



**Ritva Mickelsson**



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The emphasis of the Finnish curriculum is on the holistic mission of guiding the educational thinking of schools and municipalities.

The core curriculum can be understood as an extensive ecosystem where different areas are linked together, as a teaching-studying-learning environment with several dimensions

Vahtivuori et al. (2014).



# 2014–2017 a coherent line

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Core curricula covered all levels of education:

- early childhood
- pre-primary
- basic (primary + lower secondary) and upper
- secondary

(Halinen, 2018)



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*The purpose of the steering of basic education is to ensure the equality and high quality of education and to create favorable conditions for the pupils' **growth, development, and learning.***

*National Core Curriculum for Basic Education 2014, p. 9  
Finnish National Agency for Education*





# Aims and goals

- to develop “what works” and was good in the Finnish system
- to be prepared for changing and multifaceted world
- to enhance meaningfulness of learning
- to improve educational equality and engagement and well-being with
  - to promote life-long and life-wide learning
  - to develop wide-ranging well-being for all
  - to improve skills for a sustainable living



# Main Features of Finnish Educational System

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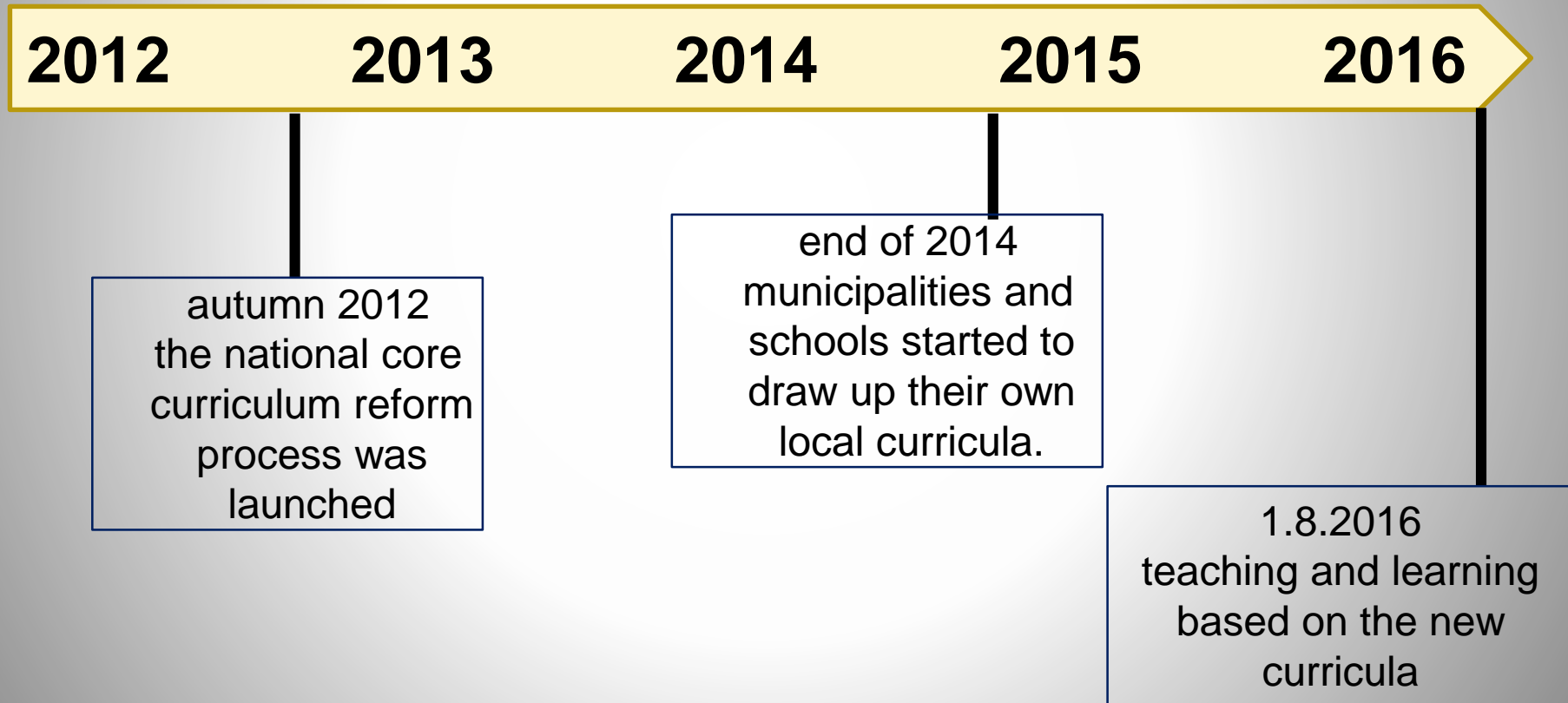
- equal education system
- high quality of teaching and learning
- good and motivated teachers
- new challenges: learning results and equality
- autonomous municipalities

**main values and principles**

**participation**



# Reform process







# Collaborative reform process

- high level of commitment

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students

teachers

principals

parents

local education authorities

teacher educators and researchers

labor unions

representatives from various ministries

the municipal workers

teacher unions

industry groups

associations of parents

textbook publishers

different ethnic groups



## the Curriculum Road Map

*the Learning Barometer 2030*  
predicting and anticipating the future

### **Support**

30 working groups produced drafts, expert hearings

### **Discussions**

to recognize strengths, weaknesses and needs

**Extensive knowledge sharing**

**Top-down-bottom-up approach**

**Strong steering element => change management**

‘Evidence-informed wisdom’





# Students' views

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grades 7-9 (aged 13 to 15) in basic education

responses from 60 000 students (26%)

- the school culture in basic education
- the meaningfulness of the learning content
- the various subjects in terms of the skills needed in the future
- how to develop their school and their studies



# School culture

*“Schools teach best by their own example”*

*The heart of the culture is a school as a learning community*

*All elements of school culture were examined from the viewpoint of students’ development, well-being and learning*



**The school’s task is to inspire hope for a good future**



*In the reform of the curriculum,  
the main goals were to tackle the issues  
which had emerged during  
the consultation processes and  
to develop education with respect to the goals of  
**equity, equality and high quality**  
and **students' engagement and well-being at**  
school.*

*Halinen et al. (2013).*



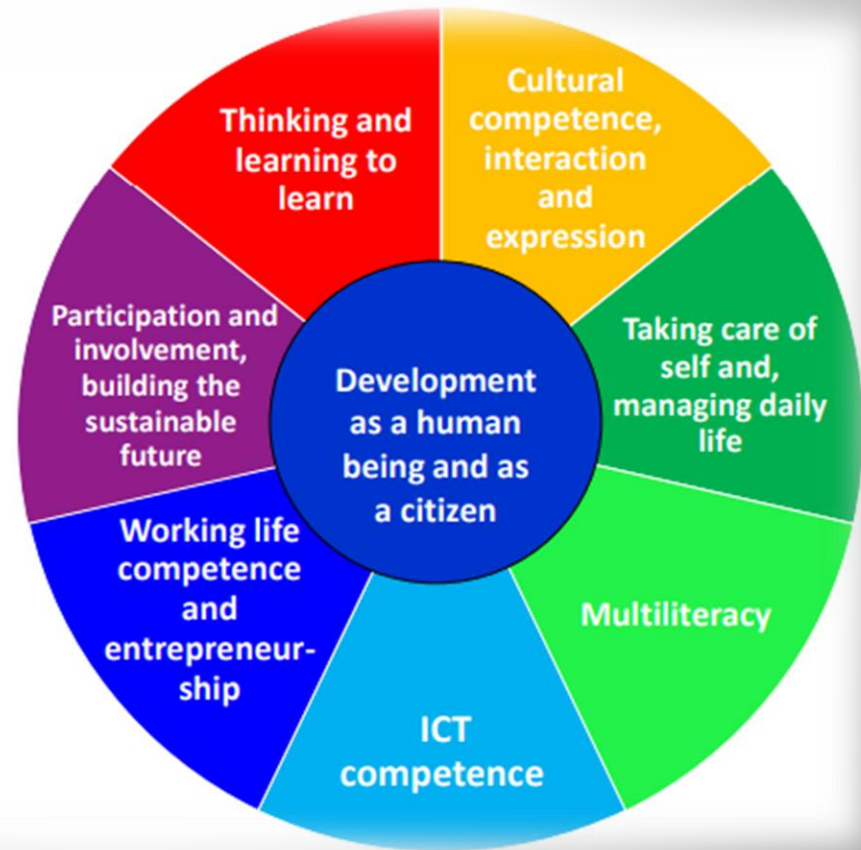
# Integrative approach

- *transversal competencies*

## Rethinking competences

National Goals for Basic Education and Transversal Competences

- knowledge
- skills
- values
- attitudes
- will







# Multi-disciplinary learning modules

exploratory study periods and projects

- schools at least once every school year


enquiry-based

- cooperation

knowledge · skills · values · attitudes · will/volition

- different study groups
- students of different ages
- the school and the community
- teachers collaborate (planning, implementing)
- students participate (planning, implementation, assessment)





instead '*implementation of the curriculum*'  
teachers construct own professional guidelines  
based on the local curriculum  
to educate students who are able to...

encounter pressures for  
change

knowledge-based  
considerations

make decisions based on  
ethical reflection

assess changes critically

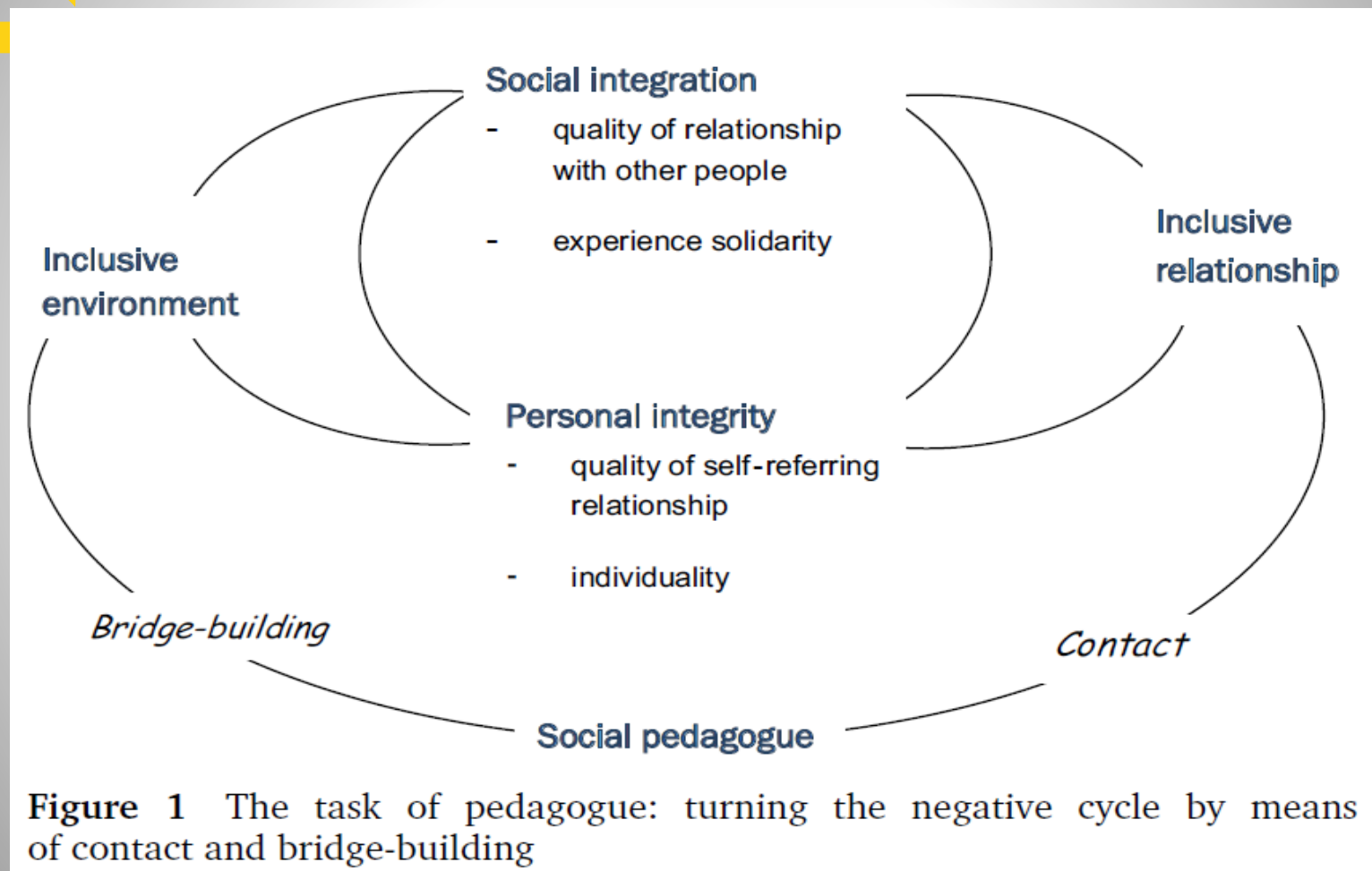
be responsible for choices  
that build our future

provide and feel empathy  
towards others

reflect what is valuable in life



*an effective teacher "builds and bonds"*



**Figure 1** The task of pedagogue: turning the negative cycle by means of contact and bridge-building

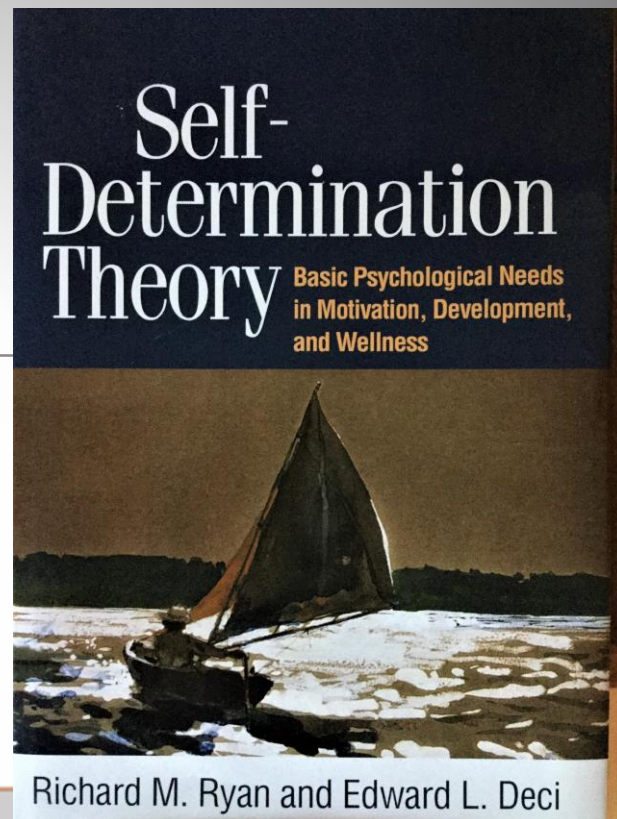


## Finnish national curriculum 2014

*safety*

*a need to belong*

*to be accepted*



Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci





# Evaluation for the school system

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A. *Who is responsible for the school system?*

- **Education providers** (municipalities/only few private schools) with guidelines set by Finnish National Agency for Education (FNAE)

B. *Is it evaluated (how and by who)?*

- **Education providers**
  - self-assessment data of each school assessed by students, parents and staff (every other year or once in three years)
  - annual plans of each school
- **KARVI** ([Finnish Education Evaluation Centre](#)) organizes voluntary national subject tests for 9<sup>th</sup> grade (Finnish, English, mathematics)



# School level curriculum planning

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*A. What is the role of principals and teachers in curriculum planning?*

- **Principals**

- A. process (teachers, students and parents included in process), content and confirm that curriculum is understood and obeyed in school

- **Teachers**

- take part in process, obey curriculum and provide information about their subject for students and parents (content, assessment)

*B. What is the role of principals and teachers in legislation?*

Principals' organization and Teachers' Trade Union provides statements.





# School regulations

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*A. How many regulations direct school system (laws, regulations) – few/many?*

- Basic Education Act
- Basic Education Degree
- Government Degrees
- National Core Curriculum
- Salamanca Statement
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Local guidelines provided by municipal board of education



# School funding

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## *A. How is school funding organized?*

- Government provides funding for each municipality for those services that are compulsory for each municipality to organize
  - September 20<sup>th</sup> each year: schools provide information how many students, special needs students, students with Finnish as second language, preparatory education students
- Municipalities are funded by that information for education, but that money is not “tagged”
  - local decision (municipalities)

# Improving schools

## A. *Who introduces improvements to the school system?*

- “Bottom-up”
  - schools are learning communities improving culture and activities (innovations and ideas shared locally and nationally)
- “Top-down”
  - FNAE and municipalities provide themes and guidelines (annual etc.)

## B. *How often are improvements done?*

- schools
  - with student council, shared leadership and collaborative teams for teachers) develop activities continuously
- curricula
  - ...1985, 1994, 2004, 2010, 2014... (FNAE)
- school plans
  - annually (at least three improvements in focus)



# Teachers' professional development

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A. Who provides for the professional development of teachers at the national level (professional institution, a public institute responsible ...)

- Professional development has multiple choices
  - universities, “open universities”, summer universities, FNAE, municipalities, schools in collaboration, individual schools)..
- teachers also have an active role in organizing additional training for themselves



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*“Equal and high-quality education  
is the best way to respect children and childhood,  
and to build a sustainable future  
for both individuals  
and the whole country.”*

*Halinen, 2018*



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