

Draft Report on the International Study Tour Visit to Finland 7 – 15 October 2023

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FOREWORD

The report outlines purpose of the study tour aims and objectives and overview of the Finland's Education system as per regulatory framework. Secondly, it describes the implementation of Finish Education System, the impact of education. Thirdly, the report outlines meetings held, school visits, Committee's key observations from the study visit. Towards conclusion, it highlights lessons learned and Committees' s recommendations for consideration by the Department of Basic Education and the 7th Parliament Portfolio Committee on Basic Education



RSA delegation led by Hon Chairperson Ms Bongive Mbinqo-Gigaba arriving at Finland Parliament

From left: Hon P. Sonti, Hon A. Adoons, Hon B. Nodada, Hon B. Mbinqo-Gigaba, Hon. R Moroatshehla

International Study Tour to Finland by Members of the Portfolio Committee on Basic Education:

Executive Summary

This report details the visit to Finland by South African delegation from Parliament of RSA, comprised of Members in the Portfolio Committee on Basic Education. The visit took place from 7 October to 15 October 2023.

The purpose of the visit was to learn about the Finnish education system and to explore potential collaborations between South Africa and Finland. During the visit, the delegates met with representatives from Finnish educational institutions, engaged with Diplomats, visited schools / learning institutions, and attended presentations at Helsinki, Turku, and Tampere. In addition, the delegates were able to gain a better understanding of the Finnish education system, culture, and its people when they engaged with officials from the Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry of International Affairs Education, Foundation, ICT Hub, Home schooling sector, FinCEED and Members of the Education Committee at Finland Parliament.

Overall, the delegation had a positive experience in Finland and were able to learn valuable lessons about the Finnish education system. Members were particularly inspired by allocation of funding to improve the basic education sector from Early Childhood Development up to Higher Education, the integration of technology in the classroom, the emphasis on individualized instruction, and the importance placed on Teacher Professional Development for the benefit of student's well-being. The delegates were also able to identify potential areas of collaboration between South Africa and Finland, including the

sharing of best practices and the exchange of teachers and students. The section below provides an overview of the program activities undertaken during the study visit, the lessons learned, and the potential areas of collaboration.

Program / Itinerary

The delegates began their visit by attending a session on the Finnish Home Education system in Helsinki. The session provided an overview of the Finnish homeschooling, including its operations in other parts of Scandinavia. Thereafter the delegation visited a home education school, where Members of the delegation were able to observe the classes in action and interact with learners and teachers.

The second school was a Vocational Upper Secondary School in Tampere, and the delegation was able to observe a variety of classes, including art, music, nutrition, entrepreneurship, massage class. Since the program was premised to engage with a range of stakeholders, a visit in Tampere preceded with a presentation on the use of technology in the classroom. The presenters focused on the use of tablets and other digital devices to enhance learning and to enable collaboration between students and teachers. The delegates also visited a Numenpakka primary school in Turku whereby the importance of school's infrastructure, role of municipality and parents were essential to improve the well-being of learners in the in-education system. The session also focused on the strategies used by schools to promote student well-being, such as flexible schedules and incorporating out-door learning activity into the curriculum. Municipality officials also came on board to share the role of municipality to support education in Finland.

Highlights

The visit to Finland was a valuable opportunity for the delegation to learn about the Finnish education system and to identify potential areas of collaboration between South Africa and Finland. The delegates were able to gain a better understanding of the Finnish Home education, Vocational education, support for learners, teacher development, and Members were particularly impressed by the integration of technology in the classroom. The emphasis on individualized instruction, and the importance placed on student well-being on a two-tier system is something is one of key lesson to take to SA. The delegates were also able to identify potential areas of collaboration between South Africa and Finland, as far as Mathematics, Science, ECD and, sharing of best practices and with exchange opportunities for teachers and students.



Source, Courtesy of Members pics (Oct 2023)

Left: Hon Chairperson Ms Mbinqo-Gigaba, Parliament RSA and Chairperson of Committee on Education, Hon Tuula Haatainen Finland Parliament.

Right picture: Mr Jukka Skantsi from Ministry of International Affairs and Culture welcoming Members of the RSA delegation: Hon Sonti, Hon Mbinqo-Gigaba, Hon Moroatshehla, Hon Nodada, Hon Adoons, support staff Mr S. Zuma (SA Sweden in Embassy) and Ms P. Mbude-Mutshekwan (Content Advisor)

Draft Report on Visit to Finland by Members of Parliament, South African Delegation

1. Introduction

This report details the visit to Finland by South African delegation from Parliament of RSA, (Members of the Portfolio Committee on Basic Education), which took place from 7 October to 15 October 2023. The purpose of the visit was to learn about the Finnish education system and to explore potential collaborations between South Africa and Finland. During the visit, the delegates met with representatives from Finnish educational institutions, visited schools / learning institutions, and attended presentations Helsinki, Turku, and Tampere. In addition, the delegates were able to gain a better understanding of the Finnish education system, culture, and its people when they engaged with the Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Members of the Education Committee at Finland Parliament

The delegation was comprised of 5 Members of the Portfolio Committee on Basic Education who conducted the international study tour.

Members of Parliament

- Hon B P Mbinqo-Gigaba MP (ANC) (Chairperson),
- Hon N G Adoons MP (ANC),
- Hon P R Moroatshehla MP (ANC),
- Hon B Nodada MP (DA)
- Hon N Sonti MP (EFF)

Parliamentary Support staff: Ms P Mbude-Mutshekwan (Content Advisor).

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY TOUR

The main purpose of the visit was to engage on their education system, literacy, numeracy, and language policies, including their implementation of the home education system. Further to look at professional development of teachers, the implementation of Early Childhood development and support for special needs education. The focus was also on engaging key home schooling sector, Ministry of Education, Local municipalities, and ICT /Education Technology stakeholders and to visit a few public schools.

1.2 THE AIMS AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

The broader aim of the study tour is to determine whether there are replicable best practices and new developments from the Finish education system that could be benchmarked to the South African education system to improve the Basic Education sector.

Summary of objectives of the international study tour were:

- a) To explore and understand the Republic of Finland Public Education System
- b) To explore and understand Finland Early Childhood Education System
- c) To explore and understand advancements in Literacy, Mathematics, Science and ICT
- d) To explore the implementation of Home Education
- e) To engage Legislators in Finland on education legislation /policies

During deliberations, the delegation engaged with range of stakeholders on the following:

- Legislation and Reforms of the Basic Education sector since the Portfolio Committee embarked on processing of the Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill (B2-2022).

- Skills required by the economy and how the Vocational Education and Training prepared learners to exit the schooling system.
- The Basic Education budget modalities and ECD funding
- School Governance structures and role of parents in the schools
- Measures to promote access to Quality Education, Learner Transport, and Nutrition
- Inclusive Education / Special Needs Education
- Language Policies for learning and Teaching at Finish Public Schools
- Educator Qualifications and Continuing Professional Development of Teachers
- Role of the Districts and Municipalities to support schools.

1.3. BACKGROUND

The international study tour is in line with the Strategic Plan of the 6th Parliament Administration (2019-2024), it forms part of the Portfolio Committee's Strategic Plan 2019- 2024, the Annual Performance Plan 2022/23, National Development Plan, the 4th United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) goal 4 on Quality Education, and the Department of Basic Education Vision 2025 Towards realization of schooling.

South Africa's vision on basic education is to provide quality education for all. This commitment is inscribed in the country's National Development Plan (vision 2030) MTSF (2019- 2030) and is also aligned with international development agreements such as Sustainable Development Goals. It is recognized that basic education is an indispensable condition for meeting other development targets, such as the internationally agreed-upon Sustainable Development (SDG) goal 4 on quality education. Sector Priority outcomes as stated in the NDP, which informed the Committee's oversight work are as follows.

- Quality basic education.
- A skilled and capable workforce to support an inclusive growth path.
 - A diverse, socially cohesive society with a common national identity

In line with Parliament Oversight and Accountability Model, it was pertinent that the Portfolio Committee embark on the study tour, engage with legislators in Finland to explore new insights that enhance its oversight role over executive thus ensuring that quality education is made accessible to all children.

Adherence to the international benchmarks such as allocating sufficient resources in education is necessary to meet SDG 4 targets. SDG goal 4 requires coordination and implementation mechanisms to be reinforced to strengthen international cooperation, and partnerships. By sharing perspectives with other countries experiences and developing joint initiatives, would ensure complementarity and synergy in efforts to meet the national development goals, (NDP) towards achievement of set priorities and MSTF (2019-2024). It is on that basis the study tour to Finland was envisaged to have outcomes on learning from Finish Education experiences.

The study tour was necessary to see how best institutions in other countries provide children, with the competences to participate in the economy with skills set that are matched with the demands of the economy. Inter alia, this requires attention to pedagogy, curricula, teaching and learning. It also became important for the Committee to explore how a country such as Finland, which had gone through similar legislation amendments in 1996, and 1921, have dealt with legislative challenges, provide access to learning materials, effective teacher training and continuous professional development.

PRIOR DEPARTURE: PROTOCOL AND DIPLOMACY SESSION

To prepare the delegation for the international participation, a pre-trip Protocol and Diplomacy session was conducted by International Relations and Protocol Division (IRPD) section, for Members effective engagement with Finland counterparts. The session briefly focused on the following:

- General Advisory on Public Diplomacy,
- Meeting and Greeting host/stakeholders,
- Body Language, Handshakes, Corporate Culture,

- Dining Etiquette, Attire and Dress code for Arrival and Official meetings.

1.4 ARRIVAL IN HELSINKI, FINLAND

Upon arrival at Helsinki Airport, the delegation was welcomed by Mr Zuma, the 3rd Secretary from the South African Embassy, at Sweden and the driver of the Helsinki Transport Services. The delegation first night accommodation was reserved at the Torni Solo Sokos Hotel in, Vantaa Helsinki for the duration of the stay, however due to visits in other parts of Finland (Tampere and Turku), the delegation was also booked for accommodation at Lapland Hotel at Tampere for 2 nights 9– 10 October 2023.

1.5 COUNTRY CONTEXT: FINLAND

Geographically, Finland borders Sweden to the northwest, Norway to the north, and Russia to the east, with the Gulf of Bothnia to the west and the Gulf of Finland to the south, opposite Estonia. Helsinki is the capital and largest city. In terms of demographics, it has a population of 5.6 million people, majority of population are (ethnic Finns) and the official languages are Finnish and Swedish, with Swedish being the native language of 5.2% of the population. Finland has persons with foreign background, and they are 7.5 % of the population. The country covers an area of 338,145 square kilometers (130,559 sq m). The education level of the working age population is the driving force of the country's economic growth, in that.

- 9 % is at basic education

- 44 % at upper secondary education and 45 % at tertiary education



Source (Tourist Webpage, Finland,2024)

Main areas visited by the delegation in Finland were Helsinki. Tampere, Turku

1.6 Why Finland was identified for the Study Tour?

Finnish education system is regarded to be among the best performing education systems globally. In line with Finland Constitution, it cites that “Everyone has the right to basic education free of charge “(Constitution of Finland, 1999)



Source: (FinCEED Presentation, 2023)

Principles of Finland Education

Principles underpinning the Education System in Finland, are embedded in the basic principle that *every citizen has equal opportunities to study throughout life. The same educational opportunities should be available to all citizens irrespective of their ethnic origin, age, wealth or where they live.*

These principles formed an area of interest and the Portfolio Committee identified Early childhood development (ECD), Mathematics, Science, and Technology, Legislative matters viz, the BELA Bill as an area to explore perspectives of the Finish education sector. The Committee was interested in learning and sharing perspectives as per the Strategic objective on International Participation.

Finland Strategic Focus in Africa, Globally and Regionally

From the perspective of foreign policy objectives and International relations aspect, Finland's strategic bilateral significance for South Africa lies in her potential bilateral partnerships especially in areas of education, innovation, sustainable economic development, the circular economy and the fourth industrial revolution.

South Africa and Finland Bilateral Political Relations

According to available records, bi-lateral relations between Finland and South Africa date back many decades ago. During the anti-apartheid struggle, Finish Government provided support to Southern African liberation movements, in particular humanitarian support. Amongst others, Finnish nationals had contributed to the attainment of South Africa's liberation by actively supporting the sanctions against apartheid between (1987 and 1991).

Finland response to Global Responsibility

Key objectives of its long-term development cooperation remain position and rights of women and girls; democracy, high quality education and training; jobs and strengthening the economic base in developing countries; mitigating climate change and adapting to it; food security; water; renewable energy; sustainable use of natural resources.

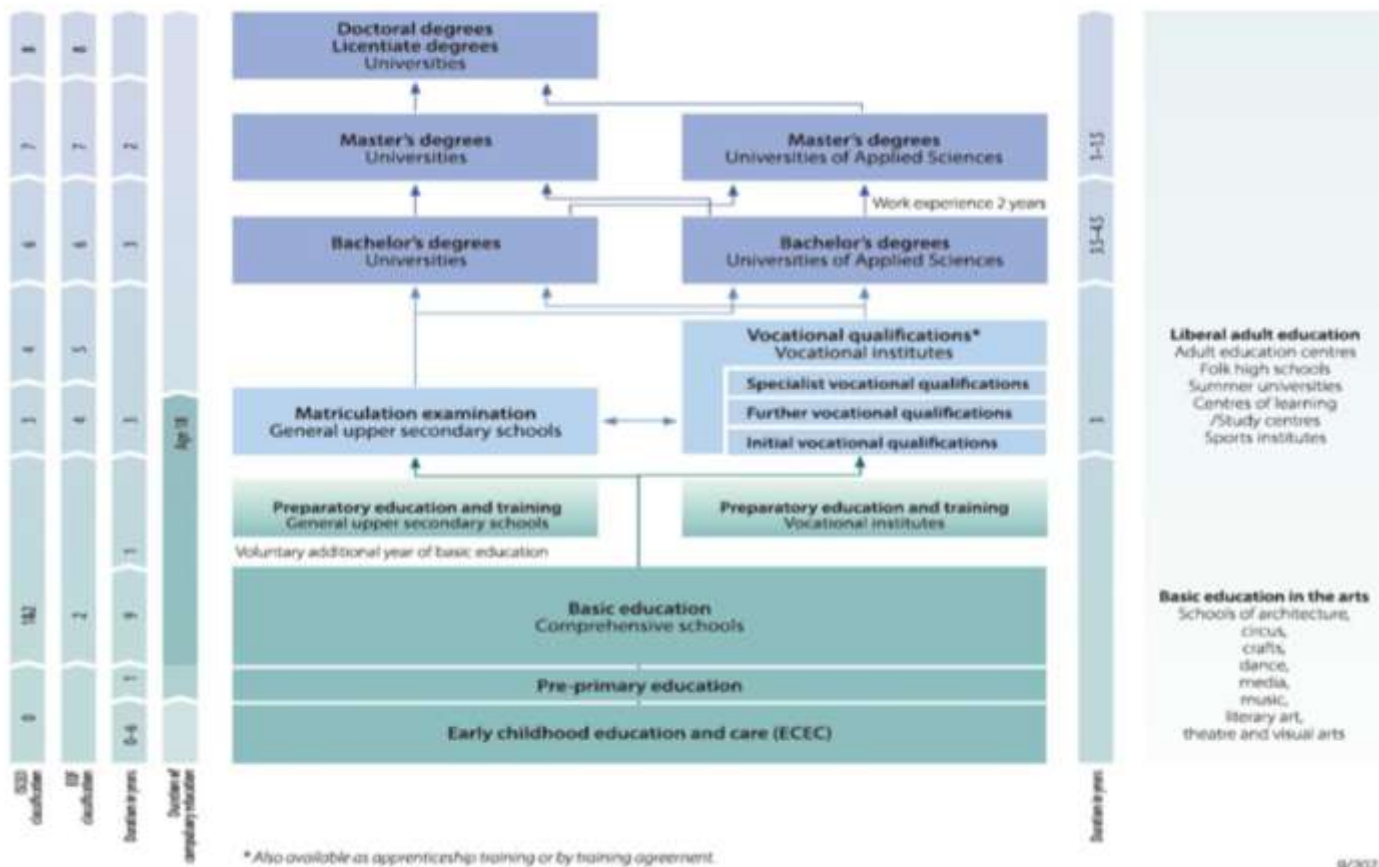
Finland commitment to increase partnerships with African countries.

Finland commits to support the EU partnership negotiations between the African Union and the EU. The new government also undertakes to prepare a comprehensive “Africa strategy”, based on Agenda 2030 aimed at ensuring “coherence” in Finland’s Africa policy.

2. Education in Finland: Ministry of Education

During the visit, the delegation met with diplomats, education experts and representatives from Finnish educational institutions, who provided presentations to the delegation to gain a better understanding of the Finnish Education system. (The information below is extracted from engagements with Finnish Education experts that had engagements with the delegation).

EDUCATION SYSTEM IN FINLAND



Source: (Education in Finland Publication FinCEED and Ministry of Education and Culture publication ,2023)

The Finnish education system regards 0- 6years as Early Childhood and Care (ECEC) whereby compulsory education starts at 6 years and from age 7 children start school. The Basic Education duration is 9 Years. The diagram above structured Finnish education as follows:

Early childhood education and care which is provided for children before the compulsory education begins, (at the age of seven normally)

- Pre-primary education is provided for children in the year preceding the beginning of compulsory education,
 - Nine-year of primary and lower secondary education (comprehensive school), is compulsory.
 - Upper secondary education, which is either general upper secondary education or vocational education and training, and
 - Higher education provided by universities and universities of applied sciences.
 - Adult education is available at all levels. Liberal adult education offers non-formal studies.
 - Basic education in the arts is goal-oriented education in different fields of art.
 - Finland has a high level of education, based on high quality teacher education.
 - The country invests in teacher education, research and development for effective learning outcomes.
- In accordance with the constitution the State provides free education from early childhood education, primary and lower secondary education elementary and middle school students while Vocational Education is governed by the local government authorities. ICT initiatives, teaching in mother tongue (Finnish/Swedish) are imbued in all levels of education, however the education system also recognize other ethnic languages.



(Source: Copy of Finland Constitution, 2020)

2.1 Structure of the Education System Finland

Finnish Education is structured into two., i.e. the National Administration System under the Ministry of Education and Finnish National Agency for Education, the latter is a group of experts.

Two-tier national administration



Source: (FinCEED, 2023)

In the above structure, the Education administration is two pronged /dual structure, the Ministry takes lead in policy and legislation at National level while the Finnish National Agency focus on core curriculum etc. Local government make decisions on allocation of funding, development of local curriculum and recruitment of personnel.

2.2 Financing Education

The State Budget is approximately of 87,9 billion euros, and the share of education is about 9,6 billion euros, which also includes spending in the cultural sector. Consideration of the draft Budget 2024 in Finland started in the week of 15 October 2023 with a preliminary debate in plenary session.

In Finland, Early Childhood Education and Care, Pre-Primary, Primary and Lower secondary education are free, and are part of the municipal basic services that receive statutory government transfers. The statutory government transfer is based on the number of 0–15-year-olds living in the municipality and the special conditions of the municipality. The municipality can decide independently how the funds are allocated.

- Funding for *general upper secondary education* is based on the number of students reported by the school as well as the unit prices set by the Ministry of Education and Culture.
- *Vocational education and training* (VET) are jointly financed by central and local government.
- The VET funding system rewards education providers for their outcomes, in terms of efficiency and effectiveness of the activities.
- The government allocates core funding to *universities and universities of applied science* (UAS).

2.2.1 The Budget Allocation

Expenditure on education 2020



• Operative costs per pupil/student	
• pre-primary education	6 341 €
• basic education	9 597 €
• general upper secondary	7 961 €
• vocational upper secondary	10 393 €

Finnish National Agency for Education

The equivalent of the above amounts conversion to ZAR @20.47euro

6342 Euros = R 129,465 per learner

9597 Euros = R195,896 per learner

7961 Euros = R 162,675 per learner

10 393 Euros = R212,341 per learner

2.2.2 Educational support

Every learner and student have the right to educational support: student guidance and student welfare services. Special Needs Education is generally mainstreamed in all schools. Learners who need more support are given intensified support or special support.

2.2.3 Teacher education in Finland

Finland's high level of education and competence is based on high-quality teacher education. The qualifications required from teachers are defined in legislation. Teachers are required to have 5years University degree. All teacher education institutions involve pedagogical studies and guided teaching practice.

2.3 Legislative Reforms: Compulsory Education

The main objective of Finnish education policy is to offer all citizens equal opportunities to receive education regardless of age, residence, financial situation, sex or mother-tongue. Responding to the above, the Finish government provided the education system that caters for pre-primary, basic, secondary, vocational, polytechnic, and university education.

Recent education reform became effective in 2021 and it means that compulsory education goes beyond 9th grade. The aim of the reform is that all students gain an upper secondary qualification after basic education. Compulsory education is free of charge for every student. The minimum school leaving age has been raised to 18 years. Before the reform school leaving age was 16.

2.3.1 Continuing Learning

The experts over-emphasized that Finnish education system has no dead-ends. What it means is that it is very important that learners can always continue their studies on an upper level of education, whatever choices they make.

2.3.2 Assessment

Finland assessment has (*No standardized tests in basic education*).

Student's progress, working skills, and behavior are assessed according to the objectives defined in the national core curricula and local curricula. Students' performances are not compared to each other. The assessment is based on the school subjects. When a certificate is provided on 6th and 9th grade, the learner's achievement is to be assessed according to the assessment criteria defined in the national core curriculum. The national assessment criteria are defined in numerical grades 5, 7,8 and 9 and a (scale 4 to 10) for the 6th to 9th grades.

Students are encouraged to think critically and assume responsibility for their own learning. The teacher evaluates the students' progress in school. In comprehensive education, all grades are given evaluation by the teacher, therefore there are no national examinations as such, like we have in South Africa with the NSC examinations.

3. Early Childhood Development

According to FinCEED presentation, (2023), Finland's Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) known as kindergartens started already from 1860's, with focus on early education. The term (ECEC) encompassed creches as well-paying attention to care of children for low-income families/single mothers who had to work. EDUCARE ideology traced back to 1880's is premised on socio-pedagogical kindergartens methods, using Fröbel's methods of upbringing children. ECEC teacher education started in 1892. The illustration below highlights the pedagogical framework of ECEC.

The pedagogical framework of ECEC



Source: FinCEED presentation, 2023

- From August 2001 every municipality had to offer pre-primary education for 6-year-old children, 700 hours/year.
- Pre-primary education became free of charge for 6-year-old children.
- Pre-primary education is organized in early learning education centres (80%) and schools (20%)
- 70% of children attend additional ECEC services on full day right through the year.

3.1 Legislative Amendments: Basic Education Act

Finland Parliament passed the Basic Education Act, section 26a and 35 (12 December 2014/1040) with clauses that emphasized the following:

- Compulsory pre-primary education started from 1 August 2015 after legislative reforms.
- The Basic Education Act made it compulsory that the year prior to entering primary education, children must attend pre-primary education or some other activity catering for the objectives of pre-primary education.
- Core Curriculum for Pre-Primary Education, adopted from August 2001, was revised in 2010 and 2014 and adapted from 1 August 2016.

The Education Act / Legislation also emphasised the following in relation to Basic Education:

Obligation to participate

The year prior to entering primary education children must attend pre-primary education or other activity catering for the objectives of pre-primary education.

Guardian's obligation

The guardian of a child is obliged to ensure that the child attends pre-primary education or will achieve similar education by other means.

Regularity of attendance

A child must attend the education to which he or she has been admitted, unless temporarily exempted for a particular reason.

3.3 Funding for Early Childhood Education and Care: Proposals 2024

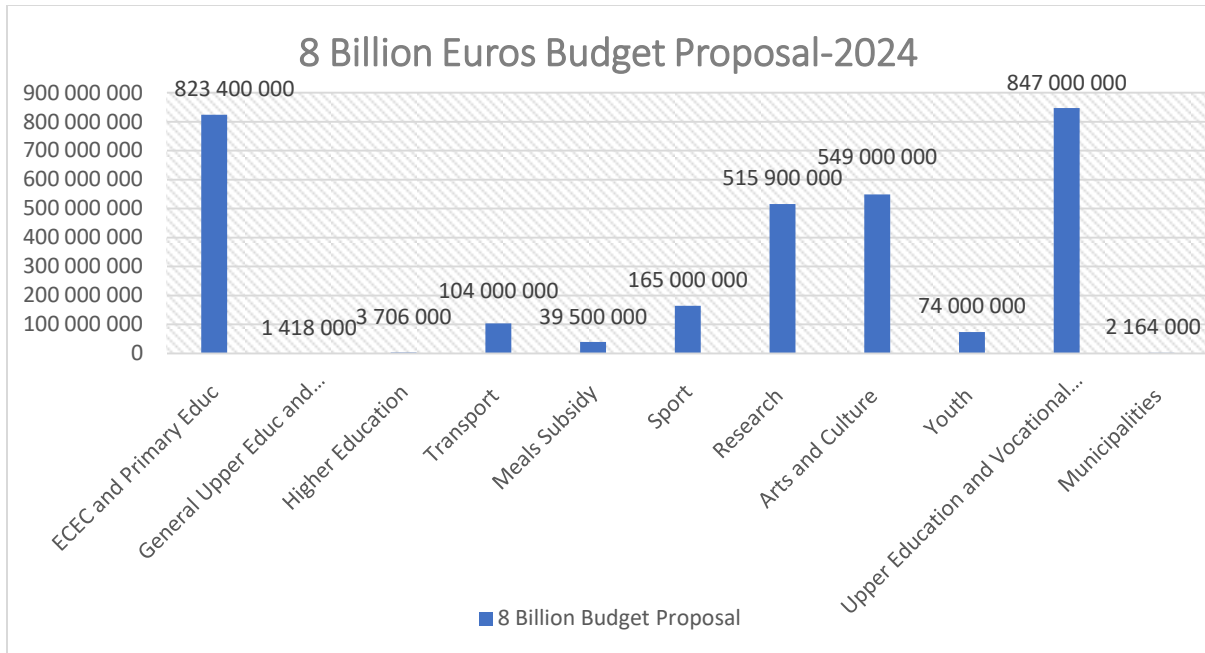
Finland provides Free early childhood education for 5-year-olds. Early childhood education duration is (4 hours a day). For 5-year-old children, ECEC begins on the 1st of August each year and continues until the beginning of their pre-primary education.

The Ministry of Education and Culture's portion of the 2024 budget proposal is EUR 8.0 billion, which is EUR 274 million more than in the 2023 Budget. The budget proposal seeks to implement the Programme of the Government by raising the level of education and competence. The measures in the budget proposal aim to strengthen the effectiveness of science and improve the conditions for conducting research and development. They also aim to advance methods of creating/ leveraging arts and culture and promote active lifestyles for all age groups (FinCEED, 2023).

3.4 Role of Municipalities in Early Childhood Education

The municipality of residence provides children with free municipal pre-primary and basic education. Compulsory education applies to children who live in Finland permanently and have a municipality of residence.

Table 1: Education Budget Proposals for 2024



(google source , Education and Culture Committee Budget proposals , 2023)

As per table 1 above, Early Childhood and Care (ECEC), Primary education, Upper Education and Vocational , followed by Research , Art and Culture seem to be main priorities in the Finland Education Budget.

Expenditure on ECEC (2020)

ECEC / child / year	€ 15,400
Pre-primary education / child / year	€ 6,500
Total expenditure	€ 2,8 billion
(ECEC, private care allowance, pre-primary)	1,4 % of GDP
Accrual of client fees	€ 228 million

The equivalent of the above amounts conversion @20.47euro to ZAR

15,400 Euros	=	R 315,330	for each child at ECEC per year
6500 Euros	=	R 133,094	per child at pre-primary education per year
2,8 billion Euros	=	R57,332 800.000	billions Total expenditure
228 million Euros	=	R4,668,528 .000	billions accrual of client fees

(Conversion figures in rands (ZAR) is just a guide)

4.MEETINGS HELD DURING THE STUDY TOUR VISIT

To achieve the aims and objectives of the study tour, the delegation held meetings with various stakeholders in Finland. starting with representatives of Home Schooling and Home Education Organizations.

4.1 ENGAGEMENT WITH HOME EDUCATION STAKEHOLDERS, HELSINKI

The delegation 1st engagement was with representatives of the home-schooling Stakeholders. The meeting was held in Helsinki. Home Schooling sector in Sweden (Olands) joined via virtual platform. They alluded that home schooling is underpinned by religious values, and they concerned about the sexualization of education and homophobia. Predominantly, Homeschooling is banned in Europe and most recently in Sweden on the grounds of religious extremism.

In Finland the class average is 8- 10 learners per class, it is completely free, the legislative requirement is that the government must be informed prior before the child/learner is home schooled. There is a municipal inspector responsible for the review and determination of learner progression.

Government schools oversee and give the grades in accordance with the National Curriculum, (that is they act as the external assessors for progression of learners. Even though home schoolers are not bound by the National Curriculum, they still need to align with it as progression is at the hands of government schools. Post home school, the learners get the opportunity to either go to the gymnasium or vocational college. They re-iterated that home school education does not disadvantage learners when they exit the system.

4.2 HOME SCHOOL VISIT: CHRISTIAN BASIC EDUCATION SCHOOL

The first school visited by the delegation in Finland was a home-school named Christian Basic Education School in Helsinki. Delegation was welcomed by the Principal Mr Jan who introduced the Members to learners and educators during a prayer devotion morning assembly, thereafter the engagements continued at the principal's office.

According to the Basic Education Act of Finland, "***if a child of compulsory education age does not participate in education provided under the Basic Education Act***, the local authority of the pupil's place of residence shall supervise his or her progress. The Christian School in Helsinki is a school for 7–16-year-old students which centres its fundamentals of basic education on Christian values. This Home school is compliant to Finnish National Curriculum, and help students learn, develop their skills and character to reach their full potential. The school emphasizes the culture of respect and helping others in need, encourage inclusive education for all students to be part of the home school. The ECD section of the school, is in the same building as the Christian school. ECD provides a preschool education for six-year-olds and early childhood education for 3–5-year-old children. Providing a caring and coherent learning environment. The language of teaching and learning is Finnish. Those whose first language is not Finnish; a second language is offered. Learners start English on first grade and Swedish on sixth grade, both of which are compulsory. In addition, the school also provide Russian and English lessons to upkeep foreign language skills in said languages, or to those whose families speak either language at home. The school is maintained by the Home School Association of Helsinki Christian School, which is a non-denominational association and is open to join for anyone interested in Christian education. The Association receives grants from the Finnish government and the city of Helsinki. There are no tuition fees or other compulsory fees for the students attending our school.

4.2.1 Member Observations

- Members asked whether home education is a key issue in Finland or does everyone goes to public school.

- Members wanted to find out whether there are exceptions whereby learners don't attend the public schools.
- Learners who exit the system, what options do they have of attending vocational training or higher education.
- Members queried what role the government plays to support home-schooling.
- Members engaged on whether the home education is aligned with public schools' curriculum.

4.3.2 Responses by the Principal

- Most parents send their children to public schools, and few chose the home schooling.
- In some part of Scandinavia e.g Sweden, Home schooling is not allowed so its few exceptions that learners don't attend the public schools.
- Learners who exit the system can attend further vocational education.
- The Government allocates small funding however at the Christian School the parents take lead in supporting the school financially and other resources.
- It's a requirement to inform the Government prior learners are being Home-schooled.
- Officials from nearby public schools act as Assessors of Home schools



Home School visit : The Principal Mr Jan with Hon Moroatshehla addressing the learners and educators
5. DELEGATION VISIT TO TAMPERE, FINLAND

Business Tampere on behalf of the City of Tampere and all other stakeholders who were part of the visit co-ordination, warmly welcomed the Portfolio Committee on Basic Education lead by Hon B P Mbinqo-Gigaba.

The delegation met the South African Ambassador to Finland Hon Consul Mr Timo Jokinen, who welcomed the South African delegation at Tampere. The Ambassador went through the study tour programme with the delegation and shared some historical information about the relationship between South Africa, Finland, and protocol to be observed during official business and dinner engagements.

Diplomatic Engagement:

The program also included engagement with Business Tampere. On behalf of the City of Tampere and all other stakeholders they warmly welcomed the South African Portfolio Committee on Basic Education. Formal dinner was hosted by City of Tampere officials i.e. Lauri Savisaari, Executive Director of Education and Culture and Kristiina Järvelä, Director of Basic Education hosted the dinner. The discussion hinged on Finland Education Priorities, Budget and role of municipalities to support education.



Hon Mbinqo- Gigaba presenting Parliament gift to Host, representing City of Tampere.

5.1 Visit to Tampere Vocational College (TREDU)

The college is located at Pyyrikki Campus, Santalahdentie 10, 33200 Tampere. Ms Anna -Maija Siirtonen, took the delegation through the Presentation about Vocational Education in Finland and TREDU.

In Finland, learners enrol for studies in the field of vocational education and training (VET). Irrespective of whether one is working towards their first profession, a career changer or someone who is looking to elevate their existing competence further, the Finnish VET caters for everybody.

Finnish VET put emphasis on skills and are always demonstrated through practical work. For students who are in a vocational institution they complete work-based learning in an actual workplace. Some apply for apprenticeship training. Previous work experience is recognized where those who already acquired the skills needed, can demonstrate their competence through skills programs and earn an official qualification. The Finnish vocational qualification also gives learners the opportunity to apply to further studies in a university.

5.2 Member Observations:

- Members were interested to understand the age of starting schooling. What is the Compulsory age to start education in Finland.
- Members commented that ECD in South Africa is infused into the mainstream, so how is ECD made compulsory?
- Is TREDU accommodative of learners with special education needs?
- Members raised a question on question on issue of learner's documentation: How are immigrant learners with no documents treated or handled within the schooling system?
- Members asked, what is the teacher learner ratio in terms of class size:
- Does the college track student after completion and how do they get feedback from students?
- Members needed to understand how learners from home schooling adjust at the VET.
- In terms of Governance what roles do SGB fulfil at the schools?
- Members queried, from age of 15 to 18, how do you teach learners about teenage pregnancy and how does this situation affect the competition of studies?
- Members queried whether Finland teachers are affiliated to teacher unions.
- In terms of exit pathway, Members wanted to find out where do students go, after completing their studies?
- How does the college deal with learner dropouts?
- With regards to community support, question was posed in terms of what roles do municipalities play in the education sector?

- What is the requirement for educators to get good qualifications?
- Members queried ways to evaluate teacher performance in the classrooms.

5.3 Responses

- The staff presented responded that Finland provides children with Early childhood and care (ECEC) and 6 years is the start of compulsory schooling.
- The culture of getting higher degrees for educators has always been there, most teachers obtain the Master's degree for teaching.
- The structure for each qualification is the same, students chose their Vocational Stream curriculum with the support of parents,
- On Undocumented, learners, such applicants write the TOEFL tests to evaluate the language skills, they need to have documents, in Finland.
- Students spend time adjusting to the meaning of Vocational Education. The Class size is from 20 – 30, in the first term, then the class size gradually decreases.
- Learners with special education are accommodated and they do enroll in vocational education. They are supported, the college however focus on inclusive education than special needs education.
- Most students, enroll for Forestry career and while, working outdoors in nature they do not come back to classes regularly.
- Immigrant learners get the free education. and are treated the same as other learners.
- In Finland, homeschooling is not popular because, everyone goes to public school, HE is not an issue, its few exceptions that don't go to public school.
- There are teacher unions, a strong voice for the teachers, as well as a coordinator of teacher unions.
- In Finland teenage pregnancy it's not an issue because Teachers talk about sexuality education openly at Grade 6, boy and girls, it's not a taboo. There's low birth rate in Finland, women give birth at age 30 years, people think of education, career, stability then think of pregnancy, young girls get protection pills up to 18 years,
- Teachers are trusted, there is no need to evaluate them.

After the engagement Members were taken through the Campus facilities tour and discussions followed at lunch time at the school premises.



Delegation in Tampere, with staff of TREDU Vocational College

5.4 Visit to Learning Scoop (Tampere)

The delegation had scheduled a meeting with educational experts from Learning Scoop and Polar Partners at Platform6, Åkerlundinkatu 8, 33100 Tampere. Ms Johanna Järvinen-Taubert, is a Pedagogical Director, & Mr Milton Aldrete, Partnership Manager, led the discussion with presentation on K12 school operations, role of rectors and teachers. Time for open discussions and questions were followed the presentation.

Ms Järvinen- Taubert, presentation touched on the topic “empowering teachers through professional development and Education outside of the classroom. She further alluded to Finnish Education Practise, how to read and write (Literacy component) and wrapped off with focus on using digital Apps. The next presentation by Milton Aldrete, from Polar Partners. His topic hinged on how to promote sustainable development for schools’ infrastructure.

Mr Milton Aldrete, from Polar Partners highlighted that his company concept is to lo whole education system development and works in collaboration with other education partners across the globe and is interested in collaborating with South African partners/counterparts.

The presentation alluded to National Projects to rebuild schools in Peru, and other part of the world with focus on designing the school's infrastructure.

On School development, the presenter highlighted the following.

- Developing education together with local's up to national level
- School development to consider the Curriculum, and rooms like science laboratories etc.
- Teacher training, toolkit
- Materials software for ICT and e-learning
- Management training
- Infrastructure School building
- Student support and wellbeing

- Finland attains educational ranking, because of learning resources provided to students, teacher and school development.
- Emphasis is on knowledge transfer

5.5 Challenges

The presentation also alluded to challenges observed as follows:

- Teachers and resources in some learning materials are not connected to the curriculum.
- Teachers hardly collaborate among each other, there is no synchronization with other classes.
- Teachers have different digital platforms, that hinders utilization of polar resources.

5.5.1 Observations

- Members queried how was the Government assisting with funding?
- Members wanted to know the aspects of Professional Development of Teachers in Rural areas; what role does the Learning Scoop organization play to ensure that the education system produce the kind of teachers that is responsive to the needs of the country?
- How is professional evaluation of teachers implemented?
- What support is rendered to reduce admin for teachers, so that time is spent effectively with classroom management and other tasks?
- * Members commented that in South Africa the school completion focus is on Matric whereby the outcome of Basic Education is measured with results over 12 years,
- The focus of Polar is on teaches and learners, what collaboration exist for Polar to help the South African schools in terms of learning resources and infrastructure.

5.5.2 Responses from Learning Scoop and Poplar Partners

- The presenters responded by drawing attention that every government has money for education, 700 million Euros investments are committed over 3 -5years.
- In the vocational sector, the allocation is based condition that the VEC is linked to the needs of the industry.
- With the Model of specialized schools, 17% of budget is spent, donors are approached to generate funding for development of the schools.
- The response was provided by illustrating examples made in relation to partnerships with Rwanda and Zambia, that are linked to teacher training i.e. Train the Trainer model.
- Finland does not assess / monitor teachers, they are highly educated, and trusted. They use authentic evaluation to demonstrate that they applied the skills in their own work.
- * For Admin, using different tools has helped to ease admin burden in that teachers need to pay attention to teaching
- * To assess the learning outcome of students, is indicative of the way teachers are trained because they are good at their work and produce the desired learning outcomes.
- Learning Schoop and Poplar is keen to link up with the department of basic education, teacher organizations and schools in South Africa for possible collaboration.

5.6 Formal Dinner hosted by the City of Tampere

The Delegation was hosted to formal dinner by Lauri Savisaari, Executive Director of Education and Culture and Kristiina Järvelä, Director of Basic Education

Topical Discussion during Dinner

The hosts warm welcome to dinner occupied the delegation for almost 2 hours and remained focused on topical issues related to education which both sides (Host /guests and delegation) deliberated on issues such as

- The South Africa- and Finland Education system
- Discussions on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) goal 4
- Municipality's role in the Finland Education
- Finland -Africa Program
- Vision of Basic Education in SA and Finland



(Source: www.google flags pics, 2023)

6 Turku:

The delegation visited Nummenpkan school in Turku and had engagement with the principal, Mr Jukka Laine (Aoraki Unit). Pictures below highlight focus of the visit at the school.



School Infrastructure-Learning Environment



Learner Support



Curriculum school



Class visit and tour around the



Nutritional Support Program for Learners

6.1 VISIT TO TURKU PUBLIC SCHOOLS, FINLAND

Nummenpakkan school visit

The delegation was welcomed by the headmaster. The mode of information sharing was through PowerPoint presentations followed by discussions where the Members of Parliament would be given an opportunity to ask questions on issues raised in the presentations. His presentation touched on the following:

*The staff component of (71) Teaching staff

* Special needs assistants (15)

* A Budget (4 million euros) allocated by the local Municipality of Turku

The school has 3 different units i.e. Hailen unit, Nummi unit with 210 pupils, aged 7 -13 for grade 1-6 and Aurajoki Unit with 475 pupils, aged 13-16 for grade 7-9.

Numempakkan is in the eastern part of Finland, and most people move in here. The school receives learners from various language background, but learners are taught in Finish/ Swedish mother tongue at the school. In addition to Finish and sign language, 30 other languages are spoken at the school i.e. Arabic, Kurdish, Russian, Albanian, Ukraine, Afghanistan, Estonian, Vietnamese and Somali etc.

Regarding Learner Support, the school provides special support to 151 learners. Learners at this school do not present severe disability challenges however those that need individual education plan IEP get intensified support. The Learning Plan considers the support needs of all learners.

Special Support program accommodates a maximum of 10 pupils per class, and special needs teachers are available in every unit of the school. Involvement of parents is critical to support the learners in subjects such as Mathematics after school.

Learners spend less hours at school, 30 mins of tuition per grade, days are short with 24 lessons per week and 30 mins homework time. For Social Cohesion, there's is an AntiAnti-bullying program at school, whereby the school encourages peace and tolerance.

Teaching profession is highly esteemed, the principal at Numepakkan told the Members that the teaching profession in Finland was highly respected, highly qualified and schools seen as engine of the community. When it comes to trust, the relationship between society and schools in Finnish society, they believed in education as a way for social mobility. The Finnish have a very positive attitude towards education. Maintain Professional standards and take responsibility continuous learning. For those teachers who are doing excellent jobs, they need more recognition, and the sector must recognise multiple ways ensuring that the teachers are provided with resources to teach learners.

6.2 Member observations

- Members wanted to find out how long it takes for teachers training.
- Members asked about the progression of learners, assessment practices and values of the school since the schools accommodates learners from different contexts.
- Members queried; how does the school employ the teachers.

- What makes the Finland education system unique among other educational systems?
- Members asked about the strategies applied for teaching Mathematics at the school.

6.3 Responses

Initial Teacher Training in Finland takes a duration of 5 years, and Teachers exit with a Master's Degree. Teaching practice occurs in the first, 2nd and 3rd year. During the 4th year, teachers specialize to support learners with Special Educational Needs, or go abroad to see how other school's work. The completion year of initial teacher training, focus on Subject teaching practice.

Educators in Finland are trained on Child behavior and are expected to conduct themselves professionally when dealing with the children. The school place big trust on the teacher's capability to do their work because the Finland education system is premised on trust and promotes valuing of teachers. Since Finnish Education system is based on trust and responsibility, the Departmental Official Inspectors are not in place since 1994. The principal decides on the hiring of teachers, and the Municipalities decide on other things. There are specifics about the Finish Education system for example Teaches are highly trained, teaching is an attractive profession, and the focus is on learning than testing. Schools don't rank of learners against other learners; but the focus is on learner support.

Teachers are exceptionally trained and have acquired the skills to support different learners with different learning needs including Mathematics strategies and Science. The Secret of Finnish Education is an education system based on Welfare of the Society. Emphasis is placed first on well-educated teachers, whereby teaches autonomy flourish. Education is based on scientific research. According to recent PISA report, Finland is among the best in OECD countries which makes the country unique, the school has least dropouts. After the presentation, the principal took the delegation on guided tour of the school.



Delegation in Turku, with Teachers & Principal, also visiting classrooms at Nummenpakka School

Finish co-operation with South Africa

From Turku, the delegation travelled back to Helsinki to meet with the Education in Finland stakeholders for interaction on education and development matters including global co-operation.

- Meeting with Ministry of Education
- Ministry of International Affairs: Africa Department,
- Meeting with Deputy Director General, Ms Helena Airaksinen
- Finish National Agency for Education for Overview of the Finish Education System Senior Advisor, Education Dr Rissanen Marjo and Ms Pavi Lindberg, topic on ECD
- Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Africa Depart Deputy Director General Ms Pirjo Suomela – Chowdhury
- Meeting with Helsinki Hub, Mr Mikka Neuvonen
- Meeting Finnish Parliamentary Committee



First seat left Ministry for Foreign Affairs Africa Department (MFA) Deputy Director General Ms. Pirjo Suomela- Chowdhury on round table discussion with Members of RSA Parliament delegation - Portfolio Committee on Basic Education

The Chairperson at the end of the engagement expressed appreciation to the officials at Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Embassy Officials for the scheduled meeting. She further expressed appreciation for inputs and topics covered during engagement as they were fruitful for possible collaboration with South Africa and Africa at large.

7. Ministry of Education, Helsinki

The discussions at the Ministry hinged on Curriculum streams available to learners, Policy perspective, Education Laws Amendment, how Finland deals with educational, extra curriculum programs, linking learners with workplace. Presentation touched on Education Benefit from the Gov program. The present government has immigration policies in place, however there are not enough labor. Finland tries to attract Talent, students in Higher Education, in this aspect there is more demand. In relation to the new jobs required in the next 10 years, it's for those in manual labor and technology Vocational Training – is developed and linked to Secondary Education

Flexible Learning systems and Education in general, and use of technology in schools
Master's degree at Univ or Univ of Applied Sciences

School days are few in Finland, but now have added a bit to give learners some extra time.

Learner Support, after Covid -19, it became important that immigrant learners are supported.

Teachers are very important in Finland, and there are possibilities to be explored to collaborate with SA.

The education system is decentralized, which give teachers some independence.

There are No standardized sed test, however that does not, does not mean that learners are not assessed.

7.1 Member observations

- Members were interested to find out how are Laws Amended in Finland
- In what way does the Ministry deals with educational Policies reforms
- The Curriculum Streams available, how does it link with workplace and prepare learners for the post schooling.
- Members wanted to find out, the budget allocated to support Basic Education programs.
- Members questioned the Demographics in terms of the population.

7.2 Responses

- The population birth rate is very low, however the health sector, costs are huge and is a challenge.
- On Immigration, Finland tries to attract Talent. there is more demand for Students in Higher Education and so the government has immigration policies in place.
- The General Curriculum Framework is in place. New jobs required in the next 10 years is those in manual labor and technology.
- Vocational Training – is developed and linked to Secondary Education
- The education system is flexible if students opt to leave, they can come back to continue,
- Teacher qualification in Finland is a Master's degree at Univ or Univ of Applied Sciences
- School days are few in Finland but have been added to give learners some extra time.
- Learner Support, after Covid -19, it became important that immigrant learners are supported.
- Education in general, the school make use of technology.
- Teaches are very important in Finland, and want to co-operate with SA, their system is decentralized, and independent.

7.3 Lessons Learnt:

Notwithstanding the fact that education should be based on contextual needs of a country, lessons can be learnt about successful education strategies in other countries. Fundamental to RSA Basic education sector, is the need to support the South African teachers as they are at the fore front dealing with many social ills.

- 1) Educational Experts and Diplomats expressed the notion that investment in teacher training is an important part of building a strong education system.
- 2) The role of teachers is paramount, investing in teacher training, investing in teachers' development, and investing in loco profession training is essential.
- 3) The standard of training of teachers differs between the two countries, and somehow certain Finnish strategies could be implemented by DBE.
- 4) The delegation acknowledges that there are vast differences, however both countries stand to learn from each other, in a bilateral way.

7.4 Teacher Development

- i) Teachers in Finland are required to acquire a master's degree, our teachers exit with a master's degree.
- ii) The high-level training, they receive means they are afforded a lot of trust and independence in developing curricula for the children they teach.
- iii) Finnish education system, each teacher education institution/ university, has a school attached to it for practising teachers.
- iv) SACE should be encouraged to consider collaboration with educational experts to support teacher education.

- v) ECD Close collaboration with the local municipalities would enhance understanding of their role in relation to social cohesion programs at schools, maintenance of schools etc.
- vi) The curriculum should meet the needs of the economy and needs of the communities.
- vii) SA needs to review the initial teacher training curriculum, and the qualification provided by the universities for Teaching professionals.
- viii) FinCEED model of (Agency) is useful, DBE may consider collaborating very closely with the Finked to contextualised what can work better for South Africa in particular ECD, Maths, Science, Technology and Teacher Exchange Programs.

8. Finland Parliament:

Meeting with Education and Culture Committee

The delegation met with HonTuula Haatainen, as Chair of the Education and Culture Committee, and some Members of the Education and Culture Committee. She outlined that this Committee deals with matters relating to early childhood education, basic education, science, art, cultural activities, sports, youth work, and financial aid for students.

In terms of composition, Finnish Parliament has two hundred members, elected for a term of four years. Members belong to parliamentary groups, of which there are currently eleven. Committees prepare Government bills, legislative initiatives and other matters for the plenary session. Parliament has 15 committees.

The presentation touched on the following.

- Values of the Finish Education System
- Access to ECEC is a universal right for every child.
- Regulation; on access, educational goals, staff-child ratio, staff qualifications and client fees in ECEC, Budget
- An integrated system; education
- Teacher Professional Development
- National core curriculum and local curricula
- Inclusion; integration of children with special needs

The engagement with Members of Parliament of Finland primarily centered on the Education system and contemporary reforms. Amongst others, the delegation gained an increased awareness of the legislation, as the Finland Members of Parliament, shared how they pursued certain changes to the legislation, / the passing of a new law or amendment to existing laws related to education.

8.1 Observations

Members queried what are the reasons on reforms that made Finland to amend/ increase compulsory age from 16 years to 18 years?

- What is the rationale behind that in the lower secondary, a learner needs to be prepared well for life in Vocational stream of Upper Secondary?
- Finland is one of the best, how do you address challenge of admissions, language policy.
- Who decides on the admission and language policy?
- On the Gender perspective, what challenge between boys and girls exist in terms of learning outcomes, there is need to work on this,
- Members commended that one of the things to take home is that Finland, allow teachers to run the education system,

8.2 Responses

- Schools in Finland are efficient when it comes policies implementation and utilization of the budget.
- Parliament deals with Legislation, Ministry attends to Policies and funding, the Finceed agency implements,
- The Legislation on equity, Edu-Fee (Agency) provide the plans and educational materials, information, publications.

8.3 General Observations

- Teacher Training is strengthened to develop the competence of teachers.
- With Professionalization of Teachers, Finland pays them well, from 7000 euros.
- Maintaining balance of work life, student life and personal life is crucial.
- There are potential areas of collaboration (Finland with SA) to develop our schools,
- In Bilateral collaboration. Finland can learn other aspects from South Africa in as much as South Africa has taken home key lessons.

8.4 Finland Parliament: Outcomes

The outcomes of the delegation engagement from Members of Parliament of Finland, included.

- ✚ Increased awareness and understanding of the issues and challenges facing the education sector in Finland.
- ✚ Improved relationships between the Finnish Parliament and other governments in Africa
- ✚ Increased understanding of Finland's enhancement of teacher education.
- ✚ Opportunities for collaboration between Finland parliamentarians, & other Parliaments
- ✚ Strategic communication required for Diplomatic engagement with other parliamentarians on legislative reforms.
- ✚ An increased capacity to identify and advocate for solutions to global challenges.
- ✚ Clarification of the views and perspectives of Finland key education policy issues.
- ✚ Influencing policymaking processes at the local level and international level.

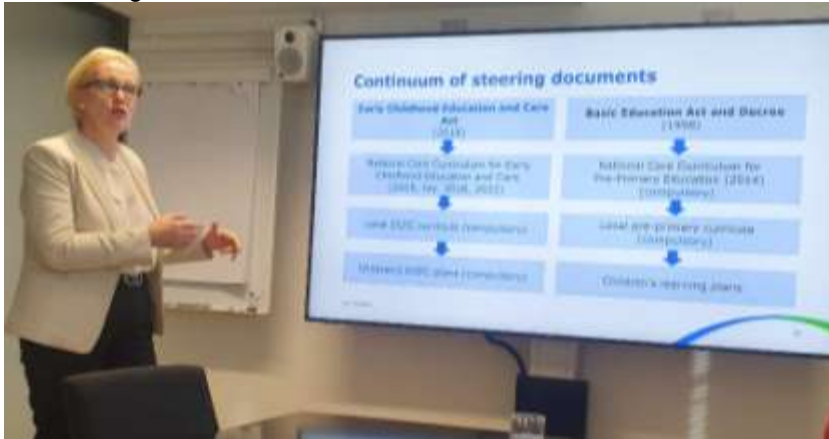


Legislative Engagements: Parliament of RSA delegation, with Finland Committee on Education

9. Finnish Centre of Expertise in Education and Development (FinCEED)

The visit concluded with a presentation on co-operation between the two countries on Early Childhood Development (ECD) by FinCEED experts Dr Marjo Risannen and Ms Paivi Lindberg. Dr Rannissen, in her presentation outlined the strengthened role of Finland in providing solutions for the global learning crisis and how FinCEED enhances Finnish capacity in education and development cooperation. Her input also touched on ECD, that there are several partners, involved working with FinCEED. Teacher networks/partnerships and different associations (Math's /History) they dialogue with the teacher organization and, Community within schools, communication channel with principal is open, and municipality administration. Finland has no districts but municipalities, the curriculum is decentralized, and managed by the municipality. Reforms/ New Policies – teachers are part of the process, that

provides teachers with the voice, Teachers' union, there is a good relationship, working together when working on education legislation. On the Gender perspective, challenge between boys and girls exist in terms of learning outcomes, however there is need to work on this.



Dr Rannissen, FinCEED

- National Curriculum is always the guidance of the municipality curriculum,
- Every school is a quality school, transport to rural schools is budgeted by municipality, every parent should be happy to send his/her child to a school nearby, At upper secondary level the child choose by means of an application form
- On language, Swedish and Finnish, it's up to parents to decide, it is mandatory to learn Swedish language.

10 Lessons from the Finish Education experience

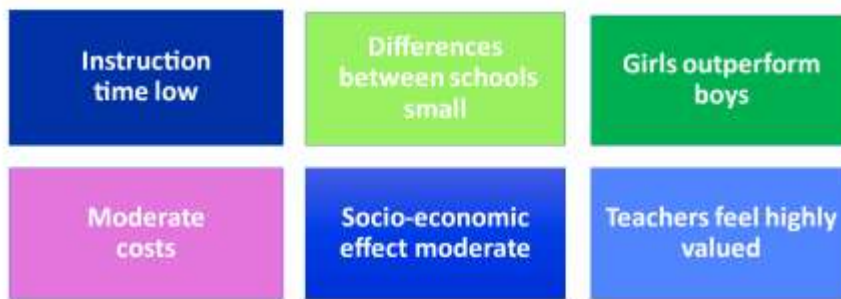
To stimulate learning: Teachers are using nature as a learning environment

- Teachers are well educated, through intensified professional development.
- Teachers has autonomy over the subject matter as they are regarded as qualified experts in their own profession.
- Teacher Education is based on scientific research, and is research driven.
- Teachers are active developers of their own work, yet learning from others is encouraged. Support for learners is paramount.
- Schools follow a Competency Based Curriculum
- * To promote culture learning teachers, activate collaborative teaching methods and use versatile learning environments.
- For ECEC, Play-based early childhood education and care is the cornerstone of building learning foundations.

What makes Finnish Education different to South Africa??

From a study tour purpose, the objective was not to compare the educational systemes but to benchmark, learn and share best practise of both countries .Below are areas where Finland compartively is doing something different to the rest of other countries

Finnish education in international comparison



Source: FinCEED presentation, 2023

10.1 Summary of Observations

Basic Education in Finland

In Finland, education is **publicly funded at all levels**. In the case of pre-primary, basic and general upper secondary education the share of private funding is only 1 per cent and private funding only accounts for 2.6 per cent of all expenditure in general.

Compulsory education applies to children who live in Finland permanently and have a municipality of residence. **The municipality of residence provides children with free municipal pre-primary and basic education.**

Basic education is provided free of charge including all the school material, and nutritious warm meals every day is provided. The education system is the same for all pupils. School leaving certificate gives eligibility for all types of upper secondary education and vocational training.

Curriculum

All schools follow a National Core Curriculum

Free Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) for 5-year-olds

Early childhood education (4 hours a day) for 5-year-old children begins on the 1st of August and continues until the beginning of their pre-primary education.

Budget for Basic Education

In Finland, education is publicly funded at all levels. In the case of pre-primary, basic and general upper secondary education the share of private funding is only 1 per cent and private funding only accounts for 2.6 per cent of all expenditure. Compulsory education applies to children who live in Finland permanently and have a municipality of residence. The municipality of residence provides children with free municipal pre-primary and basic education.

Education system based on trust and responsibility.

Teachers work independently and are trustworthy, thus there are no inspections.

Learners don't sit for formal assessments nor obligatory national testing during basic education,

There is no public ranking of schools.

Learner Support

The education system provides guidance and counselling, student welfare / welfare plans. Free meals are offered to every learner as part of the nutrition program. On Learner Transport, parents are

encouraged to find schools closer to home. Those learners who have to travel more than 5 km are provided transport free of charge.

Nutrition

Finland implements a National School meal program whereby in all schools all children are provided with nutritional meals from pre-primary to upper secondary schools. Free meals are offered to every learner as part of the nutrition program.

Inclusive Education/ Special Needs Education

Finland Education system puts emphasis is on Inclusive education than Special schools education so as to mainstream the support for learners.

Assessment

Students are encouraged to think for themselves and assume responsibility for their own learning. The teacher evaluates the students' progress in school. In comprehensive education, all grades are given evaluation by the teacher, therefore there are no national examinations as such, like we have in South Africa with the NSC examinations. Teacher feedback is essential,

Local administration and educational institutions play a key role.

The national education administration is organised at two levels. Education policy is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Culture. The Finnish National Agency for Education is responsible for the implementation of the policy aims. It works with the Ministry to develop educational objectives, content, and methods.

for early childhood, pre-primary, basic, upper secondary and adult education.

Quality of Teaching and Learning

Basic teaching can be characterized as efficient. The time students spend studying is on average 4 lessons a day. The resources allocated to education according to OECD standards are average.

Teachers' commitment and high ethics are the key strengths of Finnish education.

Teacher's profession is highly appreciated. All the basic education teachers have a master's degree.

Legislative Reforms: Education

Curriculum reform of the National core curricula for basic education, took place in December 2014, while the Local curricula, took place in November 2015. Schools implemented the curricula around 2016.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

In terms of education technology, from grade 1 learning and teaching consist of technology.

In Turku: grade 4 learners get iPad from school and grade 7 learners get Laptops.

Home Schooling

Finland Basic Education Act offers homeschooling under Sections 25, 26, and 45. This requires home school parents to notify the Municipality prior that the child will be homeschooled and ensure that the curriculum is aligned to what is offered in public schools. Home education is not popular, it's not an issue. There are few exceptions where learners don't go to public school Parents intending to home school their children, inform the local municipality prior.

11. Conclusion

The Portfolio Committee, having visited Finland from October 7-15, 2023, to benchmark the Finnish education system with the South African system achieved the aims and objectives of the international study tour.

The delegation came back to South Africa with an understanding of the Finnish approach to literacy and numeracy, legislative aspects of education reforms, Early Childhood Development (ECD), Inclusive Education, Vocational Education, Home Schooling, and global co-operation in educational matters. The

discussed for Finnish cooperation with South Africa, would be taken further by the 7th Parliament, Portfolio Committee on Basic Education for follow up.

11..1 Acknowledgements

The delegation of the Portfolio Committee on Basic Education wishes to thank the team of Finland Embassy in Pretoria and Sweden, for the programme developed and institutions visited for the purpose of the study tour. Hon Timor Ambassador to the Republic of Finland, for the quality of the programme developed in Tampere and engagement with officials at Turku. Furthermore, the Committee would like to thank Mr S Zuma, (Sweden Embassy) for the support provided during the visit. The presence of Finland Officials during the visit with government entities and other stakeholders, provided the guidance and clarity for the delegation to understand the Finland education system and those who availed themselves to provide the necessary clarity on Education in Finland. Chair of the Portfolio Committee also thanked Ms Sardha for providing the necessary tour guide when the delegation visited the Parliament of Finland.

<p>Special Thanks -</p>	<p>Kiitos - Team Finland and those whose names don't appear in the list, much appreciated</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Honourable Consular Mr Timo Jokinen, Ministry of Education and Culture ○ Ms. Jaana Palojärvi, Director of International Relations, ○ Ms. Mikaela Nylander, the State Secretary ○ Ms Kau, T: Stockholm Embassy, Counsellor: Political, ○ Ms Soiri Iina Education and Science Counsellor ○ Mr Zuma, S: Stockholm, 3rd Secretary: Political, ○ Ms Salola Tiina Counsellor (Political) ○ Ms Heini Ihalainen Ministry of Education and Culture ○ Mr Jukka Laine (Principal) Nummenpakkan ○ Ms Kati Anttalainen Ministry of Education and Culture ○ DIRCO ○ IRPD, Parliament 	<div data-bbox="789 787 1365 1186" data-label="Image"> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ms Pirjo Suomela – Chowdhury ● Helsinki Hub, Mr Mikka Neuvonen ● Finnish Parliamentary Committee ● Dr Marjo Rissannen Finnish National Education, FinCEED ● Education Experts, Ms Pavi Lindberg, ● Other officials not listed here are also appreciated for their support and contribution to the success of the international study tour.

APPRECIATION

The Chairperson of the delegation thanks all Members of the Portfolio Committee for their participation during the process of engagement and deliberations and their constructive recommendations made in this report.

Honourable Chairperson also wishes to thank Parliament of RSA for resources made available for approval of the study tour, its support staff, in particular the Acting Section Manager Mr Dennis , Bandi, Committee Secretary, Mr Llewellyn Brown; Senior Researcher, Mr Madimetja Kekana; Committee Assistant, Ms Stella Mkosana; and Ms Portia Mbude -Mutshekwane Content Advisor for their professional support and conscientious commitment to the work of the Portfolio Committee.

References:

Presentations shared by the following organizations.

Finnish National Agency for Education 2023

Tampere Vocational College (TREDU), 2023

Learning Scoop and Polar Partners (2023)

Ministry for Foreign Affairs Africa department (2023)

Ministry of Education and Culture & FinCEED, (2023) Finnish Education in a nutshell; Finland Education publication (2023)

Nummenpakka school, presentation 2023

Parliament of Finland, Presentation on Education and Culture Committee, 2023

ANNEXURE 1

Draft Itinerary/ Programme (Dated: 06/10/2023)

PC on Basic Education International Study Tour – Finland (7 – 15 October 2023)

South African Portfolio Committee on Basic Education (5):

- Hon B P Mbinqo-Gigaba MP (ANC) (Chairperson),
- Hon N G Adoons MP (ANC)
- Hon P R Moroatshehla MP (ANC)
- Hon B Nodada MP (DA)
- Hon Nokulunga Primrose Sonti (EFF)

Parliamentary Support Staff (1):

- Ms P Mbude-Mutshekwane (Content Advisor)

Embassy of South Africa Support Staff (1):

- Mr Zuma, 3rd Secretary

Date	Program	Venue	Proposed Themes to be covered in Program
Monday, 9th October 2023 – Helsinki			
8:30	• Delegation Check-out Solo Sokos Tornio Hotel, Helsinki		
09:00	• Meeting with Christian Basic Education School in Länsi-Pasila	Länsi-Pasila (5.3km/18min)	• Home Schooling / Home Education
11:00	• Meeting with Representatives of Home School Community, Kamppi Coffee Shop	Kamppi Coffee Shop (4.8km/15min)	• Home Schooling / Home Education

14:00 – 16:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delegation Travel to Tampere • Delegation Check-in Hotel, Tampere (Lapland Hotel - liopistonkatu 44, 33100 Tampere, Finland) 	(178km/2H00)	
Tuesday, 10th October 2023 – Tampere			
09:15	Welcome and Briefing at the Hotel Lobby		Contact person during the Tampere visit: Mr. Sami Puttonen. Mobile: +358 40 540 5717)
10:00-13:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit Tampere Vocational College (Tredu) 	Pyynikki Campus, Santalahdentie 10, 33200 Tampere (2.8km/10min)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation about Vocational Education in Finland and Tredu as one provider. • Tour on campus facilities and time for questions and discussions.
13:30-15:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with Educational experts from Learning Scoop and Polar Partners 	Platform6, Åkerlundinkatu 8, 33100 Tampere (3.3km/10min)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation on K12 school operations, role of rectors and teachers. Time for open discussions and questions.
15:00-16:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tour around Platform6, At Tampere Startup House 	Platform6, Åkerlundinkatu 8, 33100 Tampere	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecting entrepreneurship and education. • Brief intro to Education Tampere and how it can support on continuation. • Wrapping up the day if any questions.
18:00-19:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dinner hosted by the City of Tampere 	Restaurant Näsinneula, Laiturikatu 1, 33230 Tampere (5.6km/9min)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hosts from the City of Tampere: Lauri Savisaari, Executive Director of Education and Culture and Kristiina Järvelä, Director of Basic Education
Wednesday, 11th October 2023 – Turku			
08:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delegation Check-Out of Lapland Hotel, Tampere 	Nummenpakka school Address: Papinkatu 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finnish comprehensive school system
10:00 – 12:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nummenpakka school (Aurajoki unit) (Host: Headmaster Mr. Jukka Laine) 	Jukka Laine tel. +358 50 4323647 (166km/1H56min)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration of students from other countries • Social cohesion / Role of parents • Finnish School meal program and a typical school lunch served to the delegation
12:30 – 14:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delegation travel to Helsinki 	Ministry of Education and Culture, Meritullinkatu 10, Helsinki (168km/1H53min)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priorities in current government program as regards to education and culture
15:00 – 16:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with Deputy Minister of Education Ms. Nylander (Valtiosihteeri) 		
19:00 – 21:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dinner engagement with Deputy Director-General: Africa Department, Ms Helena Airaksinen 	Restaurant Sipuli; Kanavaranta 7, Helsinki	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finnish cooperation with South Africa
Thursday, 12th September 2023 – Helsinki			

8:45-10:45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Finnish National Agency for Education, Ms Ida Immonen 	Hakaniemenranta 6, Helsinki	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview of Finnish Education System
11:00 – 12:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Courtesy call to Ministry for Foreign Affairs Africa Department (MFA) Deputy Director General Ms. Pirjo Suomela-Chowdhury 	MFA (2.7km/12min)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finnish cooperation with South Africa
13:30 – 14:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting with Helsinki Education Hub / The Capital City Education service hub, Mr Miiikka Neuvonen 	Runeberginkatu 14-16, Helsinki (3km/13min)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Role of municipalities and education service providers in education delivery
	Lunch		
Friday, 13th October 2023 – Helsinki			
9:00-10:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education Finland, Programme Director Mr Jaakko Skantsi 	Hakaniemenranta 6, Helsinki	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finnish global knowledge and education services
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guided Tour of the Finnish Parliament (tbc) 		
11:30 – 12:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting with Finnish Parliamentary Committee 	Finnish Parliament (1.8km/8min)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finnish education legislation and recent reforms Role of parliament in education
13:00-14:00	Meeting with experts working with South African DBE on ECD; Ms Päivi Lindberg		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation of Finland and South Africa cooperation in ECD by FinCEED experts
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> End of Official Programme 		
Saturday, 14 October 2023 – Helsinki (Free Time)			
Sunday, 15 October 2023 – Helsinki (Free Time) (Travel Day – Delegation Return to South Africa)			

Annexure 2:

Parliament Gifts – presented to Host /Stakeholders during the visit.



**Annexure 3:
Parliament of RSA delegation and Finland Parliament Committee on Education and Culture**



**Final goodbyes: Members of Committee on Education and Culture, Finland
and South African Delegation from Parliament, PCBE
- End of International Study Tour -**

