

Finland to reform education for the digital age

1st June, 2017



Finland is not satisfied with constantly being top of the world's education leagues. The government is now planning to reform its education system so that young Finns are better prepared for the digital age. A key part of the proposed

reforms is to place as much emphasis on digital and workplace skills as on more traditional subjects. An example of this would be to use 3D printers in history classes so students can create models of ancient buildings. The government also wants to promote vocational training and encourage learning in real-life work settings. Students' performance would be evaluated by a teacher as well as by an official from the company helping the student.

One teacher, Kirsti Lonka, explained why a shift in educational methods was necessary. She said: "Traditionally, learning has been defined as a list of subject matters and facts you need to acquire, such as arithmetic and grammar....But when it comes to real life, our brain is not divided into disciplines in that way. We are thinking in a very holistic way, and when you think about the problems in the world - global crises, migration, the economy, the post-truth era - we haven't really given our children the tools to deal with this inter-cultural world." She added: "I think it is a major mistake if we lead children to believe that the world is simple, and that if they learn certain facts, they are ready to go."

Sources: helsinkitimes.fi / bbc.com / straitstimes.com

Writing

What three improvements would you make to the education system? Why?

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

satisfied / education / reform / emphasis / traditional / ancient / real life / vocational / shift / necessary / arithmetic / grammar / holistic / migration / economy / mistake

True / False

- Finland is very happy being top of the world's education leagues. T / F
- Finland wants to place more emphasis on workplace skills. T / F
- Finland wants every student to make models of ancient buildings. T / F
- Students will be encouraged to learn in simulated work settings. T / F
- A teacher said a shift in educational methods wasn't necessary. T / F
- The teacher said our brain is not split up into disciplines. T / F
- The teacher said students need tools for an inter-cultural world. T / F
- The teacher said kids should not learn that the world is simple. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------|
| 1. reform | a. described |
| 2. prepared | b. very old |
| 3. key | c. significant |
| 4. ancient | d. improve |
| 5. evaluated | e. change |
| 6. shift | f. assessed |
| 7. defined | g. specific |
| 8. divided | h. important |
| 9. major | i. split |
| 10. certain | j. ready |

Discussion – Student A

- What is the standard of education in your country like?
- How prepared are you for the digital age?
- What skills do you need for the digital age?
- What educational reforms would you like to see in your country?
- How much of a school curriculum should be based on workplace skills?
- How important is vocational training at school?
- How well did your school prepare you for life?
- How difficult is the job of a teacher?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| 1. constantly being top of the world's | a. on digital and workplace skills |
| 2. young Finns are better | b. deal with this |
| 3. place as much emphasis | c. methods was necessary |
| 4. students can create models of ancient | d. prepared |
| 5. performance would be evaluated | e. holistic way |
| 6. a shift in educational | f. by a teacher |
| 7. subject matters and facts you need | g. education leagues |
| 8. thinking in a very | h. to acquire |
| 9. the tools to | i. facts |
| 10. if they learn certain | j. buildings |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- What is the best way for children to learn?
- Do we need to change from teaching traditional subjects?
- Is coding or literature a more important subject?
- What is the 'post-truth era'?
- What tools do we need in an inter-cultural world?
- Should teachers teach children facts or skills?
- What questions would you like to ask Finland's education minister?

Spelling

- Finland is not fdsiiesta
- the world's education alsegue
- A key part of the odprepos reforms
- much maehissp on digital and workplace skills
- models of itecann buildings
- performance would be laeuvtdae
- a shift in educational hdetosm
- ieendfd as a list of subject matters
- facts you need to icurage
- thinking in a very htcsiloi way
- problems in the world - global crises, antmoiigr...
- if they learn tincrae facts

Answers – Synonym Match

1. d	2. j	3. h	4. b	5. f
6. e	7. a	8. i	9. c	10. g

Role Play

Role A – English

You think English is the best school subject. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their subjects. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): computer coding, art or world problems.

Role B – Computer Coding

You think computer coding is the best school subject. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their subjects. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): English, art or world problems.

Role C – Art

You think art is the best school subject. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their subjects. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): computer coding, English or world problems.

Role D – World Problems

You think world problems is the best school subject. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their subjects. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): computer coding, art or English.

Speaking – Subjects

Rank these with your partner. Put the best school subjects at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| • English | • art |
| • maths | • world problems |
| • global warming | • business skills |
| • computer coding | • money matters |

Answers – True False

a	F	b	T	c	F	d	F	e	F	f	T	g	T	h	T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.