

# Features of Publishing Work of Teaching Materials in Finland

The Finnish education system is based on the founding principle that every single individual must be given equal access to high quality education and training. This is ensured, amongst other things, by education being free for everyone and through Finnish teachers being highly qualified professionals at all education levels. In practice, equal opportunity is also achieved through free teaching materials. The same materials are available throughout the whole of Finland. The aims and most important subjects in school education are stipulated in the national curriculum. Teachers have educational freedom to decide for themselves how they wish to structure their lessons and which teaching materials they use to do so. The approval procedure for teaching materials was abandoned in 1991. Open competition guarantees the high quality of teaching materials. Additionally, the education authorities continuously work closely with the publishers in order that an open and uninterrupted flow of information is established.

Compulsory education begins at the age of seven in Finland. In the first class, each child is given its own reading primer. Using this book it learns to read and to consolidate its reading skills. Through the use of this reading primer it also learns about different styles of penmanship. In Finnish lessons for the second class, a further reading book is in general use that is almost without comparison in other cultures. Both the primer and the reading book aim at the practice and consolidation of reading skills. In many school subjects, workbooks are used in addition to textbooks. In recent years more electronic exercises have been increasingly introduced. How well they will become established depends on the IT devices that the pupils have at their disposal. The introduction of such exercises is delayed by the high VAT rate that is incurred on electronic equipment. For printed materials it is 10%, for electronic 24%.

Finnish teaching materials are compiled by education experts who are passionately committed to teaching and learning. Most authors create teaching materials in addition to their own work as teachers. They wish to develop teaching materials that improve learning results, motivate to teach and learn, and to reform the teaching material genre.

Lesson materials are compiled by working groups whose members are mainly in active teaching positions. The publisher performs product development with textbook authors as well as teachers. Through this it

is ensured that the new materials work for different classes and provide support for different personal styles of learning. The teaching material product family includes comprehensive ranges of textbooks, workbooks, electronic materials, games, visual aids and experimental aids that are required for lessons. The product family also contains comprehensive evaluation materials.

The Finnish Publishing Association counts approx. ten publishing houses which produce teaching materials for different education levels as members. In Finland this industry directly employs approx. 500 professionals for the production and distribution of teaching materials, dozens of professionals for compilation and printing, as well as hundreds of illustrators, graphic designers, translators, programmers etc. Approx. 2,500 teaching material authors receive authors' royalties annually.

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