teacher education. (He works at the same time in a Finnish high school, so in Finland they have teacher educators working in schools while they also are training future teachers. Maybe that's one of the reasons that students score high on PISA).

I have previously visited a school in Finland and have heard Norwegian politicians and school leaders speak cordially about the Finnish school, so much of that Ollie Mättä told was not entirely new to me. However, I was increasingly puzzled over how Norwegian politicians (and probably also school administrators) select some aspects of the Finnish school that they emphasize as the explanation for Finnish pupils good performances, while there are other aspects of the Finnish school that is not being mentioned. (This applies to politicians in all parties). I do not think this is the same phenomenon

as the Indian parable of how an elephant looks. (You know, that's where blind people are describing the elephant in different ways based on what they know of the elephant's body; like a stick, like a snake, like a barrel, etc. The reason is of course that each person only knows a small part of the elephant). However, I think that Norwegian politicians and school leaders consciously choose what they want to draw at Finnish schools, so now I intend to do the same. Ollie Mättä pointed out that some conditions at Finnish schools have not been particularly important here at home.

The first Ollie pointed out that in Finnish there is no word for what is called «accountability». (Now you may say that we do not have a good word for it in Norwegian either, but we have tried to translate it with responsibility management etc.) The Finns have not even tried to translate this term, and Ollie thought it was because they were not doing this in Finland. Finnish school leaders cannot be held responsible for their students' results in the same way as school leaders in many Norwegian municipalities, including in the capital.

In Norway (and most other Western countries) it has been thought that as long as teachers and principals are held responsible for the results the pupils achieve, then the school will be better. I think one finds the same logic in many industries that deal with sales, such as car sales, copy machine sellers: The business (department, individual seller, etc.) is judged by some clear, simple and comparable numbers, and those with the highest numbers get the highest salary, better position, boasted in newspapers or something else beneficial as bonus, advancement or similar. In Norway, this logic is also introduced in schools, but in Finland, they are not doing this in schools.

Finnish school is based on professional accountability and trust. The municipalities have a great influence on the school's content and activities, and national authorities do not very much interfere with how teachers are doing their education. As I said, I have visited Finnish classrooms and although I did not understand what they said (since I understand Finnish as badly as I understand Russian), I perceived (and experienced) the teaching. Compared to Norwegian classrooms, Finnish teaching was traditional, teacher-

oriented and skilled (and definitely not something I was dreaming about) - but solid. But politicians (both local and national) are confident that the teachers are professional and there is no system of accountability in Finland. The Norwegian Minister of Educational Affairs, Torbjørn Røe Isaksen hasn't said much about this. Pasi Sahlberg, a highly recognized Finnish school researcher, describes this on his blog. He compares international and Finnish school management as follows:

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|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| International school management: | Finnish school |
| management: | |
| Focus on: | Focus on: |
| Standardization | Flexibility and variety |
| Basic skills | Abroad knowledge |
| perspective | |
| Responsibility with Consequences | Confidence through professionalism |

Salberg also writes:

We don't use the term 'accountability' when we talk about what schools are expected to do in Finland. Instead, we expect that teachers and principals are responsible collectively for making all children successful in school. There is a big difference between social responsibility for all children's learning in school and holding each teacher accountable for their own pupils' achievement through data from standardized tests.

At the same conference, the Norwegian politician Trond Giske from the Labour Party, pointed out the same thing. He said:

The society's relationship with the school is somewhat like the football player's relationship with the club: everyone thinks they know better than the coach. In Norway, politicians and others are instructing teachers how to work, but they do not do the same to any other profession. When did you hear a politician tell the doctors how to operate? Research shows that there is no one teaching method that always works. Therefore, politicians must stop instructing the schools.

The point of this is not to discharge teachers and principals for the responsibility they have. We, who work in school, must constantly try to do our work better, so that students are constantly increasing their skills. But the way to achieve this is probably not making systems of accountability by model of US sales companies.

The second main point I would like to mention is what Ollie told, that Finland in 2001 made a different choice than the rest of the world. The Finns chose a supervisory scheme that also included art subjects and practical subjects in addition to reading, writing and arithmetic, therefore a supervisory system focusing on all aspects of a person. The countries that chose "hardcore" emphasis on reading, writing and arithmetic made a mistake, said Ollie. (Yes, he said so directly, no diplomatic courtesy there).

In Finnish schools, the student still gets a break from heavy theoretical subjects through doing practical subjects. And in these subjects, they get to develop other aspects of their intelligence and their personality. This is also something Norwegian students fortunately have – for the time. But we see that since the focus of the authorities is unilaterally based on what they call "central subjects" such as mother tongue, mathematics and English, the other subjects become increasingly narrow. Students get less hours of arts and crafts, music and religion plus social subjects, and I have heard rectors who have told parents that students do not get music lessons because they have to practice reading instead (as if not musical intelligence and reading are related).

Another of the main initiators of the "Ringss-in-Water Conference 2015", Professor Anne Bamford, warns strongly against reducing the practical and creative subjects of the school. She can invest this with research, and her reason was not that practical subjects are "breaks" from the "proper subjects". No, her point is that students get good at reading, writing and calculating when they also develop their creative pages and work with art subjects at school. If they cannot develop their creativity, they are not good at reading, writing and arithmetic. But I'll probably write this later.

Ollie also said that in Finland there are no standardized national tests or samples. They have no national tests and students do

not meet an exam before they finish high school (!). I think I will write more about that another time.

Have a nice weekend.

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D. Strait

TEACHING CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN THE CLASSROOM

As a culturally responsive teacher, one of the major goals is to help all students become respectful of all the cultures and people that they will interact with once they leave the classroom. This can be daunting, given that the world at large is infinitely more complex and diverse than the small and confined environment that the student inhabits in his everyday life.

In typical educational and social settings, students tend to show classic belonging or not belonging to a group behavior. In general, most students are comfortable interacting with people, behaviors, and ideas that they are familiar with, and react with fear and apprehension when faced with the unfamiliar. A culturally responsive instruction can help the teacher show the students that differences in viewpoint and culture are to be cherished and appreciated, not judged and feared. A culturally responsive educator can overcome human nature's fear of the unknown and help students become more respectful of cultures with different ideas. For example, a teacher can provide students with evidence that people who do not look or act like them are still people just like them.

A teacher can emphasize this viewpoint by building a culture of learning from one another rather than a culture of passing judgment on differences in values and beliefs. There are a wide range of classroom activities that can help students recognize the essential humanity and value of different types of people. For example, provide students with an opportunity to share stories of their home life, such as family holiday practices, provides fellow students with a window into their peer's cultural traditions. The teacher can show the