

Unit 4 Teacher Training

Task 1 Speaking

What do you think makes great teacher training? What skills do you expect to acquire during your studies?

Task 2 Conjunctions

Finish the sentences:

- a) Teaching can be very satisfying if ...
- b) You can't be a good teacher unless...
- c) Research shows teaching is a respected profession. However, ...
- d) Many people enjoy teaching despite... /although...
- e) Teachers enjoy many benefits such as...
- f) As a teacher you need to be creative whereas...

Task 3 Comparing and contrasting

A) Ask your partner about his/her teacher training experience. Use the structures below to compare and contrast the information.

COMPARING

Like X, Y...
In comparison, ...
X is similar to Y in that...
Likewise, ...
Just as X ..., Y also...
Similarly, ...

CONTRASTING

While/ Whereas X..., Y...
In contrast, ...
Y is different from X because ...
One difference between X and Y is...
Unlike X, Y ...
X differs from Y in that...

B) Scan the article below. Can you spot any similarities to/ differences from the Czech education system?

Highly trained, respected and free: why Finland's teachers are different

David Crouch, The Guardian, Wed 17 Jun 2015

Extensive training is the basis for giving teachers the autonomy to work the way they want. The result is a highly prized profession and an education system always near the top in international rankings.

In a quiet classroom adorned with the joyful creations of small children, Ville Sallinen is learning what makes Finland's schools the envy of the world. Sallinen, 22, is teaching a handful of eight-year-olds how to read. He is nearing the end of a short *placement* in the school during his five-year master's degree in primary school teaching. Viikki teacher training school in eastern Helsinki describes itself as a laboratory for student teachers. Here, Sallinen can try out the theories he has learned at the university to which the school is *affiliated*. It's the equivalent of university teaching hospitals for medical students.

The school's principal, Kimmo Koskinen, says: "This is one of the ways we show how much we respect teaching. It is as important as training doctors." Welcome to a country where teaching is a highly prized profession. Finland's teachers have kept the nation near the top of the influential Pisa performance rankings since they were first published in 2001, leading to an *influx* of educational tourists as other teachers have endeavoured to learn from the Finnish experience.

Finland is going through a deep economic crisis, and there are financial pressures on schools, just as there are on the rest of the public sector. But the five-year master's degree for primary school teachers is not in question. Competition is *fierce* – only 7% of applicants in Helsinki were accepted this year, leaving more than 1,400 disappointed. The high-level training is the basis for giving young teachers a great deal of autonomy to choose what methods they use in the classroom. In Finland, teachers are also largely free from external requirements such as inspection, standardised testing and government control; school inspections were *scrapped* in the 1990s.

For a small, agrarian and relatively poor nation, educating all of its youth equally well was seen as the best way to catch up with other industrialised countries, according to Pasi Sahlberg, a Finnish educationist at Harvard who has done much to popularise Finland's methods abroad. The Finnish dream, as he calls it, was for all children, *regardless of* family background or personal conditions, to have a good school in their community - a focus that has remained unchanged for the past four decades.

In the early phase, during the 70s and 80s, there was strict central direction and control over schools, *state-prescribed* curriculums, external school inspections and detailed regulation, giving the Finnish government a strong grip on schools and teachers. But a second phase, from the early 90s, consciously set out to create a new culture of education characterised by trust between educational authorities and schools, local control, professionalism and autonomy. Schools became responsible for their own curriculum planning and student assessment, while state inspections were *abandoned*. This required teachers to have high academic *credentials* and be treated like professionals.

Not only is teacher education in Finland strongly research-based, but all the students on the primary school master's course are engaged in research themselves – a point of pride for Patrik Scheinin, dean of the faculty. The course aims to produce "didacticians" who can connect teaching interventions with *sound* evidence, he says.

"We want to produce *cognitive dissonance*. The task of a good didactician is to disturb the thinking of someone who assumes they know everything about teaching," Scheinin says. "Just because you've been doing something for 20 years and it works for you doesn't mean it works for other teachers, other students, or in other subjects."

Educationists point to historically specific factors that have helped to fashion Finland's schools, such as the country's small population and broad acceptance of values such as equality and collaboration that are *embedded* in its version of the Nordic welfare model. But the decision to make teaching an advanced degree subject has given teaching *a high profile* in Finnish society.

Back in primary school, Ville Sallinen got *the teaching bug* eight years ago while still at school, when he started coaching football. It sparked his interest in working with children. He

is not particularly academic, he says, but like many students his passion for teaching got him on to the master's course. At the end of each day, he sits down with his mentor, Tunja Tuominen, to *deconstruct* teaching moments and to theorise them. Tuominen says: "Student teachers come here like little chicks, mouths wide open and eager to learn."

Adapted from: <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/jun/17/highly-trained-respected-and-free-why-finlands-teachers-are-different>

C) Do you understand the expressions in bold? Use the context to explain their meaning.

D) Complete the gaps with the phrasal verbs below, you will not need one of them.

set out take off try out catch up point to

1. Educationists historically specific factors that have helped to fashion Finland's schools.
2. Education was seen as the best way to with other industrialised countries.
3. In Finland they consciously to create a new culture of education.
4. Students can the theories they have learned at the university.

(for more phrasal verbs go to http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/radio/specials/148_phrasalverbs/)