

# The Finnish Education System

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## Less is more

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# Finland

**Population** 5.5 million

**Surface** 390 908 km<sup>2</sup>

**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



# High performing Finland

# High performing Finland

<p><b>Best governance in the world #1 (2018)</b> <a href="#"><i>The Legatum Prosperity Index 2018</i></a></p>	<p><b>Low corruption #3 (2017)</b> <a href="#"><i>Corruption Perceptions Index 2017</i></a></p>	<p><b>Gender Equal country #3 (2017)</b> <a href="#"><i>Global Gender Gap Index 2017</i></a></p>
<p><b>Primary education and health #1 (2017)</b> <a href="#"><i>The global competitiveness Index 2017</i></a></p>	<p><b>Higher education &amp; Training #1 (2018)</b> <a href="#"><i>The global competitiveness Index 2018</i></a></p>	<p><b>Pisa results in the top 10 since 2003</b> <a href="#"><i>Better Life Index: Education</i></a></p>
<p><b>Equality among children #2 (2016)</b> <a href="#"><i>Unicef - Fairness for Children Index 2016</i></a></p>	<p><b>Mothers' and children's well-being #2 (2015)</b> <a href="#"><i>State of the World's Mothers 2015</i></a></p>	<p><b>Most secure childhood in the world #5 (2018)</b> <a href="#"><i>End of Childhood, Report 2018</i></a></p>
<p><b>Happiest country in the world #1 (2019)</b> <a href="#"><i>World Happiness Report 2018</i></a></p>	<p><b>Global Innovation Index # 4 (2017)</b> <a href="#"><i>Global Innovation Index 2017</i></a></p>	<p><b>Best country for business # 3 (2018)</b> <a href="#"><i>Best European countries for business 2018</i></a></p>

# History of the Finnish education system

- Until 1970 – a strongly centralized & inequitable education system with a consequent achievement gap and highly variable teachers
- 1970 – 1980 – Centralized reform of the comprehensive school system with highly educated teachers ended the era of the non-egalitarian primary and grammar school system
- 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 – Total reform of educational legislation with more emphasis on development goals, pupils' rights and responsibility
- 2010 - ... – A student-oriented and flexible system based on empowerment (student counselling, tutoring and special needs education). Multidisciplinary and project-based learning.
- Equal and qualitative comprehensive education at relatively moderate costs (5.3% GDP in 2017)

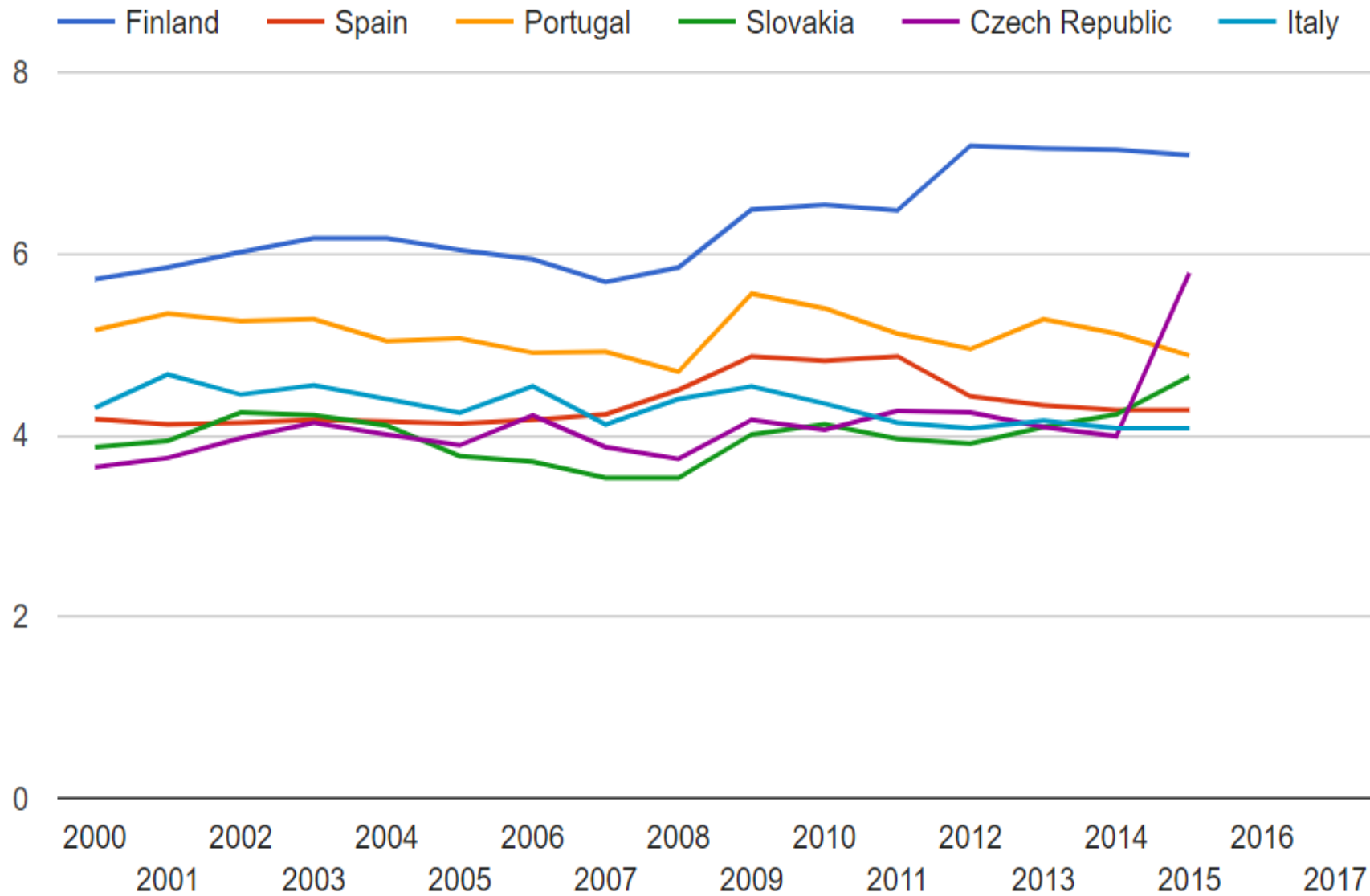


Education is  
publicly funded

—

Central vs local  
decisions

### Public spending on education, percent of GDP



measure: percent

Source: TheGlobalEconomy.com, UNESCO

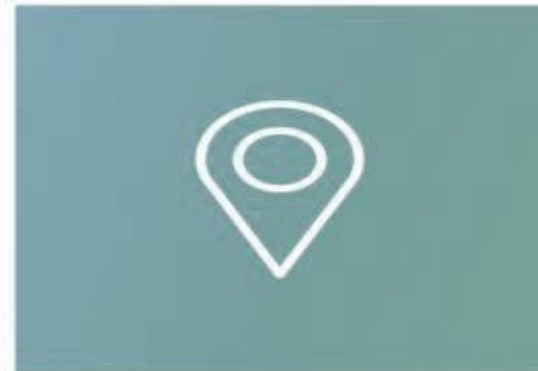


# Central Steering and local decisions




## Central / national

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



## Local / municipalities

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



# The basic principles of the Finnish Education System

Trust and  
Responsibility

Free  
education  
at all levels

High  
Educational  
Autonomy

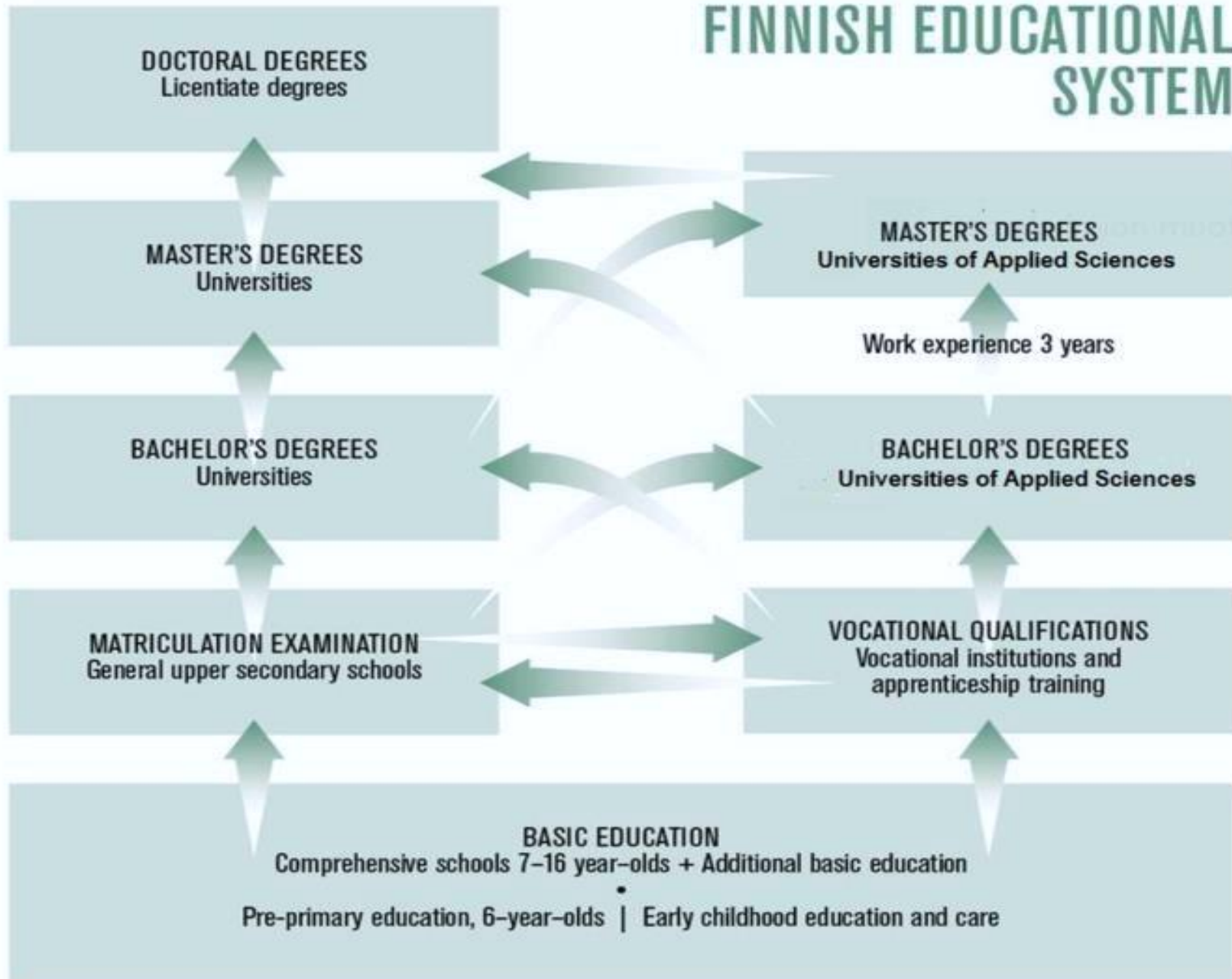
School-  
Based  
Curriculum

Equality

Highly  
educated  
teachers

No national  
testing

# FINNISH EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM





# Comprehensive School Education

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)
- there are no national tests and no degrees; 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 in the Comprehensive School

- Less instruction hours (3-5 lessons of 45min) and more rest and breaks -> Means more moments for reflection
- Less testing (assessment is part of the daily work) -> Means more moments 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

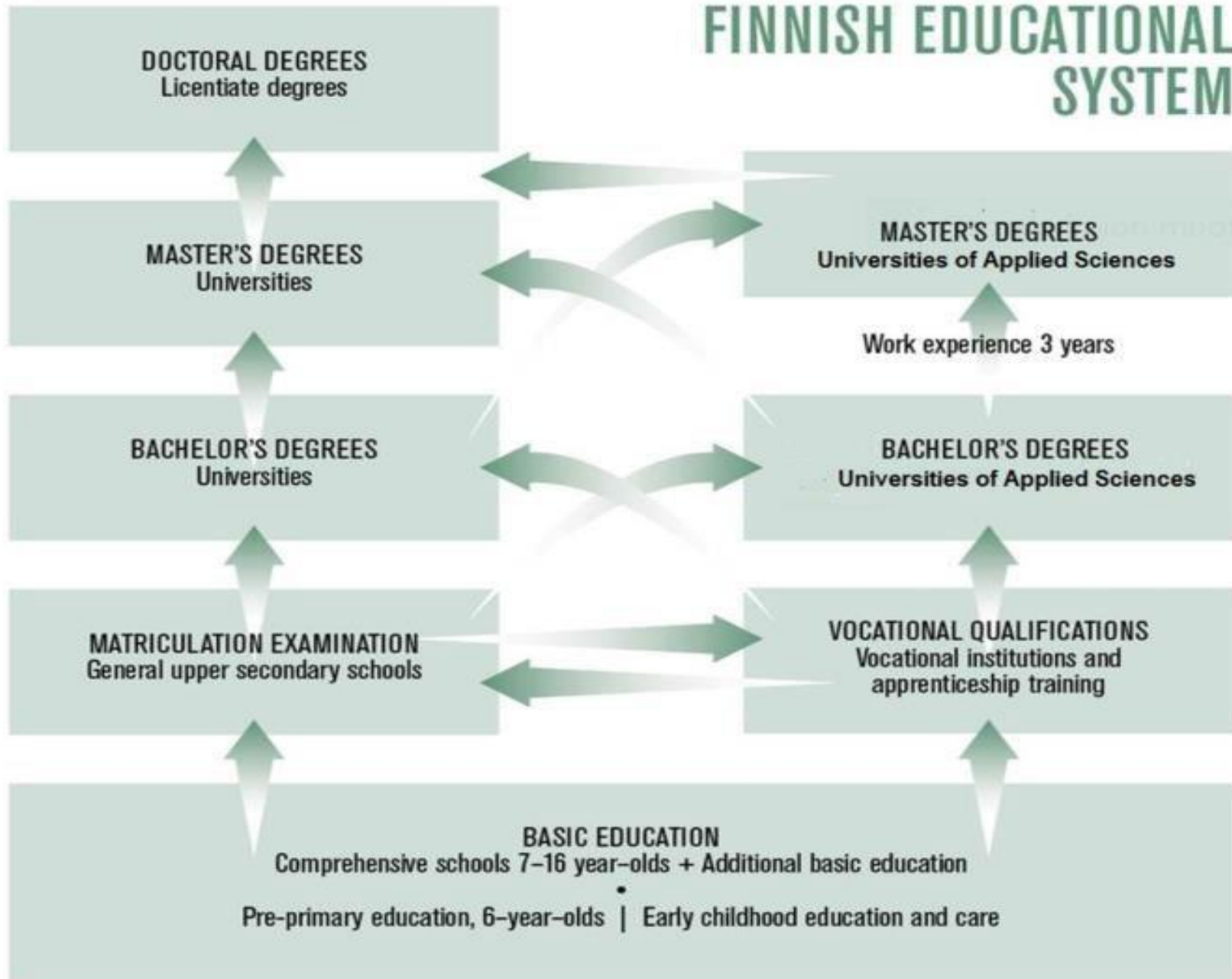
# Comprehensive School Education

## 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

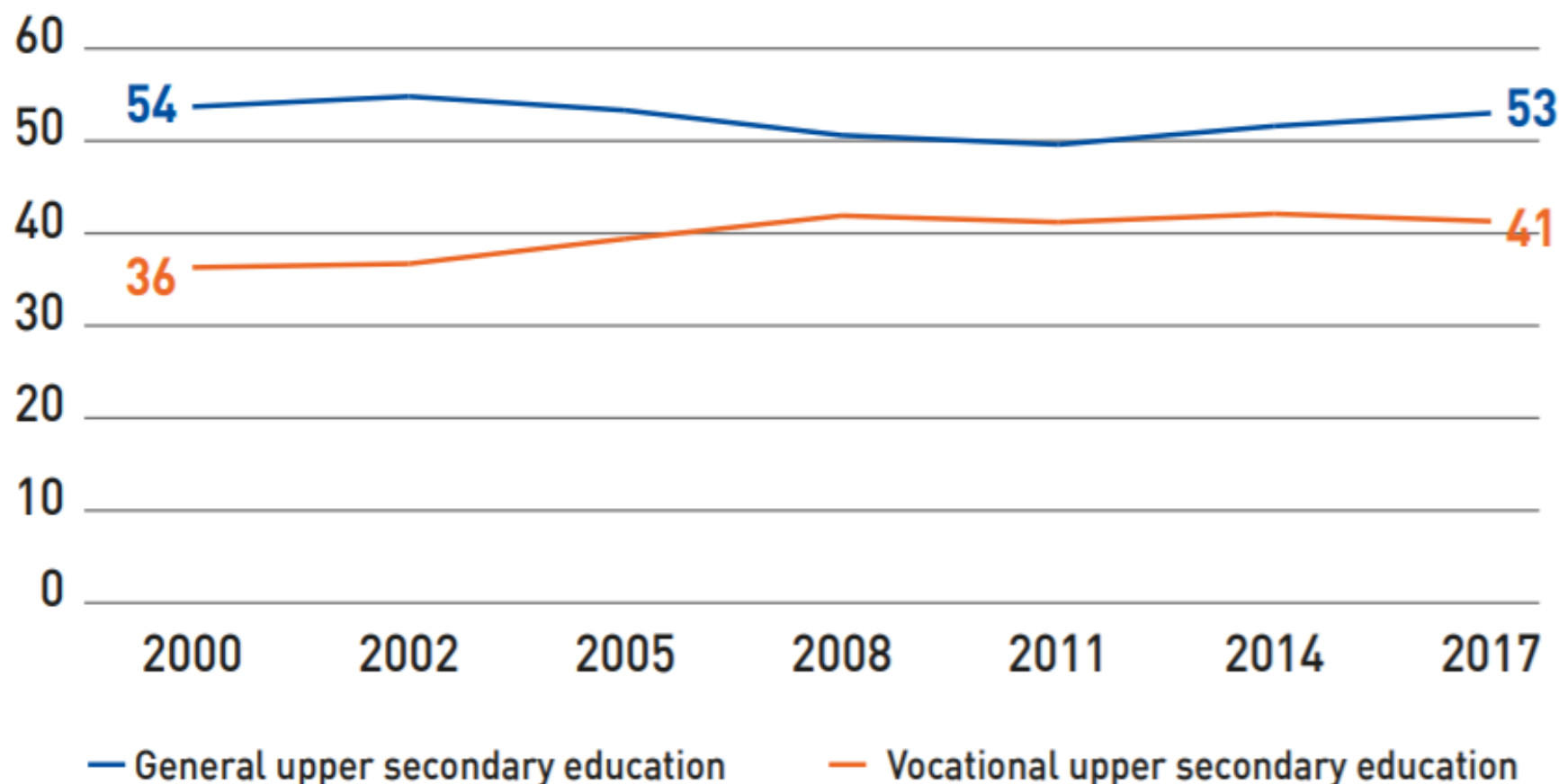
their 9-year basic education. It is more than 1100 hours less than the OECD average. ●

# FINNISH EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM



# Continuation in upper secondary education

Proportion of students who continues to a programme leading to a qualification in the same year the completed compulsory education





# Upper Secondary School Education

# Upper Secondary School Education

About 53% of students go to upper secondary school (grade marks-based admission criteria – high competition)

✓ 3-years program leading to Matriculation Examination

Individual curriculum for all students, everyone studies according to his/her own study plan (75 courses of 38 hours)

Free for all students, except books and materials



## DROP-OUT

Only some 3 %  
discontinue general  
upper secondary  
education.

## TARGET TIME

Majority of  
students complete  
education in the  
3-year target  
time.

## COURSE- BASED

Education is not  
tied to year  
grades.

## QUALIFICATION

Students take the  
national matriculation  
examination.

## VOLUNTARY

General upper  
secondary education  
is not compulsory.

## ELIGIBILITY TO HE

Graduates are  
eligible to apply to  
higher education in  
Finland and abroad.



Students generally start general upper  
secondary education at the age of 16.

# Distribution of lesson hours

Compulsory courses    Specialisation courses



Duration of a single course is on average 38 lessons.

**47-51** Compulsory courses    **10** Specialisation courses, minimum    **75** Total number of courses, minimum

depending on levels of mathematics.  
Students have to study at least 18 subjects.





# Vocational School Education

# Vocational School Education

About 47% of students go to vocational school education

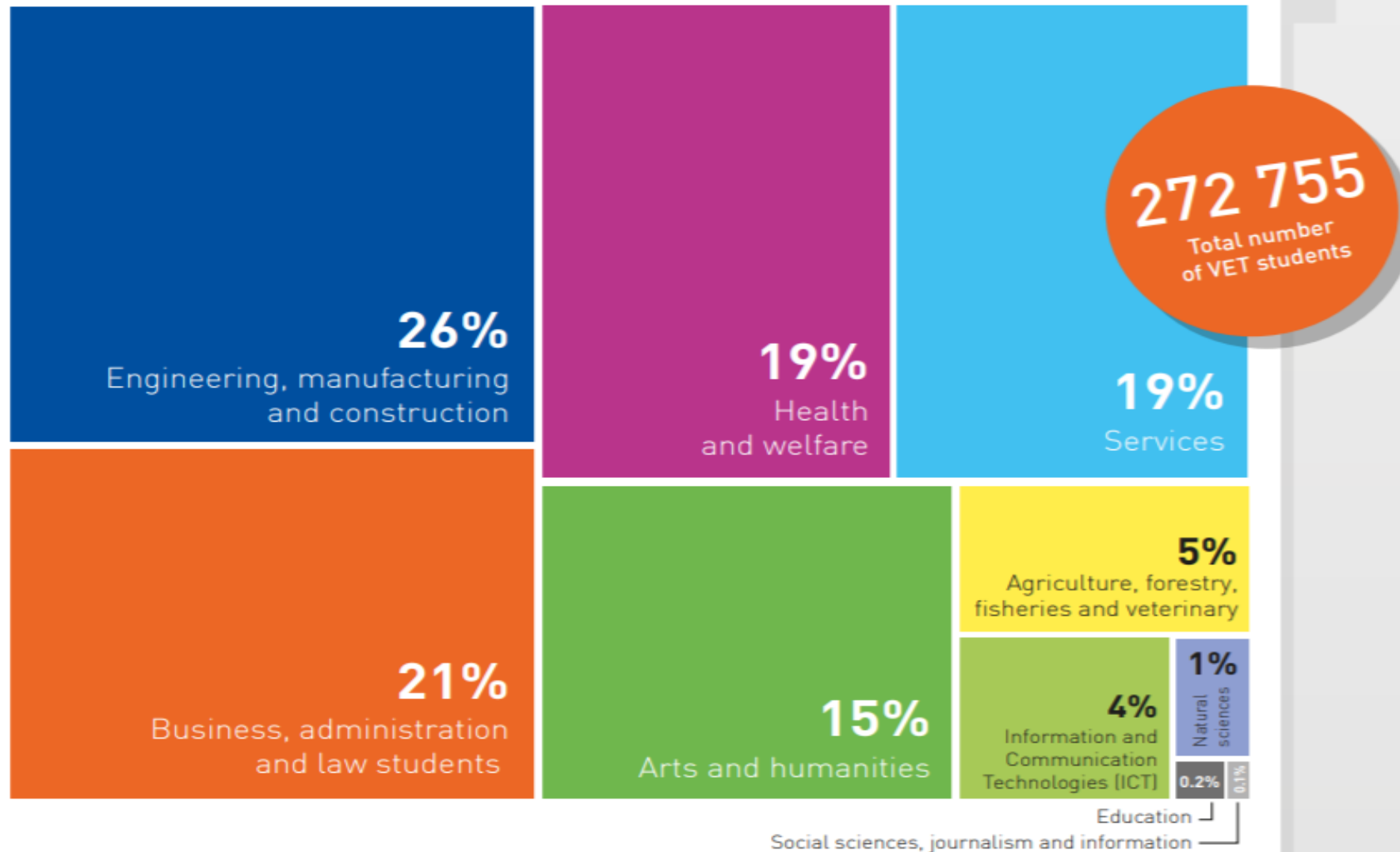
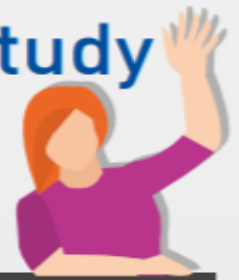
- ✓ A 3-years program leading to a vocational qualification (No matriculation exam)

Individual curriculum for all students, everyone studies according to his/her own study plan (120 credits):

- ✓ 20 credits general studies
- ✓ 80 credits specific vocational studies
- ✓ 20 credits practical studies at a workplace

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



# Being a teacher in Finland

## Admission rate to teacher education in 2016:

41%

Vocational  
teacher  
education

16%

Kindergarten  
teacher  
education

11%

Class  
teacher  
education

## Number of applicants to teacher education in 2016

Vocational teacher  
education

4 100



Kindergarten teacher  
education

3 000



Class teacher  
education

6 800



# Being a teacher in Finland

- Highly qualified and competent teachers & principals -> Everyone has a masters ' degree in basic and upper secondary school education.
- Teachers and principals are highly respected and trusted
- Teachers and principals enjoy a high amount of educational autonomy and freedom in the classroom and the school (no inspection)

# Being a teacher in Finland

## *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!