



# THE FINLAND CHARISMA!



All roads and even airways are leading to Finland these days. Educationists from all corners of the world are heading to **FINLAND** to know more about the **EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM**. Here is a case study of one such study tour

**H**ow Finland exports education nowadays is something that is worth looking at. After 2003 PISA results, Finland came into limelight and ever since the country continues to astound the world with its excellence in education. Teachers, trainers, parents, policy-makers or researchers are becoming more and more interested in discovering the 'recipe of the Finnish miracle in education.' Finland is currently promoting national strategies and programmes to 'export the excellence in education' abroad.

A number of start-ups have come up with the purpose of sharing good practices about pedagogical methods and are organising educational activities in Finland (school visits, academic lectures, and so on) or in different countries (tailored training courses according to the teachers' educational needs). Recently, I discovered one facet of this "exportation strategy" during a study tour organised by Learning Scoop, an educational start-up in Tampere. The whole week was dedicated to the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) program <http://learningscoop.fi/study-tours/ece-study-tour/>.

As teacher and researcher, I had the opportunity to analyse what constitute the particularity and the originality of a study tour.

- 1) **FIRSTLY, the training was focused on a specific age.** In comparison with global training, the programme concerning ECEC offers a deep overview for teachers or researchers interested in that age range, namely childhood. During the week, the most important aspects of childhood education were explained and analysed.
- 2) **SECONDLY, the combination between theory and practice proved very useful.** Each day the group visited schools in the morning and attended conferences and discussions in the course of the afternoon. This merger between theoretical and practical activities helped attendees to better understand the system.
- 3) **Each day was dedicated to a very specific theme on childhood education.**
  - 1) Introduction to the Finnish education system
  - 2) ECEC in Finland
  - 3) ECEC promoting learning
  - 4) Individual support in ECEC
  - 5) Co-operation and Open and Flexible learning environments in ECEC. Fortified with this diversity of knowledge and practices, each participant acquired the educative foundations on ECEC.

- 4) **FOURTHLY, the variety of schools visited presented a global panorama of educational institutions providing ECEC:** Pre-primary classes, open child care services, kindergartens, day-care centres, forest day-care centres, included classes for children with special needs, schools and libraries. These visits provided an overview on the collaboration between teachers, students, parents and society. For instance, we discovered that schools in Tampere are as good as those in Helsinki.  
In the forest day-care centre we attended the 'Mothers morning' (breakfast with children and their mothers) and the outside activities organised for students and mothers. In the library, we explored also the 'Maternity centre' (where pregnant women or mothers with children come for medical services, reading activities or attending conferences) and the 'Youth centre' a place reserved for young people eager for socio-cultural and educative activities;
- 5) **FIFTHLY, the professionalism of Finnish experts was greatly appreciated.** Each day, at least two trainers took care of us and accompanied us during the study tour. Specialists on the daily topic too joined us. This exchange was very fruitful because the attendants took

advantage of that variety of professional background of trainers.

- 6) **SIXTHLY, there was variety of trainers and participants** from Algeria, Brazil, Columbia, Costa Rica, France, Qatar, Mongolia, Romania, Russia and Vietnam, more continents were represented.
- 7) **FINALLY, educational activities and academic conferences included playful activities for the participants too.** For example, during this training, we witnessed several plays that kept the attention of the students during daily activities: 'Follow me with the appropriate figure' 'My background' 'Birthday line' and 'Let's build a story together'.

In addition, research approaches such as cognitivism, Frobel pedagogy or learning environment were passionately discussed. We also did brainstorming on face to face or on board with the application 'padlet'. In a nutshell, I can summarise the particular elements of this visiting tour in the table below:

Acquiring a deep knowledge of the Finnish educational system is almost a professional dream for plenty of teachers. We gained knowledge of the most fruitful strategies for excellence in education from Finland. ●

*(Mihaela-Viorica Rusitoru is Doctor in Education Sciences, France and a specialist in lifelong learning policies. The author can be reached at mihaela\_rusitoru@yahoo.com)*

## Cornerstones

Specific age early childhood	Theory and practice combination	Daily thematic	Variety of schools visited	Diversity of trainers' background	International participants	Ludic and playful activities
------------------------------	---------------------------------	----------------	----------------------------	-----------------------------------	----------------------------	------------------------------

Table 1: Pedagogical cornerstones of study tour with Learning Scoop in Finland