

RECENT CHANGES IN GEOGRAPHY EDUCATION IN FINLAND

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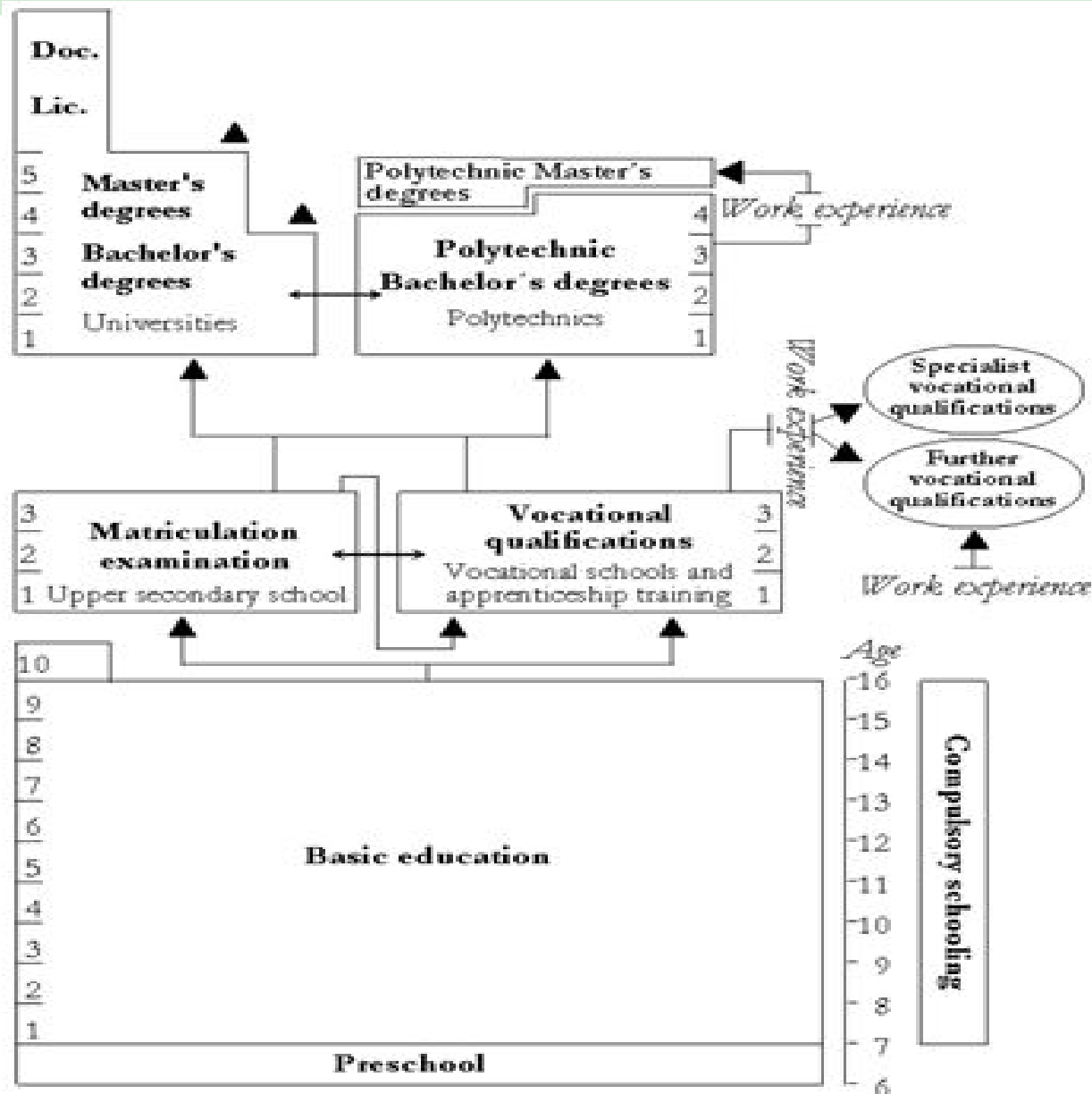
This presentation

1) Geography education in Finland

- Geographers' role in the school system
- Geography teachers' qualification
- Recent changes in the geography curricula
- Geography in the reform of the matriculation examination
- Geography and the PISA results

2) Evaluating geography learning – an approach through the concepts of learning

Education System Chart



Characteristics of basic education (by Finnish National Board of Education)

- teaching, text books and teaching materials, school transport and school meals are free
- a nine-year comprehensive curriculum for the whole age group
- teaching is provided by schools near the home
- a final certificate will be given for completing the syllabus
- provides the necessary prerequisites for all upper secondary education

Characteristics of basic education (by Finnish National Board of Education)

- almost all children complete comprehensive school, dropping out of school and repeating years are rare
- basic education includes a one-year long voluntary pre-primary education in a school or day-care centre
- local authorities can also provide voluntary morning and afternoon activities for pupils in basic education

Geography teachers' qualification

- Geography subject teachers have usually two subjects to teach (geography and biology)
- Geography teachers' MA studies
 - 3 years geography
 - 1 year biology (or other side subject)
 - 1 year pedagogical (educational) studies

Recent curriculum development in Finland

- The curriculum circle is about 10 years
- The curricula are made by the Finnish National Board of Education
- 1985: strict national curricula
- 1994: more school based curricula
- 2004: more guiding and stricter curricula
- next curricula: ???

Geography Education

Basic education (classes 1-9, begins in age 7)

- 1-4 environmental sciences
- 5-6 biology and geography
- 7-9 geography (not integrated!)

Upper secondary school education

- two compulsory geography courses
- two specialisation courses of geography
- applied geography courses

The essential themes of geography school courses in Finland.

Basic education	Essential themes
1-4 (age 7-11)	Home surroundings, home district, Finland, Nordic countries and Baltic countries
5-6 (age 11-13)	Europe, the various environments of the world
7-9 (age 13-16)	Comparison of at least two continents of the world, Europe, Finland
Upper-secondary school	Essential themes
Course 1 (compulsory)	Physical geography
Course 2 (compulsory)	Cultural/human geography
Course 3 (specialisation)	Risks and hazards
Course 4 (specialisation)	Area studies
Applied courses	Schools may decide the themes

Matriculation examination test

- National test for all the candidates (same tests)
- One test in the candidate's mother tongue is compulsory for all candidates
- Three other compulsory tests from among the following tests:
 - the test in the second national language (usually Swedish)
 - a foreign language test (English, German, French...)
 - the mathematics test
 - one test in the general studies battery of tests (sciences and humanities)

The general studies battery

- Includes separate tests in Evangelical Lutheran religion, Orthodox religion, Ethics, Philosophy, Psychology, History, Social studies, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Geography and Health Education
- Furthermore, the tests incorporate questions which cross the boundaries of these disciplines
- Depending on the test in question, the candidate answers six or eight test items (geography test: 10/6)

The amount of students (%) who chose the tests (S-06, A-06)

• Evangelical Lutheran religion	10	10
• Orthodox religion	0,1	0,1
• Ethics	0,6	0,8
• Philosophy	2	4
• Psychology	16	15
• History	16	19
• Social studies	8	5
• Physics	11	4
• Chemistry	10	8
• Biology	12	17
• Geography	14	17

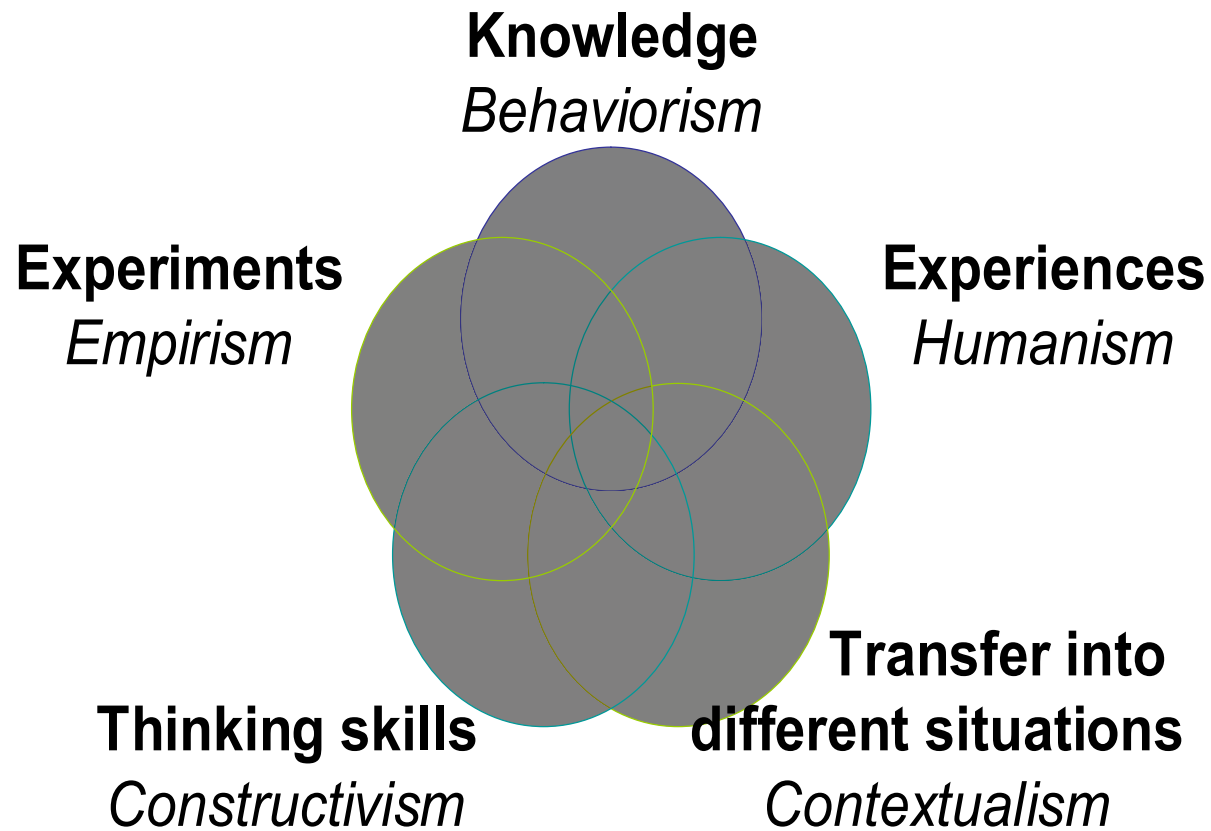
The reasons behind PISA results (according to The Finnish National Board of Education)

- Equal opportunities for education irrespective of domicile, sex, economic situation or mother tongue
- Education is accessible in all regions
- Education is totally free of charge
- The quality of learning and teaching materials
- Basic education is provided by qualified, autonomous teachers with a socio-constructivist learning conception

In 2006 the PISA assessment of scientific literacy (including geography)

- 1) scientific knowledge or concepts, which will be assessed by application to specific subject matter
- 2) scientific processes which, because they are scientific, will involve knowledge of science although in the assessment this knowledge must not form the major barrier to success
- 3) situations or contexts in which the knowledge or processes are assessed and which take the form of science-based issues

The elements of geography learning



The challenges of geography education

1. What kind of knowledge and concepts?
Physical AND cultural

2. How to strengthen
experimental learning
in geography?

4. The constructivist idea
of learning has become an
educational ideal. Is it
dominating? Is it too
individual-centered?

3. The understanding
of students' personal
experiences and
life-world

5. How to promote
contextual geography learning?
"Geography for life: From
thinking to behaviour and action"

