

## Comenius 2.1. project EU-mail

**Report on Finland: visit to schools . May, 2004.**

**Report by Marianne L. Stokke.**

General information: We visited 2 schools and they were both rather small: 360 pupils in Elementary and 263 pupils in Secondary. Size compares well to Norwegian practice. Both were situated in the countryside with no fences, which is the way it should be in the Nordic countries! Finnish system is definitely mixed ability but both schools had separated the more heavy Special Needs pupils in groups, also for those with behaviour problems . We saw some very good practice of individualized teaching.

<b>Bullet points</b>	<b>My notes</b>
<p>1) Examples of <b>best practice</b> in dealing with mixed ability individualized learning <u>in and outside lessons</u></p>	<p>1) <b>Target sheets</b> are used at the beginning of the school-year and the teachers keep detailed reports of the pupils' progress.</p> <p>2) Some teachers use <b>differentiated homework</b> at the end of a lesson.</p> <p>3) Teachers are in charge of seating arrangements in the classroom. <b>Pairwork</b> is usually boy-girl practice which is difficult to establish but once started it works quite well. There was also a system of pairing a more able student with a weaker one, but pairs were changed frequently.</p> <p>4) There is <b>no teaching to tests</b>.</p> <p>5) The teachers had <b>good knowledge of their pupils</b> which meant that they could individualize (classes were small in sec.school compared to Norway: only 17-22 pupils!)</p> <p>6) Pupils were very <b>autonomous in their learning</b>. They must have been drilled in this.</p>
<p>2) <b>Results of comparison</b> and reflection on the findings and their evaluation taking into account the specific situation in each country-as done in exchange with the couples and the general exchange with all other visitors in Friday morning</p>	<p>- The results of PISA were on the agenda very often, and we were constantly looking for factors which could tell us why they were on top.</p> <p>-We found that the results of our visits (what we had written in our forms ) were rather different even though we had been in the same schools. Some of us are probably better at asking questions or following up the answers so that we get the really interesting information!</p> <p>-I noticed that the more comfortable the teachers and Head teachers felt with their English, the better the interviews went, even though we had fantastic translators in the students who followed us around.</p> <p>-For some of the teachers the questions were not familiar and I felt that they could be intimidating or incomprehensive.</p>

<p>3) <b>Factors</b> which influence individualized learning in mixed ability groups positively or negatively</p>	<p><b>Positively:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Small teaching groups</li> <li>-Well educated teachers with in-depth knowledge of their subject: subject competence</li> <li>-Schools were very well equipped / furnished –we were very envious!</li> <li>-English language teachers had a store room with plenty of teaching material next door. 2 adjacent classrooms.</li> <li>-<u>Optional subjects</u> were important. Timetable changed every 9 weeks to accommodate these.</li> </ul> <p><b>Negatively:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Some classrooms were very small; teachers didn't have much option in grouping pupils differently</li> <li>-Teachers working space / desks nearly non-existent. Where do they keep the extra teaching material?</li> </ul>
<p>4) Aspects concerning the effect of individualized learning <b>on the acquisition of curricular and social competences</b></p>	<p><b>Acquisition of curricular competences:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-In the Finnish system the National Tests are optional.</li> <li>-There are very precise instructions for grading from the Ministry.</li> <li>-The results –if they have had the National tests- are not published.</li> <li>-If students should fail, you are not expected to repeat.</li> <li>-No marks for pupils until they were 12 years old. Head teacher said that the new curriculum will not require marks either.</li> <li>-Plenty of teaching material for individualized learning</li> </ul> <p><b>Acquisition of social competences:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-In the development plans for the schools both social skills and cooperating skills were mentioned.</li> <li>-Inclusion was also part of the school ethos.</li> <li>-What I saw in schools, the social competences of pupils were very good.</li> </ul>
<p>5) All other aspects, factors, details which help conception and testing of modules for teacher training and teachers' further education <b>at home in your country</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Emphasize the importance of <b>subject knowledge</b> for teachers in Norway. We have a system where teachers are “generalists”- knowing a little about all subjects. This no longer acceptable- even in Elementary schools.</li> <li>-<b>Strategy for self-evaluations</b> which pupils did together with their parents (the holistic view) taking into consideration social competences, knowledge and focus on how you learn.</li> <li>-How to teach/incorporate <b>social skills/competences</b></li> </ul>

6) Hints for the making of <b>videos</b>	-Teaching of “Argumentation”(Finnish language) in sec.school. How the teacher used her knowledge of each student to include them in the process. The furnishing of the room which was part of visualizing a debate. -Use of teaching materials and speed: English lesson in the same sec.school
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Report written by Marianne Stokke Nov. 6<sup>th</sup>, 2004.

I have used my notes and the report we have already written and submitted to Project management.