



Knowledge hub - Collection of best practices

Summary of the best practice

1. Title of the best practice (e.g. name of policy, programme, project, etc.) *

National Teacher Education Forum

2. Country or countries where the practice is implemented *

Finland

3. Please select the **most relevant** Action Track(s) the best practice applies to *

- Action Track 1. Inclusive, equitable, safe, and healthy schools
- Action Track 2. Learning and skills for life, work, and sustainable development
- Action Track 3. Teachers, teaching and the teaching profession
- Action Track 4. Digital learning and transformation
- Action Track 5. Financing of education

4. Implementation lead/partner organization(s) *

Ministry of Education and Culture as convener, all higher education institutes providing teacher education in Finland and relevant stakeholders, such as the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities and the Trade Union of Education (OAJ).

5. Key words (5-15 words): Please add key descriptive words around aims, modalities, target groups etc. *

Education policy, Teacher education strategy, Implementation of the strategy, Teacher standards, Teacher educator

6. What makes it a best practice? *

-POLITICAL COMMITMENT AND LEADERSHIP- National goals for teacher education are typically laid down in national or state-level documents, often called teacher education standards or teacher standards. In Finland, the Ministry of Education and Culture has nominated a Teacher Education Forum, consisting of 70 experts. The Forum was established to foster the development of teacher education and to prepare a development programme (TEDP) for teachers' pre- and in-service education through co-configurative collaboration. The Forum members represent the Ministry of Education and Culture, universities and universities of applied sciences responsible for teacher education, providers of education (principals and teachers), student teachers and other relevant stakeholders. The Forum has discussed research outcomes related to teacher education and generated ideas for revising it at national and local meetings and through web-based brainstorming. A collaborative approach was used as it is known to positively influence the design and implementation and support teacher educators' learning.

- PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION- Partnerships and collaboration between stakeholders, including inputs of student teachers were essential as described above. The key characteristics of partnership and collaboration were the joint work/interdependence, parity/equality among participants and voluntary participation.

-RELEVANCE- The Forum addresses priority education challenges and demonstrates practical solutions/approaches leading to catalytic or transformative change. The challenges were identified from OECD, PISA and TALIS surveys and national monitoring reports, produced by the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre, such as:

- Challenges stemming from the school environment that influence teacher education:
 - o student-level challenges, such as a decrease in learning outcomes, an increase in the variation of the learning outcomes and the varied needs of individual learners;
 - o classroom-level challenges, such as guiding students in active and collaborative learning, processes in heterogeneous and multi-cultural classrooms and supporting students in learning 21st century competencies;
 - o school- and city-level challenges, such as lack of collaboration among teachers and lack of pedagogical leadership that supports teachers' professional learning;
- challenges in teachers' pedagogical competences, collaboration and innovative orientation and lack of willingness or competence for personal professional learning; and
- society-level challenges, such as the number of young people who drop out of education or labour market and increased inequality as well as impact of digitalisation on education, including AI.

-EFFICIENCY- The national teacher education strategy or the Development Program for Teachers' Pre-, Introductory and In-Service Education (TEDP, launched in 2016) was implemented through research-oriented pilot projects, national seminars and workshops and local and regional meetings. In all, 45 collaborative pilot projects were financed starting 2017 and 2018, emphasising the aims outlined in TEDP and highlighting collaboration between pre- and in-service teacher education, between HEI's and schools, as well as research-based orientation of the projects.

-EFFECTIVENESS- The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre has evaluated the implementation of the TEDP by analysing the pilot project documents, surveying the projects, and interviewing stakeholders and project experts. The evaluation concluded that the teacher education reform model developed by the Teacher Education Forum had several strengths, including networking of experts and stakeholders, which was vital to the implementation of all strategic competence aims, including the 21st century competences. Most pilot projects emphasized community building. The evaluation also noted challenges and future targets for implementation, such as creating a clear plan for the achievement of the strategic competence

Description of the best practice

7. Introduction (350-400 words)

This section should ideally provide the context of, and justification for, the practice and address the following issues:

- i) Which population was affected?
- ii) What was the problem that needed to be addressed?
- iii) Which approach was taken and what objectives were achieved? *

i) Which population was affected?

Teacher Education Forum consists of 70 experts, representing the Ministry of Education and Culture, universities and universities of applied sciences responsible for teacher education, providers of education (principals and teachers), student teachers and other relevant stakeholders such as the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities and the Trade Union of Education (OAJ).

ii) What was the problem that needed to be addressed?

The challenges were identified from the OECD, PISA and TALIS surveys and national-level monitoring reports, which were produced by the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre, Karvi. The recognised challenges were discussed and summarised in the forum meetings:

- Challenges stemming from the school environment that influence teacher education:
 - o student-level challenges, such as a decrease in learning outcomes, an increase in the variation of the learning outcomes and the varied needs of individual learners;
 - o classroom-level challenges, such as guiding students in active and collaborative learning, processes in heterogeneous and multi-cultural classrooms and supporting students in learning twenty-first century competencies according to new curricula;
 - o school- and city-level challenges, such as a lack of collaboration among teachers, lack of quality work at the local level and lack of pedagogical leadership that supports teachers' professional learning;
- challenges in teachers' pedagogical competences, collaboration and innovative orientation and a lack of willingness or competence for personal professional learning; and
- society-level challenges, such as the number of young people who drop out of education or the labour market and an increase in inequality as well as the influence of digitalisation, such as artificial intelligence and automation, on the education sector.

iii) Which approach was taken and what objectives were achieved?

In short, bottom-up type of approach. In more detail, research based knowledge was followed. OECD (Burns & Köster, 2016) recommended the following for planning and implementing education strategies:

- Have enough time for planning and implementation of the strategy
- Engage stakeholders, such as providers of education and university personnel, and employ organizations to the design of the strategy
- Be in partnership with the teacher union and employ union members
- Strive for consensus in the design
- Use sustainable resources for the planning and implementation of the strategy
- Organize pilot projects and disseminate the outcomes of the pilots.

8. Implementation (350-450 words)

Please describe the implementation modalities or processes, where possible in relation to:

- i) What are the main activities carried out?
- ii) When and where the activities were carried out (including the start date and whether it is ongoing)?
- iii) Who were the key implementation actors and collaborators? (civil society organizations, private sector, foundations, coalitions, networks etc.)?
- iv) What were the resources needed (budget and sources) for the implementation?

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- i) What are the main activities carried out?

The Finnish government (2016) decided to prepare and implement a teacher education strategy, the Teacher Education Development Programme (TEDP), outlined by the government program. The TEDP was designed by 70 experts from Higher Education Institutes (HEI's), the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Finnish National Agency for Education, and other partners, such as representatives from the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, The Trade Union of Education (OAJ), the Teacher Student Union in Finland and the Principals' Association, in order to support the collaborative planning and implementation of the strategy. While designing the TEDP during one academic year, research outcomes related to teacher education were analysed, and national brainstorming related to the renewal of teacher education was organised. Moreover, several regional and four nationwide meetings were organised during the planning process.

The implementation of the TEDP in a decentralised education was implemented through 45 pilot projects. The pilot projects include teacher educators from all universities and supported the implementation of the strategy and professional learning of autonomous teacher educators in the context of the strategy.

- ii) When and where the activities were carried out (including the start date and whether it is ongoing)?

The forum organized 12 nationwide meetings, seven local meetings and several thematic group meetings between autumn 2016 and spring 2019. During 2016, these meetings supported the collaborative efforts to meet the challenges and aims of teacher education and facilitated the drafting of the Development Programme for Teachers' Pre-, Introductory and In-Service Education (TEDP). The later meetings supported the implementation process. The forum has continued its work during the years 2020–2022.

- iii) Who were the key implementation actors and collaborators? (civil society organizations, private sector, foundations, coalitions, networks etc.)?

Teacher educators in Finnish universities and universities of applied sciences.

- iv) What were the resources needed (budget and sources) for the implementation?

Altogether, 45 collaborative and networking pilot projects were financed by the Ministry of Education and Culture through the allocation of about 27,7 million euros during the period 2017–2020. Some of the projects have continued until 2022. The first open call for pilot project proposals was published at the end of 2016 and the second in 2017.

9. Results – outputs and outcomes (250-350 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the questions below:

- i) How was the practice identified as transformative? (e.g., impact on policies, impact on management processes, impact on delivery arrangements or education monitoring, impact on teachers, learners and beneficiary communities etc.);
- ii) What were the concrete results achieved with regard to outputs and outcomes?
- iii) Has an assessment of the practice been carried out? If yes, what were the results? *

The practice has been recognized as transformative through external evaluation and research.

The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre has evaluated the implementation of the TEDP by analysing the pilot project documents, surveying the projects, and interviewing stakeholders and project experts. The evaluation concluded that the teacher education reform model developed by the Teacher Education Forum had several strengths, including networking of experts and stakeholders, which was vital for all strategic aims, including the 21st century competences. Most pilot projects emphasized community building. The evaluation also noted challenges and future targets, such as creating a clear plan for supporting the achievement of the strategic competence aims (Niemi et al., 2018).

The Forum discussed research outcomes related to teacher education and generated ideas at national and local meetings and through a web-based brainstorming session. The Forum laid down six guidelines for the development of teacher education and financed 45 pilot projects. The pilots engaged several universities and providers of education and were collaborative and contextual in nature. These pilots helped realise the strategic aims of teacher education practices and supported the professional learning of teacher educators. Hence, the projects have supported the achievement of the strategy's aims. Research and goal orientation, active learning, collaboration, contextualisation and reflection were emphasised in the pilot projects. Common goal setting and evaluation of the pilots should be emphasised more in the implementation of the strategy.

- ii) What were the concrete results achieved with regard to outputs and outcomes?

The TEDP set out three strategic goals for teachers' pre- and in-service education and continuous professional learning. They are common to all types of teachers, from ECEC to upper secondary. According to TEDP, Finnish teachers should 1. have a professional knowledge base, such as deep knowledge in the subject matter and pedagogy; knowledge about learning, engagement and diversity among learners; collaboration and interaction as well as digital and research skills; 2. be able to generate novel ideas and educational innovations while, for example, constructing the local curriculum and planning inclusive education; have the willingness and competencies required for professional learning and the development of schools' operations. Furthermore, the TEDP introduced six strategic action guidelines, which described key actions, emphasising, for example, collaboration in the cumulative development of the competences of teachers. Teacher education and teaching/learning practices should be planned according to research outcomes, and student teachers should learn research skills.

- iii) Has an assessment of the practice been carried out? If yes, what were the results?

The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre has evaluated the implementation of the Development Program for Teachers Pre-, Introductory and In-Service Education as described above.

10. Lessons learnt (300 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the following questions:

- i) What were the key triggers for transformation?
- ii) What worked really well – what facilitated this?
- iii) What did not work – why did it not work? *

i) What were the key triggers for transformation?

According to Lavonen et al. (2021), the strategic aims of the TEDP had been achieved well or very well. The partners' knowledge was taken into account, and the work was organised in authentic situations (contextuality). Partners were guided to interact, collaborate and reflect on their own learning, in consistent with the recommendations of research. Consequently, the pilot project approach in the implementation of the TEDP has the potential to support the teacher educators' learning and to implement new practices in authentic situations. Research orientation in professional learning was recognised as the most important for teacher educators.

ii) What worked really well – what facilitated this?

Two important characteristics of the Finnish education are decentralization and autonomy at teacher, school, municipality and university level. This allows teachers and teacher educators to address local contexts and research outcomes. This is linked to the Finnish way of interpreting teachers' and teacher educators' professionalism and status. This makes the preparation of national guidelines challenging. Therefore, it is important to engage the autonomous teacher education institutes and teacher educators in the planning, to support the ownership of the strategy. Teacher educators should be seen as reformers rather than objects or local implementers.

The brainstorming process emphasized the importance of learning-to-learn skills, along with collaboration skills during the initial teacher education and professional learning, as well as competences related to generating new ideas, preparing for change and collaborating through partnerships and networks.

iii) What did not work – why did it not work?

Developing a national strategy for teacher education through collaboration is not easy. Voluntary participation is important, however means that there were different people in different meetings, which makes it difficult for consensus. A unique characteristic in the preparation of the TEDP was a national web-based brainstorming process, engaging teacher educators and teachers. This offered a different type of input than the forum meetings and literature review. According to Lavonen et al. (2021), there were challenges in the implementation and mainstreaming of the pilot project outcomes within teacher education in a short period of time. More studies are needed.

11. Conclusions (250 words)

Please describe why may this intervention be considered a “best practice”. What recommendations can be made for those intending to adopt the documented “best practice” or how can it help people working on the same issue(s)? *

Implementing a new strategy, a development project or a reform programme in teacher education or engaging teacher educators in the implementation is a challenging endeavour. Therefore, the Finnish Teacher Education Forum has adopted a participatory approach for implementation. In practice, several pilot projects have been executed to support the implementation of the TEDP. The implementation of the TEDP through pilot projects offers a supportive environment for teacher educators and teachers in their autonomous roles. Collaboration and networking provide a platform for discussing the strategic aims and their implementation, in addition to supporting the national planning and implementation of the TEDP. Collaboration and networking in practice involved teacher educators within one university and between universities as well as stakeholders and other parties in education, such as the Ministry of Education and Culture, providers of education or municipalities and teachers. These ‘supportive’ features for the implementation of the TEDP also helped teachers’ and teacher educators’ professional learning. This was important because the implementation was assumed to occur through teacher educators’ professional learning within the pilot projects. The research on Forum’s work show that the teacher educators collaborated and actively implemented the new ideas in the teacher education activities. However, it is not easy to determine the influence of collaborative strategy planning on the implementation of the strategy. This aspect can be explored in future research.

12. Further reading

Please provide a list and URLs of key reference documents for additional information on the “best practice” for those who may be interested in knowing how the results benefited the beneficiary group/s. *

Lavonen, J, Mahlamäki-Kultanen, S, Vahtivuori-Hänninen, S, Mikkola, A. (2020). A collaborative design for a finnish teacher education development programme. *Journal of Teacher Education and Educators*, 9(2), 241–262. <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/jtee/issue/56618/728673>

Lavonen, J., Mahlamäki-Kultanen, S., Vahtivuori-Hänninen, S., & Mikkola, A. (2021). Implementation of a National Teacher Education Strategy in Finland through Pilot Projects. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 46(10), 21 – 42. doi: 10.14221/ajte.2021v46n10.2

Niemi, H., Erma, T., Lipponen, L., Pietilä, M., Rintala, R., Ruokamo, H., Saarivirta, T., Moitus, S., Frisk, T., & Stylman V. (2018). Maaailman parhaiksi opettajiksi – Vuosina 2016–2018 toimineen Opettajankoulutusfoorumien arviointi [The world’s most competent teachers – Evaluation of the Teacher Education Forum in 2016-2018]. Kansallinen koulutuksen arviointikeskus. Julkaisut 27:2018. https://karvi.fi/app/uploads/2018/12/KARVI_2718.pdf