An Analysis of the Educational Systems in Finland and the United States: A Case Study

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**Why Finland?**

- The Programme for International Student Achievement (PISA) test administered since 2000.
- Finland has ranked at the top on the PISA test, contradicting their philosophy that drives Finland’s no national standardized tests practice.
- The United States ranks either at or below average in all categories.
- PISA shows Finland has a low in-school and between-school performance variance.

**Research Questions**

- How does teacher education in Finland and the United States compare?
- How do the structure compare for Part-Time Special Education and Response to Intervention in Finland and the United States respectively?
- How can the United States learn from the Finnish programs in terms of structure, program specifics, and implementation?

**Methodology**

**Documents**

- IDEA (Section 1401(30) and Section 1414(b6))
- Basic Education Act (628/1998)- Section 16
- National Core Curriculum of Basic Education 2004
- Educating School Teachers
- Interviews
  - School Psychologists
  - District Facilitators
  - National Agencies
  - Scholars of Comparative Education

**Coding**

- Coding segments texts into similar categories.
- Themes are produced by synthesizing similar codes.
- Example code: “need for structure”

**Themes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Special Education</th>
<th>Teacher Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flexible within structure</td>
<td>Thorough selection process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitional support</td>
<td>Strong emphasis on research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School readiness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Shared Themes**

- National and large organization guidelines with varied implementations at local levels
- Continuous development and support

**Interview Example**

Urban District A
United States
Response to Intervention

- Program idea concept in 2008
- Struggled to create clear program
- District RTI Guidelines in 2014
- Uniformity and variation
- Cite coordinators
- School psychologists
- Special education teachers
- Administrators