Implementation of educational change in Finland: The case of the undivided basic education reform

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SUMMARY

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For the past decades, educational large-scale reforms have been elaborated and implemented in many countries and often resulted in partial or complete failure. These results brought researchers to study policy processes in order to address this particular challenge. Studies on implementation processes brought to light an existing causal relationship between the implementation process and the effectiveness of a reform. This study aims to describe the implementation process of educational change in Finland, who produced efficient educational reforms over the last 50 years. The case study used for the purpose of this study is the national reform of undivided basic education (yhtenäinen peruskoulu) implemented in the end of the 1990s. Therefore, this research aims to describe how the Finnish undivided basic education reform was implemented. This research was carried out using a pluralist and structuralist approach of policy process and was analyzed according to the hybrid model of implementation process. The data were collected using a triangulation of methods, i.e. documentary research, interviews and questionnaires. The data were qualitative and were analyzed using content analysis methods.

This study concludes that the undivided basic education reform was applied in a very decentralized manner, which is a reflection of the decentralized system present in Finland. Central authorities provided a clear vision of the purpose of the reform, but did not control the implementation process. They rather provided extensive support in the form of transmission of information and development of collaborative networks. Local authorities had complete autonomy in terms of decision-making and implementation process. Discussions, debates and decisions regarding implementation processes took place at the local level and included the participation of all actors present on the field. Implementation methods differ from a region to another, with is the consequence of the variation of the level of commitment of local actors but also the diversity of local realities. The reform was implemented according to existing structures and values, which means that it was in cohesion with the context in which it was implemented. These results cannot be generalized to all implementation processes of educational change in Finland but give a great insight of what could be the model used in Finland. Future studies could intent to confirm the model described here by studying other reforms that took place in Finland.

Keywords: Implementation process, large-scale reform, educational change, decentralization

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education systems around the world have been subject to many changes over the last decades. After the Second World War, major funding has been invested into designing successful education systems in order to achieve certain standards of quality and accessibility. Indeed, the second half of the twentieth century was an important transitional period for education systems in the western cultures, as education suddenly appeared as the key to economic and social development (Hargreavves, 1989; Holmes et al., 1989; Easton, 1991; Hallinger et al., 1991; Fuhrman, 1993; Fullan, 1994; Tyack et al., 1995; Carnoy, 1999, Elmore, 2004; Schleicher, 2006; Carpentier, 2010). In many countries, accessibility to education has been drastically transformed. What was first considered as a privilege for the elite became a service addressed to the masses, thus creating a whole new environment for education systems. These major transformations changed the mission of education as well as the responsibility for authorities towards education.

Modern educational systems have continuously been subject to changes, which can take places at various levels and aim for various purposes. Attempting to reform an education system is quite a challenge for actors such as policy-makers, administrators and school professionals. Indeed, educational systems are complex organizational systems sensitive to a wide range of internal and external variables (Tella et al., 1999; Gather-Thurler, 2000; Anderson et al., 2000; Legendre, 2002; Fullan, 2007).

For the past decades, educational policies and reforms have been elaborated, implemented and analyzed. As these changes became of greater relevance in terms of financial support, public interest and political capital, studies on educational policy processes have multiplied in order to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon (Carpentier, 2010). The first generation of research on educational policy processes focused mainly on the first elaboration process (Lessard, Desjardins, Schwimmer, & Anne, 2008). Indeed, it was generally recognized that a rigorously elaborated reform plan would result in expected outcomes (Smith, 1973; Younis, 1990; Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). However, policymakers had to acknowledge that this expectation was far from reality. Indeed, many failures of educational reforms brought a need for policymakers and researchers to explore another aspect of the reform process, i.e. the implementation process.

Studies on implementation processes brought to light an existing causal relationship between the quality level of implementation and the effectiveness of the reform (see Stringfield et al., 1997; Vernez et al., 2006; Fullan, 2007). In 2006, a nationwide study in the USA has shown that reforms

are not always properly or completely implemented (Vernez, Karam, Mariano, & DeMartini, 2006). The study concluded that various reasons led to this disconnection. For instance, financial, material or human resources were not always available or sufficient; those in charge of implementation at the local level did not have a proper understanding of the changes that needed to be implemented; and teachers and administrators did not receive the proper training in order to apply the changes. The study concluded that much of the failure of the reform occurred in the implementation phase of the reform. Other studies on educational reforms in USA, Australia, France, and other countries came to the same conclusion (see Easton, 1991; Hallinger et al., 1991; Weiss, 1992; Fullan, 1994; Gather-Thurler, 2000; Elmore, 2004; Van Zanten, 2004; Fullan, 2005; Carpentier, 2010). These results express the impact of the implementation process on the outcomes of a reform.

Implementing a national educational reform is a great challenge. The environment in which the reform occurs, the actors and interest groups involved in the process and the structure supporting the implementation are all aspects that influence the implementation success or failure (Carpentier, 2010). The strategy of implementation, based on an understanding of the system's particularities and components, as well as the reaction and adjustment capability of the system to negative outcomes are also of great relevance for the outcomes of a reform.

Many approaches have been used to implement educational reforms. Three main models of implementation processes have been identified since the 1970s, i.e. the "top-down" approach, the "bottom-up" approach, and the "hybrid" approach (Elmore, 2004; Carpentier, 2010). The first approach, characterized by a more authoritative, centralized and linear system, has been considered for a long time as the normal way to proceed to implementation in all sphere of public and private change. In education, this approach consisted of centralized decisions applied by local authorities as instructed. This approach has been criticized by many education experts as it did not seem to produce the expected results (see Berman & McLaughlin, 1977; Hargreaves, 1989; Holmes, Leithwood et al., 1989; Fullan, 1994; Tyack et al., 1995; Gather-Thurler, 2000; Legendre, 2002; Elmore, 2004; Fullan, 2007). When a phenomenon of decentralization of public organization occurred, the second approach of implementation became of great popularity, consisting of decentralized actions of implementation, which in many cases also did not produced the expected results. Finally, the hybrid approach is considered as a balance between the two approaches (Carpentier, 2010). Fullan (2007) expresses the necessity to have centralized actions as well as decentralized actions in order to achieve a successful reform.

Many researchers have tried to answer the question of "what works" in terms of implementation processes. However, there seems to be no perfect model of implementation, as all approaches have been used, and all approaches have failed to some extent (Carpentier, 2010). One main critic regarding the attempt to answer this specific question is the great difficulty to create a model of implementation and the even greater difficulty to transfer a model from a specific context to another (Lessard, et al., 2008).

If researchers agree that educational reforms result more often than not in partial or complete failure, one system seems to escape from that pattern. Indeed, the education system of Finland captivates education experts around the world since Finnish pupils scored amongst the highest in international assessments in the 1990s. The success of the Finnish education system has been demonstrated in a large variety of studies (Robitaille & Garden, 1989; Martin et al., 2000; OECD, 2001 and 2004; Kupari & Välijärvi, 2005; Salberg, 2007; OECD, 2007a), and so has the success of the Finnish educational reforms (Schleicher, 2006; Sahlberg, 2006; Grubb, 2007; OECD, 2007b; Sahlberg, 2007). It seems that Finland has been able to produce a series of educational reforms over the last 50 years that built a strong and cohesive system that led the country to be considered as having one of the best education system in the world (Barber & Mourshed, 2007).

Most studies on educational change or educational reform in Finland are either descriptive or prescriptive. They may explain what changes or what reforms occurred, in which context, and what outcomes emerged (Antikainen, 1990; Aho et al., 2006; World Bank, 2006; Sahlberg, 2007; Kuusilehto-Awale & Lahtero, 2014), or they may explain the Finnish conditions for successful educational reform (Castells & Himanen, 2002; Simola, 2005; Saari, 2006; Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Grubb, 2007; Sahlberg, 2010). However, studies on Finnish educational reforms have not focused on implementation processes. Indeed, studies have mainly focused on elaboration process (what is the reform) or evaluation process (what are the outcomes). It seems that the study of the implementation process of a Finnish education reform would be of great interest of the global educational community, as implementation has been proven to be a critical step of the reform process and Finland seems to have found an efficient method of implementation, as its reforms have produced great outcomes. The study of the implementation process in Finnish educational reform has been identified as a gap in the field of educational change. Therefore, this study will aim to fill this gap by describing the implementation process of educational reform in Finland.

The difficulty to theorize implementation brings many researchers to use case study to proceed to implementation process analysis. Indeed, this research approach seems appropriate to study a phenomenon that cannot be reproduced in its entirety. This is why it is of great interest to use a case study for the present study as well. The use of a case study to describe the implementation process of an education reform in Finland is considered to be an efficient approach to gain a better understanding of the methods used within the education system to put into places important changes.

The case study used for the purpose of this study is the national reform named "Undivided Basic Education" (*yhtenäinen peruskoulu*) implemented in the end of the 1990s (Huusko & Pietarinen, 1998). This research-based reform aimed to unify the basic education path both pedagogically and structurally. In Finland, the basic education path consists of nice years of comprehensive education that leads to upper-secondary education. Before the reform, these nine years were divided into lower basic education and upper basic education. The first stage consisted of grade one to six, and the second stage consisted of grade seven to nine. These two stages were separated often physically, and most importantly, pedagogically. Most schools in Finland were either lower grade schools or upper grade school. The core curriculum for basic education had separate objectives for lower grades and upper grades, which led to the development of two separate local curriculums. In the 1990s, various issues related to school transitions have been observed in Finland and in the world in general (Karjalainen, 1992; Huusko, 1997; Pietarinen, 1998; Anderson et al., 2000; Pyhältö et al., 2011). Indeed, it seems that changing school environments aspects such as school culture, teachers, staff, peers, and pedagogy can impact pupils on various levels. The matter was taking very seriously in Finland (Huusko & Pietarinen, 1998). Moreover, the idea of unified basic education was present in Finland's comprehensive school system since the 1960s, and this separation of lower and upper grades appeared now to be a feature left from the old system that had been forgotten and needs to be fixed.

Finland proceeded to the unification of lower and upper grades officially in 1998, after testing the concept with a development project including 117 schools (Pietilä, 2001). The project resulted in positive feedback; therefore the reform was put forward. The change in legislation affected mainly the pedagogical side of unification, with the unification of the core curriculum into one consistent curriculum, with the development of a consistent individual learning path for pupils, and with the ability for teachers to teach across level borders, which was not possible by law before (Basic Education Act, 1998; National Board of Education, 2004). The implementation of the reform was

the responsibility of municipalities and schools, as Finland has a very decentralized system. Local institutions had to make sense of the reform and develop solutions in order to build a unified basic education.

This case study is very interesting for the purpose of this study for many reasons. First, this reform was applied nationwide as it was addressed to all basic educational institutions. The fact that this change is a national change allows this study to analyze the change process of the whole system rather than for one region. Secondly, it consists of a recent reform, which gives a greater access to online documentations as well as documentation in English. Indeed, in order to recreate the implementation process, a large amount of documentation is needed, which is very problematic if the process would have taken place in a period where documents were kept in paper archives and not translated. Thirdly, this reform concerns the basic level of education, which represents the foundation of education and a great reflection of a society. The study of each level of education brings different issues of great relevance. However, basic education is considered to be the best level for this study, as it is the most comparable system. Indeed, basic education systems everywhere face the same challenges regarding, for instance, accessibility, equality, integration, quality, pedagogy and funding. The purpose of this study is not to compare to other systems; however, it is interesting to see how implementation differs in a system that faces the same challenges as other systems. Finally, the implementation process has not been studied for this reform, which brings to this study a great role to play for knowledge building regarding this critical change in the Finnish education system. This reform has been studied mainly in terms of outcomes, which consists of the normal evaluation process of a reform. Studies have been published, for instance, regarding transition issues and teachers' professional agency in a unified basic education (see Pietarinen, 2000; Pietarinen et al., 2010; Pyhältö et al., 2012). Some studies have looked into the implementation process (see Pietilä et al., 2007; Pyhältö et al., 2011), but these research have focused on one aspect of the implementation process rather than on the whole process (for instance, the role of principals, the actions of specific schools or specific municipalities). This research aims to describe the implementation process of the UBE reform in its entirety, which has never been done.

This research pursues the general goal of understanding how the Finnish UBE reform was implemented. To achieve this goal, four sub-questions need to be answered, i.e. 1. How did the central authority implement the reform, 2. How did the local authorities implement the reform, 3.

How did local and central authorities interact together in the implementation process, and 4. In what context did the reform took place.

In order to answer these questions, this study will be divided into seven chapters. Chapter 1 will present the literature review. This section includes the theoretical background of policy process analysis, the presentation of implementation process approaches, the previous findings in the field of educational reform implementation analysis, and finally, the presentation of the theoretical framework for this research. Chapter 2 consists of a presentation of the research questions. Chapter 3 and 4 are descriptive. Chapter 3 will describe the context of the Finnish global system as well as the context of the Finnish education system. These descriptions will aim to present the historical, cultural, and structural features of both systems. Chapter 4 will describe the UBE reform. The description aims to explain the historical context of the reform, i.e. the agenda-setting, elaboration and decision making process of the reform. Chapter 3 and 4 are crucial for the analysis of the implementation process. Indeed, the implementation process is not a separate step of the reform process and can only be fully understood when it is put in its context. In chapter 5, the methodology is explained. In chapter 6, the implementation process of the UBE reform is presented. Finally, in chapter 7, I answer the research questions by analyzing the features present in the implementation process. In the conclusion, a summary of the analysis will be presented.

2. Literature review

This section aims to locate and present the field of research in which this research evolves. Then, the specific field of implementation process analysis will be presented, as well as the different approaches used to analyze this topic. The previous findings in the field of education will be presented, followed by the presentation of the theoretical framework used for this study.

2.1 Studying the policy process

This study is located in the field of policy process analysis. Indeed, the goals here are to describe how a specific policy (or reform) is implemented. The content of the policy as well as the outcomes will be used in the analysis only to provide a greater understanding of the implementation process and will not be analyzed in depth. The elaboration process will also be a variable considered in the analysis, as it is clearly interrelated to implementation process, but is by no mean the object of this study. The next section will now describe the various approaches to policy process analysis and explain where this study is located in the field.

2.1.1 Policy process theories

The study of policy processes concerns mainly the field of politics, as it is the result of decisions made by authorities and influenced by actors with various level of power. Indeed, the policy process is related to the notion of power in the state (Hill, 2005, p. 8). It is of great relevance, when analyzing policy processes, to take into account the level of power and influence of actors involved in the process. This concept of distribution of power is reflected in two perspectives, that is, the pluralist perspective, who claims that the power is "evenly spread and openly contested" (Hill, 2005, p. 8) and the elite theory, which sees the power much more concentrated within the state itself. Even though the study of policy processes nests in the sphere of politics, Hay (2002) stresses that policy process is also a social phenomenon and that many extra-political factors need to be considered in the analysis.

Pluralist perspective

Pluralism is grounded in modern society, where governmental institutions and interest groups are evolving together in the system of power in place. This perspective explains that popular will is achieved by the cooperation of various groups such as political parties, pressure groups, interests

groups, which all represent a part of society. They consider this diversity of people representation to be necessary and positive (Schwarzmantel, 1994).

The pluralist model is well exposed in the very popular study "Who Governs?" from Robert Dahl (1961). In this longitudinal study, Dahl analyzed the city level's policy process regarding few particular issues. He concluded that, not only he was in presence of a large amount of groups involved in the process, but that the "balance of power" often shifted from a group to another, demonstrating a relatively well distributed level of influence, according to the issue and the context. He notes that the only actor that was present in all policy processes was the mayor, and he did not have the majority of the power, but rather he was an actor involved among others. Dahl pretends that any group can obtain a certain level of influence with enough determination.

Pluralists do not pretend that every group has the same level of power. They acknowledge that groups are more influential than others, but they emphasize the possibility of any groups to be heard at some point during the policy process. The concentration of power in a system cannot be generalized, and the need for empirical data is crucial in order to apply the pluralist model.

The critics of the pluralist approach of policy process analysis brought new perspectives which seek to compromise between pluralism and other perspectives set up by pluralist's attackers. The two main approaches are that of democratic elitism (or elite perspective) and the structuralist approach.

Elitist perspective

The elitist perspective originated at the end of the 19th century, and relied mostly on the classification of the system of power into two categories, that is, those who rule, and those who are ruled (Mosca, 1939). The first category of people is the less numerous and enjoy all power of ruling and advantages that derive from it, while the second category of people is the majority of the people, and is being completely controlled by the rulers. If this classical definition was developed in a context of pre-democratic society, this perspective can be understood today with a larger diversity of elite groups, such as political, bureaucratic, military, aristocratic and business elite groups that control all the power system (Hill, 2005, p. 38). To illustrate this idea, Bottomore (1966) differentiates the political elite from the political class, which represent the two entities of power distribution. For Bottomore, the political elite is the group who actually exercises power and consists of some members of the government and the high administration, military leaders, influential families and powerful business stakeholders. As for the political class, it consists of the

political elite, as well as other political actors such as members of opposition parties, unions, businesses, and intellectual. Indeed, with the enlargement of the modern state, elitists have observed the multiplication of new actors of power, namely large firms, trade unions and political parties. However, the main changes that elitists observe is within the state itself, as the growth of bureaucracy modifies the state's decision-making process.

As more and more sources of power surfaced, elitists adapted their perspective to meet those of the pluralists. The democratic elitism sees the power system on three levels. First, during election process, party leaders compete between themselves with the participation of elite interest groups. Then, these groups also try to gain power in between elections. Finally, the interactions between governmental elite and elite interest groups complete the system of power in modern states (Hill, 2005). One interesting point is that various interest groups participate to various issue-related policy processes; hence, one elite interest group does not have all the power along with governmental power. One elite theorist, Pareto (1966), even suggested the idea of circulation of elite, meaning that elite groups vanished as new ones arose, which relates to the pluralist idea of power distribution according to determination.

Other perspectives on policy process analysis have been developed in order to explain the complex relationship between actors and power in the policy process, which could not be fully explained by pluralist or elitist theories. Among these alternative theories, the structuralist theory and the institutional theory explore the impact of the context and the structure in the policy process, while advocacy coalition approach and rational choice theory focus on the decision making strategies of various actors.

Structuralist perspective

The structuralist perspective is related to the relationship between structures and action (or decision), and the impact one has on the other. Structuralist theories suggest that political actions are determined by pre-existing demographic, social and economic factors (Hill, 2005, p. 43). Indeed, social structure would reinforces the *status quo*, and therefore become a constraint for change in policy. This simplistic idea of determinism (that everything is predetermined) motivated theorists to elaborate conditions that would allow changes. The structuralist approach is interesting in the sense that it acknowledges the importance of the social context in which a policy process occurs. Indeed, structures impact greatly the rise of interests groups within society, as well as procedures for policy process, as it usually follows an already existing procedure. Interesting

studies used structuralist ideology to explain the creation of a policy by the correlation with a structural change such as economic growth or urbanization.

Institutional theory

Another perspective on policy process analysis is the institutional approach. From the very roots of institutionalism, Selznick defines the concept of institution as the "natural product of social needs and pressures", in opposition to that of organization, which he sees as a "system of consciously coordinated activities […], a rational instrument engineered to do a job." (Selznick, 1957, p. 5). Indeed, Selznick considers organizations to be located in an institutional system and are affected by its internal and external environments, which than call for adjustment.

Institutional analysis also tends to explore the history of the policy process in a system to expose change "pathways". Indeed, institutionalists see political institutions as playing a major role in democracy. Not only institutions allow formal interactions of social actors, but they also represent formal procedures and structures that defend specific interests. For Hall, institutional factors influence actors involved in the policy process on two levels. First, the policy-making procedure already in place influences how much a set of actors can get involved in a policy process. Secondly, the original position of the authority towards a policy influences the positioning of other actors on the issue (Hall, 1986).

Advocacy coalition approach

A very interesting approach to understanding interaction between actors within the policy process is the advocacy coalition approach. This approach has been developed by Sabatier in collaboration with Jenkins-Smith (Sabatier, 1993) in an attempt to refine the implementation process analysis. Sabatier defines advocacy coalition as a set of "actors from a variety of institutions who share a set of policy beliefs" (Sabatier, 1999, p. 9). This approach sees a coordination of action between actors sharing the same beliefs towards a policy. Coalitions aim to influence the policy process in order to fulfill their own interests. There are dominant coalitions as well as minority coalitions, with various levels of influence and success. The advantage of advocacy coalition approach is that it can reduce a very large number of actors from different parts of the policy system into a more manageable representation of units and interests.

Rational choice theory

The rational choice theory is based on the notion that "individuals act in their own best interests" (Hill, 2005, p. 93). This theory brings marketplace ideas within politics, with a pluralist premise (Downs, 1957). In the case of public policy, self-interest, or selfish purposes, can be understood in term of externalities, which are the consequences, positive or negative, of an action. A policy will have various impacts on various actors within society. Therefore, each of these actors positions itself regarding of these externalities. The main difference between the marketplace and the public policy process is the consideration for collective action. Interestingly, a policy responding to individual interests might result in collective negative externalities for these same individuals. This is why collective action is needed in order to provide positive externalities to a collectivity.

The main challenge here is to identify correctly externalities. Many policies will have a wide variety of pros and cons to be considered by concerned actors, and the complexity of these externalities makes the actors' rational analysis of a policy incomplete. Indeed, the ideology behind the rational choice theory is that the people knows and understands all externalities of a policy and therefore can make a rational decision. However, the reality is far from this idea, and individuals, as well as collectivity, might possess only a partial understanding of the issue and its variables (Hill, 2005). This explains the role of the state, which sometime acts against popular will, in order to compensate for the lack of knowledge of the population.

These perspectives on policy process analysis give a good understanding on the challenges that occurs while studying the complex interactions happening during a policy process. The next section will go through these challenges and explain the perspective on policy process analysis used in this research.

2.1.2 Challenges of policy process analysis

Studying policy processes is not an easy task. Even though it can be considered as social science research, cases of experimentation rarely occur, as variables are not controllable, processes are unique from one another, and environments cannot be recreated. Indeed, the policy process analysis does not allow generalization and is often presented in the form of a case study, while its data is mainly qualitative (however, studies on impact use often quantitative data). Data collection can also be tricky, as many activities cannot be observed. This might be the greatest challenge of all political behavior analysts. Indeed, this field of research has been confronted for decades to a lack of data

due to political secrecy. Finally, the type of data analyzed can also be an issue for researchers, as they relate greatly to human behaviors, desires, feelings, perspectives, and so on. In social science, one needs to be very careful with the interpretation of such data, and it might be greatly influenced by one's own understanding of the issue. Post-modernists are particularly harsh on such research. Indeed, they argue that generalization cannot be achieved and that all analysis is relative. In order to produce relevant studies, researchers might want to use more than one model to analyze policy processes (Hill, 2005, pp. 9-11).

Most researchers who have done implementation process analysis have been influenced by a pluralist perspective. Indeed, the implementation process is characterized by the participation of a large amount of actors interacting. Using an elite perspective on implementation would impact a study in the sense that it would only focus on main actors in the central authority and disregard the impact of local actors who are usually in charge of implementation. Another aspect considered by implementation process analysts is the impact of the structure and the context on implementation. Indeed, many studies have concluded that the structure of the system impacts greatly the success or failure of the implementation process in the sense that structure and process must be cohesive in order to be successful. The specific context is also of great importance for the analysis of implementation, as it impacts greatly the sense making pattern of local actors. These aspects of implementation process analysis will be explained in more details in section 2.2 (studying the implementation process), through the description of the main approaches of implementation process analysis. For the reasons stated above, structuralist and institutionalist theories are considered to bring an interesting perspective to implementation process analysis.

2.1.3 Positioning implementation process

This section aims to explain where the implementation process is located in the policy process. In order to do that, each stage of the policy process will be described, as they all will be a part of the analysis. The policy process has been separated into clear stages for the purpose of this explanation, even though these stages are all interrelated. The stage-based model of policy process analysis is as old as the field in itself. Indeed, Lasswell designed the first model during the 1950s by dividing the policy process in seven distinct stages (Lasswell, 1956). Even though this approach has been highly contested, the model is still nowadays widely used as a basic framework in many spheres of policy research (Jann & Wegrich, 2006). A linear model such as this one is criticized for the fact that real life decision-making is not processed in such a simple and chronological series of steps. Hodwood

and Gunn stress the risks linked to considering policy processes as a fragmented series of steps, as these steps are overlapping, interdependent and take part into a dynamic activity (Hogwood & Gunn, 1984, p. 5). Lasswell's model has been an inspiration for many scholars who developed various models of stage-based policy process. Today, the conventional model is divided into five stages, i.e. agenda-setting, policy formulation, decision-making, implementation and evaluation (Jann & Wegrich, 2006).

Agenda-setting

The first stage of a policy-making is to acknowledge the presence of a problem and the need for a change. This is the basis of the process, as no policy will be created if there is no need for it. Therefore, the stage one of a policy-making will be to take notice of the issue and select a solution to solve it, hence the creation of a policy. The social and political context as well as a variety of stakeholders (e.g. lobby, unions, and media) influence greatly the way a governmental institution will go through this first stage (Kingdon, 1995, p. 3).

Many researchers have studied the agenda-setting part of the policy process, raising questions regarding the variety of mechanisms used to select issues and solutions (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993). Various patterns can be put forward in order to proceed to agenda-setting. These patterns are characterized by the degree of implication of officials, stakeholders, the population and the media in the process of problem recognition and definition. Far from being the result of a rational decision, the agenda-setting process includes many variables and is highly related to its context. Kingdon suggests a model where all relevant variables meet to create a window of opportunity for a specific agenda to arise. Indeed, social, economic, and political contexts need to converge at the right time for an issue to become of great relevance, pushed by the right actors to create both public and state approval (Kingdon, 1995).

Policy formulation

The policy formulation stage consists mainly of elaborating the policy according to the issue identified during the previous stage. At this stage, many options can be considered, and the purpose is to identify the best options, document each of the options, and elaborate a strategy to implement them. This step is usually processed by a group of public servants from a specific field or a variety of fields, all related to the issue (Bernard, 1976). The authority in control of this step will elaborate a procedure to operate the process, according to what is needed. Consultations can be needed, and

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other agencies might be included in the process. The goals can be on a short term or long term scale, or both. According to the situation, purposes can be ideological and not measurable in a quantitative manner, or be of a more financial or administrative value and be quite rigorous and specific. Purposes will be influenced by all actors included in this process, as well as influenced by the party in power. Indeed, the decision-making process is usually done by government officials, or influenced by them. Therefore, all final policy formulations that will be proposed will have to be in accordance with the political ideology of the final authority.

Once the set of purposes has been decided, the means to achieve these purposes need to be elaborated. To achieve this, public policy experts are usually in charge to create a policy that will be applicable. Indeed, the identification of the means need to provide information regarding, for instance, budget planning, regulation and law modifications, timeframe, and human and material resources needed (Bernard, 1976). Finally, the form taken by the policy formulation process is defined greatly by its context. Indeed, the historical-institutional approach stresses that countries have developed over time particularities embodied in their policy process that is a reflection of the state culture as well as the organization of society (Lehmbruch, 1991).

Decision-making

The decision can be explained by the action of making a choice between many options, which is made intentionally and is the result of a reflection and produces an action (Bernard, 1976, p. 295). The decision can be taken by a legislative vote or a governmental decree, depending on the matter (Bernard, 1976). For a decision to be appropriate, decision-makers must have all available tools. However, it is of great difficulty to know what will really influence a decision. A decision can be rational or emotional, or a mixture of both. A decision might be influenced by variables such as cost efficiency, interests and pressure groups, or ideology. Furthermore, the information available to decision-makers has been influenced by actors who contributed to the elaboration process, which can be, for instance, a consulted stakeholder or an expert of the field. The participation of actors to the elaboration process can therefore have an impact on the decision-making process (Bernard, 1976).

Implementation

The implementation process is the stage where the policy actually takes form. It is the link between the decision and the results. Indeed, this is where the action takes place. O'Toole describes the

implementation process as "what happens between the establishment of an apparent intention on the part of the government to do something, or to stop doing something, and the ultimate impact in the world of action" (O'Toole, 2000, p. 266). In the implementation process, policy actors (usually public servants) establish details regarding the application of the policy. At this moment, the policy becomes a program, a plan, a strategy, or a reform. This part includes, for instance, the specific details of the policy, the role of each organization in each part of the application, the financial support coming from which institutions, timetables of application, decision-making process within the application, accountability measures, and evaluation planning.

Evaluation

This stage is used to identify the success or failure of the policy process. The evaluation process focuses on the expected outcomes of the policy (Jann & Wegrich, 2006). Evaluations are not only applied at the end of a policy. Indeed, evaluations can be performed throughout the whole process in order to adjust the policy. The final evaluation, however, is performed according to the final goals predicated within the timeframe planned. Evaluations can lead to various feedback mechanisms. For instance, successful policies can be reinforced, a pilot project can be applied nationwide, or the policy can be terminated (e.g. if the policy had incentives). Unsuccessful policies can be adapted, transformed, or terminated (Monière & Guay, 1987).

The biggest critics regarding evaluation of policies concern the great difficulty of isolating the impact of a specific policy on specific outcomes and the failure of creating a process that is not affected by politics (Jann & Wegrich, 2006). Indeed, the relationship between a policy and its outcomes is established according to position of interests, values and actors involved. Furthermore, the idea of self-evaluating organizations is regarded as highly problematic, as it reflects conflicts of interests for organizations involved.

2.2 Studying the implementation process

Studies on policy processes did not care for implementation at first, as it was common to link policy results to policy design, i.e. the ideas and concepts behind a policy. Only in the 1970s, policy process analysts came to understand the relevance of the implementation process as a determining factor of success for a policy. Indeed, when studying the failure of a public policy regarding job creation in America, Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) came to the conclusion that the difference between expected results and the actual outcomes was the result implementation issues (Younis,

1990). After several research demonstrated the same problematic (e.g. Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975; Bardach, 1977; Mayntz, 1979, Hjern, 1982), the study of implementation process became of great relevance.

Concretely, implementation studies address interdisciplinary issues and concern the fields of public administration, organizational theory, public management and political science (Schofield & Sausman, 2004). Its popularity grew as concerns increased regarding the effectiveness of reform programs. Indeed, Barrett expresses that the process of "translating policy into action" seemed more complex than expected as the outcomes did not match expectations (Barrett, 2004, p. 251).

Three generations of implementation studies can be identified since its debut in the 1970s. The first generation, located in the 1970s, principally establishes the importance of implementation in the policy process and its impact in the failure of many policies and reforms. If the scholars were mainly pessimists, this first generation helped build a very extensive body of literature that revealed to the policy process analysts the necessity to study in more depth this particular process. The second generation was more determined to develop theoretical frameworks for implementation studies. The main debate resides in the top-down/bottom-up approaches to implementation. The top-down approach suggests that implementation is a hierarchic process following a centrally designed policy. For the bottom-up approach scholars, implementation refers mostly to "everyday problem-solving strategies" (Pülzl & Treib, 2006, p. 89) that are dealt with at a local level of bureaucracy. Finally, the third generation of implementation researchers aimed to reconcile the two previous approaches by joining them. The latest generation also focused on a more scientific approach to implementation studies, which includes clear hypotheses, empirical observations and proper testing methods in order to validate hypotheses.

2.2.1 Top-down approach

The top-down approach emerged in the early 1970s (O'Toole, 1986) and studies implementation from the perspective of those who elaborate the policy (Matland, 1995). This approach considers implementation as a distinct phase of policy process which follows policy elaboration (Carpentier, 2010). The top-down approach of policy implementation resides mainly on the idea that decision-makers control the application of the policy. Based on the system model of Easton (Parsons, 1995), the top-down model suggests a direct and causal link between policies and outcomes, where those in charge of implementation would have a minimal impact. In this perspective, implementation is considered as a "governing elite phenomenon" (deLeon, 2001, p. 2). This approach, inspired from

the rational model, implies "adequate bureaucratic procedures" (Pülzl & Treib, 2006, p. 91), since the administrative system has to execute policies correctly, and therefore should not be a variable in the outcomes. The model also presumes the existence of sufficient resources, a system of clear responsibilities and a hierarchical control of actions.

With these assumptions in mind, Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) stress that the number of agencies involved in the implementation process increase the difficulty of it. In 1975, Van Meter and Van Horn elaborated a "policy delivery system" derived from the system model of Easton, comprising six variables that affect the variation between the goals and the outcomes of a policy. These six components are the environment of the system, the demands and resources (influencing policy makers), the conversions process (formal policy process structure), the policy (goals and structure), the performance (the outcomes, the actual delivery), and the feedback (how the outcome affect the environment) (Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975, p. 446). Van Meter and Van Horn suggest that effective and significant policy change is possible only when it is in the presence of a high level of consensus among concerned actors.

In 1977, Bardach compared the implementation process to a "scenario writing", explaining that the success of policy implementation is only possible if policy-makers structure minutely the implementation plans (Bardach, 1977). Sabatier and Mazmanian (1979) also elaborated a six variable model leading to effective implementation. According to the researchers, the implementation's success depends on the clarity and consistency of policy goals, the validity of theoretical foundation of the policy, the adequate structure of the implementation process, the commitment of implementation actors, the supports of the interests, legislative and executive groups and stable socioeconomic conditions. Sabatier and Mazmanian acknowledged the difficulty to achieve a perfect top-down control, stressing the impact of unfavorable conditions on implementation outcome, but they nevertheless suggested the large influence of program design and implementation structure on the success of a policy implementation.

Hodwood and Gunn (1984) used a pragmatic approach to develop 10 recommendations for successful implementation, which represents necessary conditions for perfect implementation. First, external circumstances should not impose extensive constraints; then, sufficient time and resources should be made available; each stage of the implementation process must receive the appropriate resources; the policy must be implemented on the basis of a valid theory of cause and effect; the relationship between cause and effect is mostly direct; the implementing agency must not depend of

another agency to guarantee its success; the goals are complete, understood and agreed upon; the tasks to be performed can be described in perfect sequence; the communication between the coordination and the elements of implementation is perfect; and finally, those in authority can obtain perfect obedience (Hogwood & Gunn, 1984, pp. 199-206).

To summarize, the top-down perspective is a rational approach that aims to prescribe strategies for a successful implementation. Globally, the expected outcomes must be elaborated centrally. Then, goals, means and processes must be clearly defined, detailed and well understood. Outcomes should be measurable in order to evaluate properly if the expectations have been reached. The central authority should assign tasks, and those in charge of implementing should not have freedom of decision, they should only apply what they have been told to apply, in the way they have been told to execute it. Communication should go vertically from the top-down and take form as specific and detailed interactions and operational instructions. Finally, the use of stimulating sanctions is expected (Carpentier, 2010).

Many have criticized the top-down approach (e.g. Sabatier, 1986; Linder & Peters, 1987; Matland, 1995). The main issue regarding this rational approach is that the decision-makers perspective brings a lack of consideration for other actors of implementation, i.e. those who execute the policy, make sense of it, and modify it. Indeed, a policy is not considered to be linear but rather evolves throughout its implementation, which is not considered in the top-down approach.

2.2.2 Bottom up approach

The bottom-up approach was created to answer the need for an alternative approach to the top-down perspective. Its debut can be traced back to the end of 1970s and early 1980s (Sabatier, 1986). The perspective of this approach starts with the view point of the actors that are concerned by the policy and those who put it in action. The attention is therefore put on the actors and actions located at the bottom of the pyramid, i.e. on the field. They are considered to be those who influence the most the outcomes of a policy because of the modifications they bring to it (Matland, 1995; Linder & Peters, 1987). These modifications can be the result of either the interpretation of the policy or the interactions between local actors. The central authorities must then realize that the starting point of the policy resides in the local behaviors, and must be thought out according to the local realities. This will bring the policy to take form as a concrete problem-solving plan based on organizational solutions that affects directly local behaviors, inspired by the reality of the field (Meny & Thoening, 1989). The particularity of this approach is that the central authority does not need to know how the

task is executed or if it is executed evenly. Actually, the diversity of action in the execution is considered to be a relevant indicator for policy improvement.

Michael Lipsky is considered to be the founder of the bottom-up approach in 1971 with his work on street-level bureaucracy (Hill & Hupe, 2002). In 1980, his publication demonstrated the difficulty to control the actions of local level public servants, and established that a public policy is ultimately the result of local decisions and working patterns (Lipsky, 1980). Benny Hjern is also a great contributor to the bottom-up perspective. He developed a model of implementation structures with his colleagues Porter and Hull suggesting that activities are found within implementation structures and are formed in pools of organizations through "processes of consensual self-selection" (Hjern & Porter, 1981, p. 220). To develop their model, they constructed networks at the local level of organization according to the field of activities. Their observations led them to conclude that top-down control is far from effective, and that the myth of "stable and sequential relationship between politics and administration" (Hjern & Hull, 1982, p. 108) reinforces the use of traditional top-down implementation.

The main critics of the bottom-up approach focus on the emphasis put on the local level actors and the tendency to forget the impact of prior actions and outside influences. This perspective also seems to underestimate the influence of the central authority on the behaviors of local authorities (Carpentier, 2010).

2.2.3 Hybrid approach

Finally, the third approach arrived towards the end of the 1980s, in order to find a compromise between the top-down and bottom-up approaches (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). The 1990s is a period where studies on implementation processes are very popular, therefore present in great quantity. These studies brought to light the possibility to solve issues from both approaches by using a hybrid method of implementation, which consists of applying a double logic of vertical and horizontal implementation (O'Toole, 1986). The vertical approach suggests that the central authority should first establish the rules and control the division of power between other actors. The horizontal approach suggests to leave a certain level of autonomy to the local authorities and to delegate certain decision-making power, since local actors will try, in any case, to create their own policy, by bargaining with the central authority. The hybrid approach is characterized by this bargaining zone which appears clearly when both models are applied as such (Carpentier, 2010). This zone is created when local and central authorities communicate and negotiate in order to compromise and

agree on the way to proceed. In their strategy, both level of authorities must include the interests of other actors, as well as the context of the policy.

Richard Elmore is an important contributor to the hybrid approach. He built an organizational model for social program implementation. The innovation of his methodology resides in the triangulation of his approach. Indeed, he argues that implementation cannot be understood with one perspective. His model suggests analyzing the implementation process using four approaches, i.e. the system management model, the bureaucratic process model, the organizational development model and the conflict and bargaining model (Elmore, 1978). Inspired by Lipsky and the bottom-up approach, Elmore stressed the importance of understanding what is happening on the field.

Fritz Scharpf, inspired by the work of Hjern and the bottom-up perspective, developed a model of network analysis that is prescriptive and focused on the results. Its main objects of research are the coordination and collaboration patterns, which he identified according to types of coordination need through empirical factors (Hill & Hupe, 2002, p. 59). This analysis allowed him to identify the nature of networks as well as resources and exchanges that form the implementation process.

Ripley and Frankin (1982) also worked with networks, but using a more pluralist approach. They developed a model in order to identify what is happening and why it is happening. The key variables included in their model are implementation features, policy types and outcome. According to the researchers, implementation can be described according to five main features, i.e. actors, goals, context of government programs, layers of governments and factors beyond control. They stress the importance to analyze implementation in its institutional and cultural contexts. The type of policy is also a key element to the analysis. They identify four types of policy, i.e. distributive, competitive regulatory, protective regulatory and redistributive. Finally, they differentiate performance outcomes from impact outcomes, in the sense that performances are actions, but they don't necessary lead to impacts (Hill & Hupe, 2002).

A great contributor to the hybrid perspective on implementation process is Paul Sabatier, who developed the advocacy coalition approach (Sabatier, 1986). This approach combines the bottom-up emphasize on actors and their perceptions with the impact of social and economic context as well as legal instrument constraint behaviors (Sabatier, 1986, p. 23). This approach, like the network model, addresses the impact of conflicts present in the implementation process.

Goggin, Bowman, Lester and O'Toole developed in 1990 a communication model for implementation process analysis aiming for systematic research application (Goggin;Bowman;Lester;& O'Toole, 1990). They focused on the reaction (support of rejection) to the policy from all layers of government. Their independent variables affecting the reaction were the means of inducement and constraints on each level of authority whilst their intervening variables were the organizational and ecological capacity as well as policy retroaction (Hill & Hupe, 2002). Stoker (1991) focused on analyzing the implications of layers of government using three approaches, i.e. authority approach (how to obtain compliance from local authorities), exchange approach (cooperation and division of power) and governance approach (Hill & Hupe, 2002). Matland (1995) focused on implementation contexts as well as the clarity of policy goals.

Kickert, Klijn and Koppenjan (1997) elaborated the policy network approach. They claim that a policy is made inside an environment of interactions between a large number of actors. These interactions evolve in networks of interdependent actors, defined by stable patterns of social relations (Hill & Hupe, 2002, p. 77). These patterns are affected by the policy implementation and adapt to it, developing rules regulating behaviors and resource distribution. Actors within networks behave according to their perceptions of the policy, their own expectation and the expectations of other actors. The outcomes are affected by conflicts, tensions, diversity of goals and interests within networks and actors (Kickert;Klijn;& Koppenjan, 1997) and the main factor responsible for success or failure of the implementation is the degree of cooperation. The variables in place are the degree of interaction, of awareness and of game management, and the network is characterized according to the degree of power between networks. Actors are considered to be autonomous, as there is no central control. Finally, the outcomes cannot be measured with individual performances, but rather with the presence of openness, carefulness, reliability and legitimacy in the implementation process (Hill & Hupe, 2002, p. 78).

If hybrid approaches of implementation have solved many issues created by top-down and bottom-up approaches, implementation processes are still inefficient in many cases, in the sense that states do not have sufficient financial resources while public policies cost increasingly more and more, and their outcomes are still disappointing (Sabatier, 1986; Matland, 1995). This situation creates a high degree of accountability from public institutions. This fixation on performances and results forces governments to study outcomes and justify it (Carpentier, 2010). Indeed, the search for successful public policy implementation processes is still very much alive.

2.3 Previous findings in education

The use of implementation process analysis in the field of educational policy happened as soon as the field developed the first approaches. The 1950s is a period of national reforms of the education system in many countries. In the USA, educational reforms affected many sphere of education, such as the curriculum, the use of technology, and the organization. However, the expected outcomes never fully materialized, and policy makers realized the importance of studying the implementation process in order to get better results (Elmore, 2004). In this section, the results and findings of implementation studies of educational reforms will be presented, along with the many challenges of educational policy implementation that they evoked.

Most implementation studies aim to research how to achieve a successful implementation (Fullan, 1994). Research on top-down policy implementation showed a series of failure (Elmore, 2004). Indeed, many researchers associated these failures with the lack of leading role of actors present on the field, i.e. teachers and school administrators, the misunderstanding of the local culture of institutions and the complexity of change in education (see Berman & McLaughlin, 1977; Hargreaves, 1989; Holmes, Leithwood & Musella, 1989; Fullan, 1994; Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Gather-Thurler, 2000; Fullan, 2007; Legendre, 2002; Elmore, 2004). These findings brought policy-makers to create policies that were more bottom-up oriented, aiming to bring a greater participation of local actors in the whole implementation process.

In the USA, for instance, a great number of states started to decentralize the education system, implementing the model of school-based management, in order to provide local actors with a greater control on the education process. However, this decentralization did not produce the expected outcomes. Indeed, in 1992, a study of 33 schools (16 schools implemented school-based management and 17 schools did not) by Taylor and Teddlie (Fullan, 1994) showed that the teachers present in the school involved in the reform considered to be more involved in the school's decision-making process, but there were no difference in the actual teaching strategies used by teachers. In both categories of schools, a central formal teaching approach without student's participation was largely used. Furthermore, almost all schools included in the study (31 out of 33) showed very little collaboration among teachers (the two schools excluded were not part of the reform). A second study, by Weiss in 1992, came to the same conclusion when analyzing the same reform in 12 schools of 11 states (Fullan, 1994), as schools did not pay more attention to curriculum content or pedagogical issues than before the reform. Other reforms of school-based management

came to the same conclusions and expressed the lack of actual changes resulting from the reform (see Easton, 1991; Hallinger, Murphy & Hausmann, 1991; Weiss, 1992).

In France, many bottom-up reforms (1981, 1986, 1992, and 1995) were applied in order to increase the autonomy of local actors with an administrative decentralization as well as a decentralization of decision-making power (Carpentier, 2010). However, implementation studies showed many issues related to these reforms (Van Zanten, 2004). Indeed, it seemed that the fact that the French government is traditionally organized with a centralized structure might have played a role in the failure of a decentralized reform implementation. This reminded policy makers how much the structural context is relevant when it comes to elaborate and implement reforms that goes in a different direction.

Australia and England also have examples of bad implementation using the bottom-up approach (Fullan, 2005). In Australia, a reform in 1992 aimed to decentralize power and responsibilities towards schools, but the expected outcomes never materialized and the reform was cancelled; the education system was centralized again. Many studies of implementation observed the same issues regarding bottom-up reform in education, i.e. lack of coordination, superficial changes, uneven level of efforts, lack of time, lack of focus, lack of pressure, low level of efficiency, lack of effect on teaching or learning, and so on (see Gather-Thurler, 2000; Elmore, 2004).

After a series of failure in reforming education systems, researchers established that top-down approaches as well as bottom-up approaches are not efficient when they are applied separately (Fullan 1994). In the 1990s, national educational reforms became very popular in various countries, as it seemed to be the solution to many economic and social issues put to light by the new context of globalization (Leithwood & Earl, 2000). Policy-makers are now focusing on hybrid approaches to educational reforms. The vertical aspects consist of giving clear direction regarding expected changes, expected actions from actors on the fields, expected outcomes and goals. The central authority also make available appropriate resources, establishes standards, indicators and an accountability process. As for the horizontal approach, it consists of giving a certain level of autonomy to actors on the fields and to develop the field's abilities to apply the changes (Fullan, 2005). In terms of the bargaining zone, researchers propose to include all educational stakeholders and the population in the change process by promoting debate, discussion and reaching for consensus. Finally, the context must be taken into account when comes the time to choose an implementation strategy. If these conditions are respected, educational reforms should have more

chance of success (Hargreaves, 1989; Fuhrman, 1993; Gather-Thurler, 2000; Legendre, 2002; Tyack & Cuban, 2003; Van Zanten, 2004; Fullan, 2007).

2.4 Theoretical framework for the study

The theoretical framework of this research is based on a hybrid approach of implementation studies. In the light of the previous findings in implementation studies, it seems very clear that top-down approaches and bottom-up approaches of implementation analysis do not give a complete framework of analysis, as in both cases variables are underestimated. This study does not start with the assumption that central or local authorities play a bigger role than the other, but rather wants to create a framework that will allow a complete understanding of interactions between all levels of authorities in order to evaluate which authorities play a bigger role and to what extent.

The top-down approach has been criticized a lot because it does not pay attention to local activities, which creates an incomplete analysis of a very complex process. However, the bottom-up perspective is also to be criticized for its exclusive focus on local level activities which dresses an unrealistic view of national reform implementation process by putting aside major components of the reform process. My point of view is that only a hybrid approach of implementation process analysis can achieve a complete analysis of the complete process, which includes a vertical approach as well as a horizontal approach. The hybrid approach put also a lot of emphasis in the interaction between levels of authorities as well as the context in which the reform occurs, which represents for me a great addition for this analysis. Indeed, previous studies have shown that implementation process activities happen in a environment made of interactions between layers of institutions and is greatly affected by the context.

I have few critics to address toward the hybrid approach of implementation analysis. This framework of analysis is very prescriptive instead of descriptive, which deviates from the purpose of this study. Indeed, all contributors to the hybrid approach have prescribed what should happen during a hybrid approach of implementation process for it to be a success. This study does not evaluate the success or failure of the reform, nor the success or failure of its implementation process. Previous studies on implementation process analysis have adressed the constant failure of developing the perfect implementation process model. These prescriptions are therefore to be taken with precaution. This section will present the framework of analysis based on the hybrid approach, including the contributions of researchers regarding prescriptions. This will allow the analysis to

compare the Finnish implementation model with the implementation model proposed by experts in implementation processes, and see what are the differences and similarities.

The first perspective (vertical) focuses on the role of the central authority. The variables included are the goals and expected outcomes of the policy, the resources made available to implementers, the standards elaborated and the evaluation process. The second perspective (horizontal) focuses on the degree of autonomy of local authorities and their abilities to create and apply changes (Fullan, 2005). The hybrid approach adds a zone of bargaining, which concerns the communication pattern between different levels of authority. Finally, all variables are analyzed according to the context (Hargreaves, 1989; Fuhrman, 1993; Gather-Thurler, 2000; Legendre, 2002; Tyack & Cuban, 2003; Van Zanten, 2004; Fullan, 2007). This section describes each variable in more details.

2.4.1   Vertical approach

Fuhrman (1993) establishes that the central government has to coordinate the curriculum, the student's evaluation and the foundation of a coherent vision of education. This allows the production of coherent actions throughout the entire education system. Fuhrman states that in most cases, teachers and schools do not have the ability to elaborate and implement their own change, which makes the role of the central authority very important. The need for standardized processes is also present in the work of Bonami and Garant (1996), which states that teachers must refer to programs elaborated by themselves or by others, which define teaching content and goals. Bonami and Garant also express the relevance of standardized pupils' evaluation which allows an efficient performance measurement.

Goals and expected outcomes

A policy needs to be guided by a clear vision as well as clear expected outcomes (Fullan, 1994; Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Elmore, 2004). The central goals must be clear and established for each year and for each level (Bonami & Garant, 1996; Fullan, 2007). Finally, goals must also be established for long term purposes and based on appropriate knowledge, including relevant research (Fuhrman, 1993; Elmore, 2004).

Resources

Resources can take many forms. However, they need to be easily usable, coherent and persistent (Fullan, 1994: Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Resources can take forms as material, time, support, funds,

and training. Material can be for instance school books, curriculum, and pedagogical tools such as computers. The material provided needs to be clear and of good quality (Fuhrman, 1993; Bonami & Garant, 1996; Fullan, 2007). Support can take form as, for instance, a new agency which helps the process, or technical assistance. A good support must focus on involving a diversity of actors and develop mutual collaborative feeling (Fuhrman, 1993; Elmore, 2004; Fullan 2007). Funds need to be coherent, sufficient, and long term oriented (Fullan, 2007). Training concerns actors on the fields. It can take form as information transmission in meetings or actual training where professional development takes place. Training must ensure that local actors understand how to implement changes. These trainings can be requested by local actors themselves or offered directly by central authorities. This resource concerns aspects such as the problematic to solve, the different solutions that can be applied, the role of each actor, and the plan of implementation (Fuhrman, 1993; Legendre, 2002; Elmore, 2004, Fullan, 2007).

Standards

Standards are relevant in order to measure performance (Fuhrman, 1993; Bonami & Garant, 1996). Standards need to be established for each year and for each level of implementation; however, too many standards might be counterproductive as certain changes can take longer to appear. Therefore, standards have to be established realistically by professionals and be accepted by the teaching community (Elmore, 2004).

Evaluation

Evaluation is used by central authorities in order to follow the implementation process. It takes form as evaluation of outcomes but also evaluation of the process (Fullan, 1994; Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Bonami & Garant, 1996; Legendre, 2002). In order to be effective, evaluations must be representative, follow a purpose of reward rather than punishment and lead to adjustment according to results (Fuhrman, 1993; Fullan, 2007). The data obtained must be available to those concerned. The results must be able to evaluate properly the efficiency of a process in order for it to be adjusted if necessary. The data must come from all actors included in the process and collected with various methods (Legendre, 2002).

2.4.2   Horizontal approach

The leading principle of the horizontal approach is that teachers must not be considered as technicians (Fuhrman, 1993; Fullan, 1994; Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Bonami, 1996). Indeed, they are

professionals with extensive knowledge and experience related to their place of work, which policy-makers don't have. Furthermore, learning cannot be completely programmed, and the creativity of local actors is necessary in order to adapt teaching to different pupils (Bonami & Garant, 1996). This institutional reality explains mostly why a reform cannot be entirely applied as it was first imagined (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). The existence of local autonomy is therefore very important in order to make local actors responsible to create policies adapted to their own reality, based on central reform. This professional approach was put forward by Carnoy (1999) who believed the great effect of professional knowledge on school performances. Indeed, teachers are the closest actor to pupils; therefore they are in the best position to make appropriate decisions regarding these pupils. The idea of decentralization allows the development of teacher's commitment to the implementation process. Decentralization also ensures the implication of local actors and the creation of networks of collaboration and discussions in order to support and participate to the implementation process (Fuhrman, 1993; Fullan, 2007).

Degree of autonomy

The degree of autonomy can be described as the level of flexibility left for local actors to adapt and develop the central reform. This concerns teachers, school communities, local administrators and other local stakeholders (Fuhrman, 1993; Fullan, 1994; Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Bonami & Garant, 1996; Legendre, 2002; Elmore, 2004). It refers also to the level of decision-making present in local authorities as well as their level of accountability to central authorities.

Ability to create change

This variable focuses on the network of collaboration and discussion developed by local authorities in order to implement changes. These networks can take many forms and pursue many goals. It can take form, for instance, as learning networks, which focus on training professionals responsible to implement change regarding of the content and structure of the change (Fullan, 1994; Tyack & Cuban, 1995, Bonami & Garant, 1996). It can also take form as structures that promote changes, evaluate the process, communicate information related to the reform, and create debate and discussions (Elmore, 2004).

2.4.3 Bargaining zone

This bargaining zone is the place where central and local authorities meet. Each level of authorities defends its interests, discusses and debates regarding the implementation process (Carpentier,

2010). This place of exchange can take different forms, according to the structures and the context. For instance, it can take form of transmission of information in order for all actors (e.g. citizen, teachers, pupils) to really integrate and understand the whole change process (Fuhrman, 1993; Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Legendre, 2002). This exchange of information is applied from top-down and bottom-up. The purpose is to provide relevant information but also to listen to all actors in order to improve the process. Another form of bargaining zone consists of making all actors participate to the process in order to ensure their support to the reform and increase their feeling of commitment (Fuhrman, 1993; Fullan, 1994; Bonami & Garant, 1996; Elmore, 2004). This collaborative bargaining is based on the idea that teachers must be the main actors included in all parts of the change process. This type of bargaining zone can take many forms. For instance, schools can participate to the elaboration process as well as implementation process. Actors of all level can be included in various structures, which encourages interactions and the reach of common goals. It can take form as mobilization, where the reform is supported by teachers, parents, municipalities and the community. This mobilization can consist of building implementation structures that stimulate implementation actions and increase the level of support from all actors. A collaborative zone can also result in the presence of debate including all stakeholders. Finally, the bargaining zone tries to create consensus regarding implementation process, its vision, goals and standards of performance (Furhman, 1993; Fullan, 1994; Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Bonami & Garant, 1996; Legendre, 2002; Elmore, 2004).

2.4.4   Context

The context includes the environment in which the policy is elaborated, decided and implemented (Carpentier, 2010). If all agree that the context must be taken into account when developing public policies (Fuhrman, 1993; Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Legendre, 2002; Fullan, 2007), Fullan stresses the crucial element of context referring to the elaboration process. Indeed, the process in which a policy was created is a crucial element to consider when implementing the policy (Fullan, 2007). The elements of need, clarity, complexity and efficiency are particularly relevant. The element of need refers to the fact that the change proposed is considered to be essential and useful (Legendre, 2002). The clarity refers mainly to the goals as well as the means to achieve the goals. Indeed, if the core idea of the reform is not clear, a lot of confusion can be created around it and will greatly affect the implementation process. The complexity refers to the extent to which changes will appear. A complex reform needs to ensure appropriate structures to proceed to a complex implementation.

Finally, the efficiency refers to the presence of appropriate resources available to ensure an efficient transformation.

Another aspect of context that is of great importance is the consistency of the policy in relation to other policies (Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Elmore, 2004; Fullan, 2007). Indeed, a policy might contradict another policy or even overlap with an existing policy. The ideology behind the reform must be in conformity with the foundation of the system, and even be supported by other policies outside of education. The level of consensus and conflict, the stability and the characteristics of the environment need to be taken into consideration at all steps of the change process.

The analysis of the vertical implementation, horizontal implementation and the bargaining zone in the context of the policy, the education system and the Finnish system should produce an exhaustive description of the UBE reform implementation.

3. Research questions

The literature review helped define the goal of this study and locate the gap that this study will fill in the field of implementation study. Previous findings in the field of implementation process analysis have put into light the lack of studies regarding precisely Finnish educational reform implementation process. Indeed, most research in the field of implementation studies are located in Anglo-Saxons countries as well in Western Europe, but very few focus on Nordic countries. If Hjern and its colleagues have brought the study of implementation processes to Scandinavian countries, their focus was not on educational change and their approach was more oriented towards bottom-up perspectives (see Hjern et al., 1981; 1982). Therefore, this research seems to be the first focusing on implementation process of educational change in Finland using a hybrid approach. Finally, the use of a case study makes this study completely unique, as the implementation process has not been studied for the UBE reform. Indeed, this reform has been studied for other purposes and using other approaches. Studies have been published, for instance regarding transition issues and teachers' professional agency in a unified basic education (see Pietarinen, 2000; Pietarinen et al., 2010; Pyhältö et al., 2012). Other studies have looked into the implementation process (see Pietilä et al., 2007; Pyhältö et al., 2011), but these research have focused on one aspect of the implementation process rather than on the whole implementation process (for instance, the role of principals, the actions of specific schools or specific municipalities).

In the light of these assumptions, the goal is to produce a descriptive analysis of the implementation process of the UBE reform. In order to achieve this goal, I will look into four major components of the implementation process, which is the framework of this analysis. These four components are the role of central authorities, the role of local authorities, the interactions between central and local authorities, and finally the global cohesion with the context in which the process took place.

The next two sections aims to provide an extensive description of the context. Carpentier (2010) divided the context into three categories, i.e. the context of the system, the context of the education system, and the context of the policy. The first section will provide a description of the first two contexts, which are identified as external and internal environment. The following section will provide the context of the policy as I will go through the previous stages of the policy, i.e. the agenda-setting, the elaboration and the decision making process.

4. Context

In order to proceed to a proper analysis of the implementation process, it is of great importance to place the event in its context. The context of the implementation process of an education reform can be comprised into two main categories, which are the external environment and the internal environment (Monière & Guay, 1987). The external environment refers here to the country of Finland as a system, and the internal environment refers to the education system within Finland.

The environment of a system refers to its history, structure, and culture. Therefore, in order to describe the external environment, there will be a presentation of the recent history of Finland after the 1960s, which is the time where many reforms took place in the country in order to shape the Finnish system known today. Then, the demography and economy will be described in order to understand the reality of its population. Finally, the structure and culture of the political system will be presented.

The internal environment refers precisely to the education system. The aspects included in this context are the history of educational reforms in Finland, its organizational structure as well as the culture present in the system. The description of these variables will allow the reader to understand to a greater extent the context in which the implementation process is taking place.

4.1. External environment

Finland is among the countries considered to have a very high quality of life. The country was ranked seventh in the World happiness record of 2013 and scored over OECD's average for many well-being dimensions of Better Life Index. Among its best dimensions are education and skills, personal security, environmental quality and subjective well-being (OECD, 2014). Income inequality, calculated with the Gini index, is at the level of 26.8%[1] in 2008, positioning the country on the 12th rank of best income equality in the world (The World Factbook , 2015).

4.1.1 History

Finland has been an independent country since 1917. Indeed, Finland was a part of Sweden for many centuries before it was taken by Russia in 1809 (Lewis, 2004). The evolution of the Finnish system is very interesting. It changed drastically over the past 100 years, as many countries have. What makes it quite unique is the way Finland has approached these transformations, which are

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[1] The Gini index varies today between 23% and 63%, from extremely equal to extremely unequal income distribution.

characterized by a very slow and continuous change process that ensured the stability and durability of these transformations. The years between 1960 and 1990 represent the period of radical change in the definition of State's responsibilities in Finland (Fellman;Hjerppe;& Hjerppe, 2011). Indeed, the reforms implemented in the 1960s were the beginning for the welfare state and the formation of a decentralized system.

In the early 20th century, Finland was characterized by social poverty (with a GDP per capita twice smaller than that of United Kingdom), church-managed basic education and uneven health care access due to a wide dispersion of the population in small towns across the country (Fellman et al., 2011).

The development of the welfare system in Finland was very gradual and the country was by no mean among the first countries to apply welfare reforms (Germany is considered as a forerunner with many welfare programs created before the 20th century). Finland has created most of its welfare state institutions after the 1960s (Fellman et al., 2011). Indeed, Finland began to invest in maternal and child care program after the Second World War (WW2). Social programs expended with a national pension plan and unemployment aid. Then, the country developed its systems of health care and education to them make effective and universally accessible. Finally, in the 1970s and 1980s, Finland reformed its sickness insurance, family allowances and unemployment benefits (Fellman et al., 2011). Between 1980 and 2005, transfers to households doubled (in relation to GDP). These transfers represent the welfare programs of pensions (for elderly and disability), family allowances and employment benefits (Fellman et al., 2011).

These transformations brought an increase in State's employees and public expenditures. Indeed, while 9% of the population was employed by the State in 1960, the percentage went up to 24% in 2007. In terms of public expenditures in relation to GDP, the percentage went from 26.6% in 1960 to 50.4% in 2005 (Fellman et al., 2011).

The 1960s were also the years where unions came to be an important part of the Finnish system by becoming a powerful actor in economic development. This was the arrival of the corporatist tripartite model where the State, corporations and unions built a consensus oriented negotiation tradition as they developed the welfare system (Fellman et al., 2011).

After a growth of the economy alongside the growth of the welfare state during the 1960s, Finland's economy found itself in a state of stagnation and resulted in a recession in the 1970s. However, the

public expenditures did not decrease and the welfare system continued to grow, as it was favorably perceived by the population as a relevant tool to ensure social stability and economic development (Sihvo & Uusitalo, 1995). In order to resolve this economic issue, Finland applied financial policies to control inflation and increase market demand.

The 1980s are characterized by economic growth. Finland was not in presence of public deficit, but slowed the pace of social expenditure. Towards the end of the 1980s, Finland had one of the best economic growth among OECD's countries, even being referred as the Japan of Europe (Sihvo & Uusitalo, 1995, p. 255). Within Finland, the support of the population for the welfare system was very high due to its success.

In the 1990s, Finland found itself in a great recession and started to accumulate public deficits, which provoked considerable cuts in social expenditures as well as an increase in taxation. The GDP decreased of 10% in the first half of the 1990s, and by the year 1993, Finland's employment rate was over 18% (Sihvo & Uusitalo, 1995).

The economic crisis of the 1990s forced Finland to rethink its social welfare system, as the employment rate was consistently high. Indeed, Finland needed to stimulate the economy in order to decrease the amount of people on social welfare and give a better access to jobs (Kautto & Uuasitalo, 2003). For the first time in Finland, economic policies were prioritized over social policies. Over the following decade, all successive governments focused on the same issues, i.e. to balance public finances, to stimulate the market and extend Finland competitiveness in the global market. In doing so, a critical evaluation of social policies as well as public institutions was applied in order to improve their efficiency, which created a massive reform of the Finnish public system (Kautto & Uuasitalo, 2003). Emphasis was put on avoiding an increase of taxation, even though it was inevitable towards the end of the 1990s.

The economy started to grow slowly after 1993, due mainly to an increase of exports, which provoked eventually an increase of consumption within the country in 1994 and the return of investments in 1995. The effect on employment appeared finally in 1996. Meanwhile, the public debt continued to grow, but at a much slower pace, and finally started to decrease after 1996 (Kautto & Uuasitalo, 2003).

4.1.2   Demography and territory

Finland is a country located in Northern Europe, between Russia and Sweden. The climate is characterized by cold winter and mild summer, as well as long period of darkness during the winter and constant presence of the sun during the summer (Aho, Pitkänen, & Sahlberg, 2006). The country joined the European Union in 1995. The population of Finland is around 5.4 million inhabitants, spread on a territory of 338 000 km^2. The great majority of the population lives in the southern part of Finland and more than 82% of the population lives in urban area (The World Factbook , 2015). The country as a density of 17 inhabitants per square kilometer (among the lowest in the world) and only 4% of the population lives in the territory of Lapland (north), which represent one third of the whole territory. Even though most people live in the southern part of Finland, the population is still considered to be very scattered (Aho et al., 2006).

Finland has two official languages; Finnish and Swedish. The population is very homogenous as Finnish is spoken by 89% of the population. Swedish is the second most spoken language with 5.3%, followed by Russian at 1.3%. Religious beliefs also reflect this homogeneity, as 78.4% of the population is a member of the Lutheran Church. Other religions are quite marginal, and 19.2% of the population does not take part in any religion (The World Factbook , 2015). Finally, 4.9% of the Finnish population was born abroad (OECD, 2015a).

The median age in Finland is 42.4, and the population growth rate is at 0.4%, which is one of the lowest rate in the world. Finally, 28% of the population is under 24 years old, whilst 33% of the population is above 55 years old (The World Factbook , 2015).

4.1.3   Economy

Finland has a GDP of EUR 197 billion in 2014 (OECD, 2014), and a GDP per capita of US $40.300 (The World Factbook , 2015). The GDP grew impressively between 2000 and 2008, performing better than the majority of OECD countries, but decreased drastically (-6%) in 2008 and 2009, during the global economic crisis. The growth has been slow after 2010, facing two years of negative growth (2012 and 2013). The 2014 GDP is still under the level of 2007 (OECD, 2014). Finland's public debt represents 59.6% of its GDP in 2014 and the public budget had a negative balance of US $10 million on a total US $156.1 billion of expenditures for the year 2014 (The World Factbook , 2015).

During the 20th century, Finland was known mainly for its forests and metal-related industries. During the 1980s, the country massively developed its investment sector, which resulted in uncontrolled banking deregulation and created an instability which led to the great economic crisis of 1990. By 2000, Finland had oriented its economy toward the ICT industry, and is nowadays classified among the best countries in terms of R&D, employment and exports in the field of ICT in the world (World Bank, 2006).

Finland has put the emphasis on knowledge economy, and the government as well as the private sector have doubled their investment into R&D, to reach 3.5% of the GDP (the OCED countries average is 2.5%). This investment happened during the 1990s, while Finland was in presence of a recession and very high unemployment rate. This choice of action was risky, as is meant to invest in a long term economic plan, rather than an immediate economic growth (World Bank, 2006).

Since Finland is an exporting country, its economy has been affected by the economic struggle of most countries of Europe. However, its balance of trade is still positive at US $5 billion in 2014 (The World Factbook , 2015). Finland's exports are mainly electrical equipment, machinery, transport equipment, paper, chemicals and metals. The imports are mainly food, petroleum, chemicals, transport equipment, iron and steel, machinery and electronics. Finland exports mainly from Germany, Sweden, Russia, USA and the Netherlands and imports mainly from Sweden, Germany, Russia, the Netherlands and Denmark (The World Factbook , 2015).

In terms of labor force, the main occupation is in public services, which represents 28.5% of the labor force in 2011. The second main occupation is commerce at 21.3%, followed by industry at 15.5% and finance at 13.3%. Transport and communications represents 9.9% of labor force, construction is at 7.1% and agriculture and forestry is now at 4.4% (The World Factbook , 2015).

The unemployment is a constant struggle in Finland. With an unemployment rate of more or less 8% since the 2000s, Finland is doing better than the average of OECD, but is last among the Nordic countries (OECD, 2014). If work policies help to prevent the rise of unemployment, a better look at the statistics shows a small increase of long-term unemployment among the unemployed.

4.1.4   Structure of the political system

In this section, the concept of division of power in Finland, the voting system, and the structure of public institutions will be described. Together, these three aspects form the structure of the political

system in Finland, which represent the balance of power within politics and the normal application of political and administrative decisions.

4.1.4.1 Division of power

The Constitution of Finland divides the political system into three separate powers, that is, the legislative power, the executive power and the judicial power (Constitution of Finland, 2011). The legislative power is represented by the parliament and the president. The executive power is represented by the government, and the judicial power is represented by a system of courts of law (Eduskunta, 2015).

Legislative Power

The Parliament consists of 200 members (Constitution of Finland, 2011) from various political parties representing various political ideologies. The main responsibilities of the Parliament are to enact legislations and overlook the government's work on many aspects. During a plenary session, legislation's enacting is the result of a government's proposal, a member's motion or a citizen initiative (Constitution of Finland, 2011). Most of legislations adopted are the result of a government's proposal. For a citizen's initiative to be discussed in a plenary session, it has to be signed by a minimum of 50 000 citizens allowed to vote during an election[2].

After a first debate that will guide the orientation of the legislation, the proposal is sent to the corresponding committee that will study the proposal and produce a report, often recommending adjustments to the initial proposal. The Parliament has 15 permanent committees, dealing each with a specific type of issues. Members of the committees are the Members of Parliament (MPs). They take part in committees (MPs usually take part in two committees) that relate to their field of expertise (Eduskunta, 2015).

A first reading of the proposal takes place in plenary session, and legislators choose the content of the bill, debate on each of its section, approve or propose modifications to it, according to the committee's report. The bill then goes back to the committee in order to produce the final text. The second reading in plenary session consists only of approving or rejecting the modified bill. The bill is submitted to a vote and a simple majority is required.

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[2] This citizen's initiative has started only in 2012 due to an amendment to the Constitution.

Once a bill is adopted, the President must ratify it, otherwise it must go back to the Parliament in order to be modified. However, if the bill is not altered after being returned, it does not need to be ratified by the President and will enter into force. The Bank of Finland and the Social Insurance Institution (Kela) are accountable directly to the Parliament (Eduskunta, 2015).

The President's responsibilities are included in the Constitution. Mainly, he/she is responsible to ratify bills adopted by the Parliament and to nominate certain officials, such as the governor of the Bank of Finland and Finland's ambassadors. He/she also have to confirm the nomination of the Prime Minister (PM) after approbation of the Parliament, after an election. The President is also the supreme commander of the Defense Forces. Matter of war and peace must be decided in collaboration with the Parliament (Suomen Tasavallan Presidentti, 2015).

Executive Power

The government consists of the PM and the ministers, which are all MPs. The PM is selected by the Parliament after a parliamentary election. He/she is usually the head of the party who gained the most seats during the election. The PM chooses the ministers among the MPs. Finland is used to the presence of coalitions, which consists of alliances between parties in order to form a majority in the Parliament. Indeed, a great number of political parties are present in Finland and in the Parliament, which makes it difficult for only one party to obtain the majority by itself. Finland had not been in presence of a majority party since WW2. Therefore, after an election, the party who gained the most seats will decide which parties will be part of the coalition (even though it is often decided earlier), and among these parties, the PM will choose some of its members to be ministers as well.

The government is responsible to apply the government's program. Each minister supervises its ministry. The decision-making process of the government takes place during the government's plenary sessions, consisting of the PM, the ministers, and the Chancellor of Justice (Valtioneuvosto, 2015).

Judicial Power

The justice system in Finland is overseen by the Chancellor of Justice (nominated by the President) and the Parliamentary Ombudsman (elected by the Parliament). The Constitution guarantees its independence. In order to apply justice, three types of courts are used, i.e. the courts, the administrative courts and the special courts (Constitution of Finland, 2011).

The normal court system is applied on three levels; the district courts, the courts of appeal and the Supreme Court. This court system deals with criminal and civil cases in the district courts, and a decision that is appealed will be taken to the court of appeal, and then the Supreme Court. The administrative courts are applied on two levels; the administrative courts and the Supreme Administrative Courts. This court system reviews the decisions from the authorities. The special courts consist of four entities; the market court, the labor court, the insurance court and the High Court of Impeachment (Oikeus, 2015).

The Judicial Appointments Board is an independent organization responsible to select judges of the first level of courts. This selection will be handed to the minister of Justice, who then will recommend nominations to the President, who will appoint the judges. Supreme and Appeal courts nominate their own judges among those from the first level of courts (Oikeus, 2015).

4.1.4.2 Voting system

The Finnish population has the opportunity to vote on four occasions, that is, for the presidential elections, the parliamentary elections, the municipal elections and the European elections (Jääskeläinen, 2010).

The presidential election takes place every six years and the same president can only be in office for a maximum of two consecutive terms. This election is proportional. Indeed, the vote is only one turn if one candidate obtains more than 50% of all votes, but there will be a second turn if it is not the case, and only the two candidates who received the most votes in the first turn are present in the second turn. In order to be a candidate for the presidential election, one must be nominated by a political party present in the Parliament, or be nominated by a constituency associations established by at least 20 000 people (Jääskeläinen, 2010). The voting turnout in the last presidential election was 72.8% in the first round and 68.9% in the second round (Official Statistics of Finland, 2013).

The parliamentary election happens every four years and elects 200 MPs (Constitution of Finland, 2011). The PM can start an election before the end of its mandate on a reasoned initiative, but it is unlikely to happen (the last one was in 1975). The territory is divided in 15 districts and each district will elect a number of MPs according to the density of its population (Jääskeläinen, 2010). The smallest district is that of Åland with only one MP (Åland is an autonomous territory[3]), while the district of Uusimaa elects 34 MPs. These numbers can change according to the change in

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[3] See Constitution of Finland, section 25.

demography, which is confirmed before the elections. Each registered party or constituency association can present a maximum of 14 candidates per district. In the cases of districts where more than 14 candidates will be elected, the maximum amount of candidates allowed per party is the number of candidates elected in the district (Jääskeläinen, 2010).

The results are calculated in four stages using the d'Hongt method. In the first stage, the total number of votes that each party received is counted, with no consideration for the candidates. If parties had formed an alliance, they are considered as one party. In the second stage, each candidate is ranked within its party according to the number of vote received individually. The third stage gets more complex, as the candidates receive an index of value. The candidate who received the most votes within a party will get an index worth of the total amount of votes received by the entire party within the district. The candidate ranked second will received an index worth exactly 1/2 of the first candidate's index. The candidate ranked third will receive an index worth 1/3 of the first candidate's index, and so on. This is applied for each party's candidate within the district. In the fourth stage, the number of candidates allowed by the district who have the highest index of value are elected. For instance, in a district of 7 MPs, the candidates with the 7 highest indexes will be elected (Jääskeläinen, 2010). The voting turnout in the last parliamentary election was 70.1% (Official Statistics of Finland, 2015).

The municipal elections happen every four years, in which municipalities' counselors are elected in all 342 municipalities. In order to be candidate, one must be nominated by a municipal party or association. The number of candidates allowed per party is equal to 150% of the number of counselors that are to be elected, which is established according to the city's population size[4]. The result is counted the same way as for the parliamentary elections (Jääskeläinen, 2010). The voting turnout in the last municipal election was 58.3% (Official Statistics of Finland, 2014a).

Finally, the European elections happen every five years and elect 13 Members of the European Parliament. Each party or association can present 20 candidates. There is no division of the territory and the result is counted the same way as the parliamentary elections (Jääskeläinen, 2010). The voting turnout in the last European election was 41% (Official Statistics of Finland, 2014).

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[4] See Local Government Act, section 10.

4.1.4.3 Structure of public institutions

The system of public administration in Finland is not shaped on a regular top-down model. Indeed, the central government, the municipalities, and other institutions such as churches and universities[5] are at the same level under the authority of the legislative authority. In this section, the composition and the responsibilities of these public administration bodies will be described, in order to gain a better understanding of the role of each organization within the system.

Central government

The central government consists of the ministries and central agencies. In Finland, there are a total of 12 ministries, including the Prime Minister office (Valtioneuvosto, 2015). The ministries are responsible to apply the government's program within their sphere of power and responsibilities. They implement the executive decisions and act as political and administrative experts. Ministries are also responsible to supervise central agencies under their jurisdiction.

Central agencies are autonomous bodies. There are around 100 central agencies in Finland (Ministry of Finance, 2015). They have to report to the ministry they are related to and get their budget from them as well, but they are independent in the application of their responsibilities. The tasks of agencies can consist, for instance, to regulate a specific field (e.g. the Finnish Rail Authority), to evaluate performances (e.g. the Finnish Education Evaluation Center), and to distribute a service (e.g. the Social Insurance Institution of Finland). If most of central agencies answer to a ministry, some of them answer directly to the Parliament.

Regional administration bodies are an extension of ministries authority at the regional level. There are four types of regional administration bodies. Regional State Administrative Agencies are responsible, for instance, to promote regional equality in the field of basic rights, legal protection, access to basic public services, environmental protection, and public safety (Regional State Administrative Agencies, 2015). Centers for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY centers) are responsible for promoting regional competitiveness and sustainable development (Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment, 2015). Regional Councils are the statutory joint municipal authority (Regional Development Act, 2002), and every local authority is a member of a regional council (their members are elected officials from municipalities). Their main fields of responsibility are regional development and land use planning.

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[5] See Constitution of Finland, sections 119 and 121.

Finally, Forest Centers are responsible to develop forestry and enforce forestry legislation (Finnish Forest Center, 2015).

State local administration consists of direct services to the population. Organized in State local districts, local services consists of police and enforcement authorities, customs, employment services, tax offices, and so on (Ministry of Finance, 2015).

Municipalities

The Constitution guarantees the basis of municipal autonomy[6]. The 342 municipalities of Finland are responsible mainly of social welfare, health, education, culture, environment and technical infrastructures (The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, 2011).

Municipalities' income comes from local taxation, fees and charges, transfer from the central authority and sales revenues. Local taxation takes form as income tax, real estate tax and corporate tax and represents almost 50% of all local income. Each municipality can decide on the level of taxation. The average municipal income tax rate is around 19%. Local fees represent around 25% of the municipalities' income and can take form as water supply, power supply, and public transportation. Most of public services are free or apply very low charges. Central government transfers represent around 20% of the municipalities' income and are a mean to create a more equal quality of services in all municipalities (The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, 2015).

Central government transfers to local authorities are established by the *basic public services program*[7]. This program consists of adjusting the budget and the administration of basic services according to new legislations and actual needs of the population. The program and budget is prepared by the Ministry of Finance in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Ministry of Education and Culture and other ministries if necessary. The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities also participates as a permanent expert (Local Government Act, 2012). Legislations affecting transfers can be, for instance, the Act on Central Government Transfers to Local Government for Basic Public Services (1704/2009), the Act on the Financing of Education and Culture (1705/2009), and the Act on Planning and Government Grants for Social Welfare and Health Care (733/1992).

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[6] See Constitution of Finland, section 121.
[7] See Local Government Act, section 8a.

The municipal council is the central decision-making body. Its members are elected every four years and they form municipal committees in order to provide specific services. Municipalities are free to organize their administration as they which. However, in addition to the local council, a municipality must have decision-making bodies in the form of a local executive and authority audit committee[8]. The municipal council is responsible for the general activities and finances. It decides the main objectives and approves the administration principles. The local executive is responsible for the administration and the financial management of the municipality. Local authorities can create various authority committees and management boards, as well as sub-committees and commissions, according to their priorities, such as school boards, board of management, planning and human resources divisions (Local Government Act, 2012).

Referendum initiatives are possible at the local level. When 5% of the population creates such an initiative, the local council has to consider it[9]. Joint municipal authorities can be created with agreement from municipalities who want to improve cooperation between local authorities. Participating municipalities must finance this organization, and some powers are transferred to it[10].

4.1.5   Culture of the political system

The culture of the political system consists of the aspects of political culture and political ideologies. The first aspect refers to the type of democracy present in the system, as well as the relationship between the political system and its population. The second aspect refers to the various ideologies that are present in the system and shape the society's development.

4.1.5.1 Political culture

The political culture can be understood by the perceptions of citizen towards the political system and the role they can play in it (Arend & Rabier, 2000). This may include, for instance, values, political orientations, and democratic system. The political culture is an indicator of the level of acceptability of the political system from the population. This acceptability is influenced by many socialization agents, which will impact the opinion that someone will have throughout his/her life. Socialization agents may be the family, religion, school, workplace, unions, associations, and media. The political culture is also influenced by political socialization, which consists of the transmission of political culture from one generation to another (Arend & Rabier, 2000).

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[8] See Local Government Act, section 17.
[9] See Local Government Act, section 31.
[10] See Local Government Act, section 81.

The Finnish political culture is one of consensus (Lounasmeri, 2010). The fact that the government is formed by a coalition is a strong indicator that political consensus is preferred to political confrontation. The strong presence of unions in policy elaboration processes is also a sign that the political sphere is reaching out to the population in order to form a consensual policy, and therefore avoid disagreement in the outcome (Luhtakallio, 2012, p. 15).

The population is quite participative as well. Finland's culture does not tend to encourage demonstrations and strikes. However, there are moments in the history of the country when the population did demonstrate in the streets when decisions from the authorities were contrasting too much with the general consensus (Luhtakallio, 2012, p. 98). A very recent example would be the student's demonstration in Helsinki in 2013 in reaction to the government's decision to limit student's financial aid (Yle, 2013). The Finnish population participates also to a great extent through associations, who address serious issues in the name of their members (Luhtakallio, 2012, p. 36). Another example of the participative side of the Finnish population would be the new citizen's initiative that took place in 2012, allowing the population to force a topic to be discussed in the Parliament when more than 50 000 citizens require it (Jääskeläinen, 2010). Finland has legalized gay marriage using a citizen's initiative (Yle, 2014). Finally, the voting turnout is a great indicator of the population's participation to the political process. With 70% in the last parliamentary election (Official Statistics of Finland, 2015), Finland is slightly above OECD average rate (68%), and finds itself at the 19th rank on a total of 36 countries (OECD, 2015). Over the last three decades, the best voting turnout Finland has had was 81.2% in 1979 (Official Statistics of Finland, 2015). Since then, the voting turnout has been slowly but constantly going down, which is a trend that can be observed in all OECD's country, except in countries where voting is obligatory (Luhtakallio, 2012, p. 17).

Finland's society is characterized by a high level of trust between all social actors. This can be explained by the great attachment of Finnish people to the concept of truth, in a scientific understanding of it (Lewis, 2004, p. 57). If people don't tend to lie, it creates an environment favorable for trust. Truth and honesty are expected from political actors to the point where a PM had to resign after using "terminological inexactitude" (Lewis, 2004, p. 60). The level of trust towards politicians and public institutions seems to be quite high. One reason is that politicians don't appear to be corrupted. Indeed, Finland has been ranked among the countries with the lowest perception of corruption in the world (Transparency International, 2015). The political process is also very transparent (Luhtakallio, 2012, p. 188), as information related to any policy processes,

public contracts or even the people's personal income are easily accessible. As a welfare State, Finland is considered to be paying quite high level of income taxation, but the "taxation policies are largely approved by the public, which understands that taxation is a necessary means for securing overall social welfare." (Anckar, Kuitto, Oberst, & Jahn, 2015, pp. 7-8)

Finally, one of the main cultural values present in Finnish political culture is that of autonomy. The principle of self-governing, included in the Constitution[11], is of great importance of Finnish people. Indeed, the central government transfers a great amount of money to local authorities and trusts these institutions in their actions. Local institutions are responsible for the great majority of welfare services, and if they have to follow certain central rules, they can manage the funds as they wish and do not need to be accountable to the central government (Local Government Act, 2012). This level of autonomy is quite unique and characterizes the Finnish system very well.

4.1.5.2 Political ideologies

Political ideologies can be defined by coherent ideas and beliefs that guide actions and help creating a vision of the world, an understanding of human nature, an ideal of society and State, as well as developing a mean to achieve that ideal and a hierarchy of basic values (Arend & Rabier, 2000, p. 53). Indeed, political ideologies represent an ideal of society and is conceptualized by common values that will lead to this ideal. Finland system has been historically based on a social-democratic frame of political ideology and is now being confronted to a global trend of liberalism, which create a conflict of values.

The social-democratic system implemented in Finland share many similarities with its neighboring countries, and this is what many analysts call the *Nordic model* (Alestalo;Hort;& Kuhnle, 2009). In Finland, the ideology of equality is strongly represented throughout the whole structure of its political system.

Equal opportunities

Finland is committed to a system that promotes equal opportunities. This value can be seen in the access to education, the access to welfare programs, the gender equality policies and the treatment of minorities, such as gays, ethnic minorities and disabled. The access to basic education is guaranteed by the Constitution[12], and higher education is also free of charge. In addition, financial

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[11] See Constitution of Finland, chapter 11.
[12] See Constitution of Finland, section 16.

assistance is given to university students to ease their training and encourage them to make the choice of studies. The Constitution also guarantees "for everyone equal opportunity to receive other educational services in accordance with their ability and special needs, as well as the opportunity to develop themselves without being prevented by economic hardship." (Constitution of Finland, 2011, section 16). This aspect is essential to equality of opportunities, as it shows the emphasis put early on those presenting difficulties in order to make sure they have an equal opportunity of development. Ensuring and equal access to quality education also results to equal opportunities in life, as every individual receive the same tools in order to succeed. The access to welfare programs, also guaranteed in the Constitution, is shaped in a way that those in a disadvantaged situation may have access to resources that will help to create opportunities to reach a better position (Kautto & Uuasitalo, 2003). Gender equality has always been a high valued aspect of social equality in Finland. Luhtakallio refers to gender equality as an "issue of national pride, and questioning it is threatening in many ways" (Luhtakallio, 2012, p. 69). Indeed, gender equality policies can be seen as far as 1906, when Finland became the first European country to allow women to vote. In 2005, Finland included quotas of 40% of women and men in all public administration bodies and bodies exercising public authority (Act on Equality between Women and Men, 2011).

State interference

Finland is characterized by a large public sector and a significant presence of the State. The country advocates state interference to regulate the inequalities created by the free market. This is visible through high taxes, wealth redistribution's system, regulations in many aspects of the economy, as well as through its welfare program, such as unemployment allowance and sick pensions (Fellman et al., 2011).

Social security

In terms of social security, the Finnish system has minimum benefits available to all Finnish people, guaranteed in the Constitution. The universal nature of these benefits can therefore be noted. This system is supplemented by prior income-related benefits as well as a support from municipalities that make up the difference between incomes and needs of a person. Among these benefits available, there are housing allowances, education allowances, social assistance, social assistance for the unemployed people, unemployment benefits, sick leave benefits and national pension. Social services and health care are also funded and accessible to all (Kautto & Uuasitalo, 2003).

Other values influence the way Finnish people conceptualize the world. The attachment to Finnish to education, the relationship to the nature, and their attitude of neutrality towards international conflicts is greatly explained by the history of the people of Finland, and is reproduced in the choices made by citizen when they participate in the political system.

Political Parties

Finnish's values are represented by the people they choose in the political process. The change of parties and values within the Parliament is a reflection of the change that occurs in the society. There are presently 16 registered political parties in Finland. Among them, eight have seats in the Parliament.

The National Coalition Party (Kansallinen Kokomuus) subscribes to a liberal-conservative ideology. The Social Democratic Party (Suomen Sosialidemokraatinen Puolue) subscribes to a moderate social democratic ideology. The True Finns (Perussuomalaiset) is a new party that shares a populist approach and a nationalistic point of view. The Centre Party of Finland (Suomen Keskusta) finds its roots in the historical agrarian ideology and shares a liberal-conservative view. The Left Alliance (Vasemmistoliitto) is the result of the fusion of three former left wing parties. The party promotes social justice and environmental values. The Green League (Vihreä liitto) is an environmentalist liberal party. It is the first green party to reach a ministerial position (1995) in Europe. The Swedish People's Party (Svenska Folkpartiet) is a liberal party that supports the Swedish speaking minority. Finally, the Christian Democrats (Kristillisdemokraatit) is a traditional Christian conservative party (Political Organization: Finland, 2015).

The last parliamentary elections happened in 2015 and showed an interesting shift towards liberalism. The Centre Party of Finland won the overall elections with 49 seats. The second party with the most seats is the True Finns with a total of 38 seats. The National Coalition Party arrived third with 37 seats. The Social Democratic Party obtained 34 seats, the Green League 15 seats, the Left Alliance 12 seats, the Swedish People's Party 9 seats, and the Christian Democratic Party obtained 5 seats (Official Statistics of Finland, 2015).

During the last parliamentary session (2011 to 2015), the party in power was the National Coalition Party, and the parties forming the government together were of course the National Coalition Party (6 MPs), the Social Democratic Party (6MPs), the Centre Party (2 MPs), the Green League (2 MPs) and the Christian Democratic Party (1 MPs). This coalition was mainly a center liberal coalition,

with a strong voice for the social democrats and the environmentalists. The new election brought a new coalition. Even though the voting results were not drastically different, the coalition that resulted from it brought a more right conservative ideology in the government. Indeed, The Centre Party (6 MPs) made a coalition with the True Finns (4 MPs) and the National Coalition Party (4 MPs). The beginning of the Parliamentary session began with some important reforms regarding social welfare as well as education accessibility and working conditions, which created a great movement of dissent among the population (Valtioneuvosto, 2015).

4.2   Internal environment

The implementation of a reform happens within a particular system. This system shapes the form that this change will take, and explains to a certain extend the interactions between actors present in the system. The frame of analysis for this research needs to take place within the internal environment of the system. The following part aims to describe the system on three different aspect, i.e. the historical context of educational reforms, the organizational structure and the culture of the education system. In this section, the focus will be on the comprehensive school system, rather than the entirety of the education system. The reason for this is that this study focuses on a reform that took place in the comprehensive school system. The upper-secondary school system and the higher education system will be briefly mentioned, but not detailed.

4.2.1   History of comprehensive education reforms

The education system evolved over the past 50 years from a traditional and underperforming education system to this modern and accessible model that accomplishes great performances in international assessment. The change process has been qualified as progressive and continuous and its implementation has been marked by consensus and decentralization (Sahlberg, 2010). In this section, the evolution of the comprehensive education system in Finland will be reviewed.

Before the mid 1960s, the comprehensive school system in Finland consisted of four years of elementary school, followed by two parallel tracks (Aho et al., 2006). The mission of the education system after WW2 was to produce three types of citizen. Those only attending the first four years of elementary school would be the labor force; those finishing either path of comprehensive school would be middle managers, and finally those achieving upper-secondary level would become the leaders of society (Aho et al., 2006). This school system created inequality within the population, since only a small portion of student reached upper-secondary school (Sahlberg, 2010).

4.2.1.1 Comprehensive school reform

The comprehensive school reform (1972-1977) in Finland is by far the biggest educational reform implemented in Finland, and the most transformative (Simola, 2015a). In the 1960s, it had become clear that Finland's education system was not strong enough to support the economic and social transformation currently happening throughout the country (Aho et al., 2006). Legislators and educators worked together in order to create the basis of a new education system.

This reform would adopt a comprehensive school model based on equal accessibility to education without consideration for income, social status or place of residence. In order to achieve that, changes have occurred in three major aspects of education: the structure of the school system (nine year comprehensive school), the quality and uniformity of the teaching content (curriculum), and the teacher's training (university training). The reform was long and opposed different ideologies, as the process included participation of all actors and brought to the table many debates and discussions.

In 1963, a parliamentary decision on new comprehensive school was taken after many committee work and pilot programs. This work reached great consensus among teachers, unions, and politicians (Aho et al., 2006). The idea of a new comprehensive school was born and put into practice in a pilot project. This project included a new unified basic education path of nine years, as well as the addition of pre-school to primary education. In 1964, teachers were asked to receive a parallel training in order to cope with the new changes. By 1965, the experimentation project had implemented an early form of the comprehensive school reform in 25 municipalities, in which teachers had greatly participating in the creation of the curriculum. The attitude of policymakers towards teachers during the pilot was to recognize and respect teachers' professional knowledge (Aho et al., 2006).

The reform process created a heated debate among the population. This debate raised important questions regarding reform appropriation from teachers and special interest groups. Questions regarding teacher's status, work conditions, salary and freedom were also of great concern at the time. In 1965, a committee was created to establish the new teacher education policies (Aho et al., 2006). The committee recommended a three year bachelor level training for all teachers, the need to train classroom teachers and subject teachers in the same institutions, and suggested that the income and status of teachers should not be determined by the grades they teach, but rather by their seniority. Finally, the committee stated that the teacher's role resemble more to that of a learning

adviser than that of an information provider. The new teacher training was put into place in 1968 (Aho et al., 2006).

In 1971, an understanding was established between the teachers and the government. The teacher's union wanted to make sure that teachers would not lose the seniority along the process (Aho et al., 2006). They also required a higher income's compensation for the greater role they were asked to play in the new system. Finally, they wanted their work conditions to be bargained with the employer, and not decided in a law. The unions successfully obtained the agreement of legislators on these aspects, which was a great step into getting teachers to commit to the coming reform.

In 1966, the Comprehensive School Curriculum Committee was created, which allowed a great collaboration between teachers and legislators (Simola, 2015a). The committee lasted until 1970 and the first Comprehensive School Curriculum was approved in 1972. In 1968, the reform was official with the ratification of the Act on Basic Education reform (Aho et al., 2006).

On the basis of equality of chance, the reform also aimed to bring a series of social services to school for children, such as health care, dental care, special education support, free meals, and free transportation (Sahlberg, 2010).

Throughout the whole elaboration process (from 1963 to 1972), discussions, negotiations and debates were constantly shaping the reform. The main actors involved in the dialogue were the State (locals and central), the teachers and the private sector. All agreed to focus on the principle of equality (Aho et al., 2006). This debate was followed by a "surprisingly strong consensus and mutual agreement", which enabled "sustainable political leadership and continuous development of an education system in line with the agreed principles and values" (Aho et al., 2006, p. 6).

The implementation was overseen by the National Board of General Education (NBGE). The organization was also transformed to reflect better the new comprehensive school system. The NBGE was structured into two new departments, i.e. the school department and the education department (Aho et al., 2006). The school department was responsible of the school structure, network and planning of the reform, while the education department was responsible for the educational content, the curriculum and the learning material. The Ministry of Education also transformed its structure in 1974.

The actual implementation process of the reform happened gradually, region by region, and was defined by the School System Act of 1968. This act established the local autonomy of education as

well as the commitment of local authorities. Indeed, municipalities had to produce a plan of implementation, describing how the restructuration would take place in their area. Based on these plans, regional implementation plans for the 11 districts of Finland had to be prepared by the education divisions of each of these provincial offices in collaboration with the NBGE, who had to approve the plans (Aho et al., 2006).

The regions where the reform was first applied were in Northern Finland. The reform also aimed to be implemented first at the primary school level and then at the lower-secondary level. At the same time, the teacher training was being restructured.

The reform took many years to be applied in its entirety, and was completed around the end of the 1980s. At the end of the reform, a nine year path of basic education was accessible for all, and student's evaluations showed a low degree of variability between schools performance, which confirms that the concept of equality for all was highly respected. International comparisons showed great performances from the Finnish students (Aho et al., 2006). National comparisons showed a significant improvement between the generation of the 1960s and that of the 1980s in terms of academic achievement.

4.2.1.2 Continuous change after the reform

The comprehensive school reform was a transformative change for the education system of Finland. It created a new model of school, as well as a new understanding of the mission of the education system (Sahlberg, 2010). The changes that followed this reform were smaller and always aimed to reinforce the system already existing.

As part of the university reform in 1978, the teacher education program was reformed again and expanded to a five year university program instead of three years. The basic requirement to be a teacher would now be a Master of Science degree (Aho et al., 2006).

A new national curriculum was approved in 1985 (Aho et al., 2006). This new curriculum brought an even bigger role of municipalities within the curriculum development process, as the national curriculum would be from now on only considered as core principles, and municipalities would have to develop their own extensive curriculum. During the same year, the division of pupils according to their level of performance was officially abolished. A new system of funding of education was put into place in 1986. The school inspections were also abolished towards the end of the 1980s.

During the 1990s, the whole public system in Finland was being restructured, due mainly to the economic crisis and the coming of the new public management model. In the education system, these changes translated into more decentralization. The reform of the municipality law in the early 1990s brought the new Local Government Act (*kuntalaki*) in 1995 which transferred more autonomy to municipalities, such as budget and planning. The National Board of Education was created from the merging of the NBGE with the National Board of Vocational Education (NBVE) in 1991, and started a development project called "aquarium project", which consisted, among other things, to develop a school-based curriculum (this project will be described more in a later part of this paper). The idea of school-based management was also present in the new core curriculum of 1994. Finally, the last major changes concerning the comprehensive school system took place in the reorganization of all legislations regarding education in 1998. Among these changes are the Unified Basic Education (UBE) reform and the "free school choice-policy". If the UBE concept represents a continuum of the Finnish comprehensive school system (this reform will be detailed later), the free school choice-policy represents a new concept of liberalism brought mainly by the influence of globalization, as it now gives to parents the freedom of choosing the specific school where their child will be sent, rather than automatically sending pupils to the closest school. This new policy was criticized regarding the effects it can have on equality as it could increase the qualitative differences between schools (Aho et al., 2006).

4.2.2 Organizational structure of the education system

In Finland, the purpose of education aims to achieve four main goals, i.e. to support pupil's development as a social agent in humanity in order to make them a responsible member of society, to provide pupil's with knowledge and skill that will be needed in life, to promote equality in society and to ensure an equal access to education (Basic Education Act, 2010, section 2). This section will try to understand how these goals are applied, and what kind of system is supporting these purposes. This section will be divided into two main categories. First, a general description of the Finish education system will be provided, in order to understand the content of this system. Second, a description of the structure will be provided, I order to understand how the system function.

4.2.2.1 General description

The education system in Finland includes one year of preschool (age 6), nine years of basic education (age 7 to 16), upper-secondary education and higher education. The upper-secondary

level consists of two paths, i.e. general upper-secondary education (three years) and vocational education (three years). Higher education also consists of two paths, i.e. universities and polytechnic schools.

Preschool and basic education

Preschool is not compulsory, but the municipalities are obligated to deliver preschool services to all children upon parents' request. Free of charge, preschool aims to "create an integrated continuum of early childhood education and care, pre-primary education and basic education" (Aro, Järvinen, Rinne, Julkunen, & Lunabba, 2010, p. 2). The Ministry of Education recommends no more than 13 pupils per class. Preschool can take place in the primary school, in a daycare, or any appropriate place.

Basic education consists of a nine year path of comprehensive school. Also free of charge, the access to basic education can take place to the nearest school or in a school chosen by the child and the parents. In the case of schools with a specialty (e.g. languages, music), entrance examination can be required. According to the Basic Education Act, foreign-language schools are allowed to charge tuition fees. Basic education is compulsory. After the nine years, there is a possibility to do a 10th year, or pursue further studies in upper-secondary level. Usually, grades one to six are taught by a class teacher and all pupils receive the same education. Grades seven to nine are taught by subject's teachers, and pupils start to choose elective subjects.

Private schools represent 2.8% of all pupils in 2008, and Finland counts 350 home-schooled children (Aro et al., 2010, pp. 6-7). Private schools' license is provided by the government, but the home-school agreement is done with the municipalities. Teachers choose their pedagogical approach and students need to develop their own learning path. Free meals, health care, and transportation (if the school is more than five kilometers from the pupil's home) are offered to all pupils.

Special education is provided by comprehensive schools on the model of integration. According to the type and degree of disability, a pupil can be integrated in a normal class while receiving additional support, take part in a special education class within a regular school, or go to a special education school (Aro et al., 2010). A longer path for completing compulsory education can be applied for students with disabilities when the case requires it. Instead of completing basic education in nine years, a disabled student may complete it in 11 years. If the disability suggests

that upper-secondary level training is not appropriate, special education and guidance will be provided in order to ensure the possibility of work and independent living (Aro et al., 2010, p. 14).

Upper-secondary level

After completing the nine years of comprehensive school, pupils can choose to attend to either general upper-secondary school or upper-secondary vocational school. Both systems are generally free of charge, but fees can be applied for material. Daily meals are also offered free of charge.

General upper-secondary education last three years and finishes with the matriculation examination, which consists of a national assessment that qualifies students for higher education. Some schools have specialty, such as sports or arts. Students can apply to the school of their choice, and the admission criteria are decided by schools; some may require an entrance examination. Private general upper-secondary schools represent 8% of all general upper-secondary schools (Aro et al., 2010, p. 9).

The courses offered by these institutions are divided in three categories, i.e. compulsory, specialization and applied courses. Students choose a path between those offered and specialize in that field. Choice of studies might be literature, foreign languages, natural science, social sciences, religions, health, art, and so on (Aro et al., 2010, p. 10).

After completing general upper-secondary education, students must complete compulsory tests. These tests are approved by the Finnish Matriculation Examination Board. This examination consists of a minimum of four tests. The mother tongue test is compulsory. Then, students will choose tests according to their specialty, such as foreign language, mathematics, and humanities (Aro et al., 2010).

Vocational schools consist of a training that qualifies students for technical work, as well as higher education. In order to be accepted, students must have completed their compulsory education. Two types of trainings are suggested, i.e. the school-based education system and the apprenticeship system. The school-based system consists of full time studies in a vocational institution. The apprenticeship training consists mostly of practical learning, where up to 80% of the training takes place in a working environment, while the theoretical training takes part in a vocational institution. Private vocational schools represent 20% of all vocational schools (Aro et al., 2010).

Higher education

Higher education consists of universities or polytechnics (also known as universities of applied sciences). Universities offer bachelor degree, master's degree, licentiate's degree and doctoral degree. Polytechnics offers diploma that are the equivalent of bachelor and master's degrees (Aro et al., 2010).

Qualifications to access higher education are mainly the matriculation examination and the vocational qualification. All university programs have limits of entry due to the number of places available. Many programs will use an entrance examination in addition to the previous study records. Polytechnic's requirements are the completion of either general or vocational upper-secondary education (Aro et al., 2010, p. 17).

4.2.2.2 Structure

The education system is the result of a great number of legislations, institutions, and actors. In this section, only the structure of the comprehensive system will be described. First, the general legislations regarding education will be presented. Then, the central institutions, and their responsibilities will be explained, followed by local institutions. This section will end with the description of parallel actors who influence the system as well.

Legislations

The Constitution lays the foundation of the education system in Finland. It stipulates that basic education must be accessible for everybody and free of charge. It also stipulates that equal opportunities to receive educational services include differences in ability and special needs[13].

Then, the details of its application are contained in various acts and decrees that explain the responsibilities of each actor that takes part in the system.

Educational acts

The Parliament is responsible to debate and vote on all legislations regarding education and other issues. These legislations then regulate the planning, administrating and implementing of educational policies. MPs cannot interfere in the good management of the education system. Each act voted attributes responsibilities to educational bodies. Most of the legislations are applied by

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[13] See Constitution of Finland, section 16.

other legislative and administrative bodies, such as the Ministry of Education, the NBE, municipalities and schools.

The Basic Education Act (628/1998) is considered to be the main central authority as it has authority on all institutions of education. It establishes the central premises for national education, as well as the role of the government, local authorities, education providers and central agencies. Finally, it specifies other legislations that regulate the system.

According to the Basic Education Act, the purpose of education is to "support pupils' growth into humanity and into ethically responsible membership of society and to provide them with knowledge and skills needed in life, […] [to] promote civilization and equality in society […] [and] to secure adequate equity in education throughout the country." (Basic Education Act, 2010, section 2).

It establishes rules that cannot be overlooked by local authorities. For instance, it establishes the national core curriculum as the reference to govern education[14] and stipulates rules and exceptions regarding the length of the syllabus (nine years) and the languages of instruction (Finnish, Swedish, Same, Roma and sign language)[15]. The required content of the syllabus (such as literature, mathematics, and chemistry) is indicated, as well as the right to guidance counseling[16] and religious education[17].

The Basic Education Act is quite specific about the right to receive special-need education and other form of support, including the procedure and details about the different options of support[18]. The obligation for municipalities to offer meals, material, and transportation free of charge is mentioned[19], as well as the idea that a pupil must have more time for rest and hobbies than for school and homework[20].

The Basic Education Act stipulates how many school days must form a school year[21], how many hours of before and after school activating must be provided by the participating local authorities[22],

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[14] Section 3.1
[15] Section 10
[16] Section 11
[17] Section 13
[18] Section 16
[19] Sections 31-32
[20] Section 24
[21] Section 23
[22] Section 48b

and clarifies the rules on entrance examination[23]. It also requires that each school has a head teacher (or headmaster), hourly-paid teachers, classroom assistants and other personnel[24].

The Basic Education Act establishes the division of responsibilities and decision-making power regarding all other details of basic education, such as curriculum, lesson hours, before and after school activities, evaluation of education, assessment of pupils, and budget transfer. These responsibilities are under the jurisdiction of the government, the Ministry of Education (or other ministries), the NBE, the Education Evaluation Centre, municipalities, schools, or other educational bodies. The distribution of these responsibilities will be detailed in the next section along with the description of each institution.

The Basic Education Act (628/1998) is the most important legislation regarding comprehensive education. However, other acts legislate on rather important issues regarding education, as mentioned in the Basic Education Act. The Act on the Financing of Education and Culture (1705/2009) and the Act on Central Government Transfers to Local Government for Basic Public Services (1704/2009) establish the rules for budgeting education. The Act on the National Board of Education (182/1991) and the Act on National Education Evaluation Centre (1295/2013) are the legislations that have created central agencies that play a great role in basic education. Finally, the Local Government Act (365/1995) describes the organization of local authorities. The details of these legislations will be explained in a later section, during the description of each authority linked to these acts.

Educational decrees

Decrees often accompany such acts. Decrees are regulations that are passed by the government, and therefore do not require a vote in the Parliament. Therefore, the government also has decision-making power. Indeed, after legislations are passed in the Parliament, the government passes various decrees regarding education that regulates in more details the education system. The legal authority of a decree is included in the appropriate act. For instance, according to the Basic Education Act, the government has to pass a decree regarding the qualification of educational staff[25], the general objectives of basic education and the allocation of lesson hours[26], and the assessment of learning performances[27].

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[23] Section 28
[24] Section 37
[25] Section 37

The Basic Education Decree (852/1998) regulates, for instance, teaching arrangements, groups' organization, teaching hours, work load, and pupil's assessment. The Decree on the Qualifications of Educational Staff (986/1998) describes the qualification requirements for all educational staff. The Decree on the objectives and distribution of lesson hours in basic education (1435/2001) establishes the minimum number of lessons for the core subjects. The Decree on the Financing of Education and Culture (806/1998) establish certain parameters of funding. Finally, the Decree on National Education Evaluation Centre (1295/2013) establishes the tasks and functions of the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre.

Central authorities

The central authorities are represented by the government, its ministries, and the central agencies. In this section, the responsibilities of each administrative body will be established in relation to the legislation described in the previous section.

Government

The government influences education in two major ways. First, it passes decrees based on parliamentary legislations which regulate the application of education acts. These decrees regulate, among other things, the teacher's qualifications and the distributions of lessons hours.

Secondly, the government releases a strategic program which indicates the main priorities and reforms for the next years. The program has to be approved by the Parliament. A government program consists of general key objectives for the Finnish society. It can take various forms such as improvement of performances or budget reductions. Regarding education, the last government program had six key projects such as the development of digital material in comprehensive schools and acceleration of transition towards working life (Prime Minister's Office, 2015). The ministry and its agencies have the responsibility to make sure these key projects will be applied, according to the details given in the program.

The government is also responsible to approve the development plan for education and research every four years, which details the education and science policies expressed in the government program.

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[26] Section 14
[27] Section 22

Ministry of Education and culture

The Ministry of Education and Culture is divided into five departments that work under the authority of the minister of Education and Culture. There are the Department for General Education and Early Childhood development, the department for Vocational Education and Training, the Department for Higher Education and Science Policy, the Department for Art and Cultural Policy and the department for Youth and Sport Policy. Each Department has divisions according to specific policies. Five separate units ensure the good management of the ministry, i.e. the administrative unit, the finance unit, the information management unit, the communication unit and the secretariat for international relations.
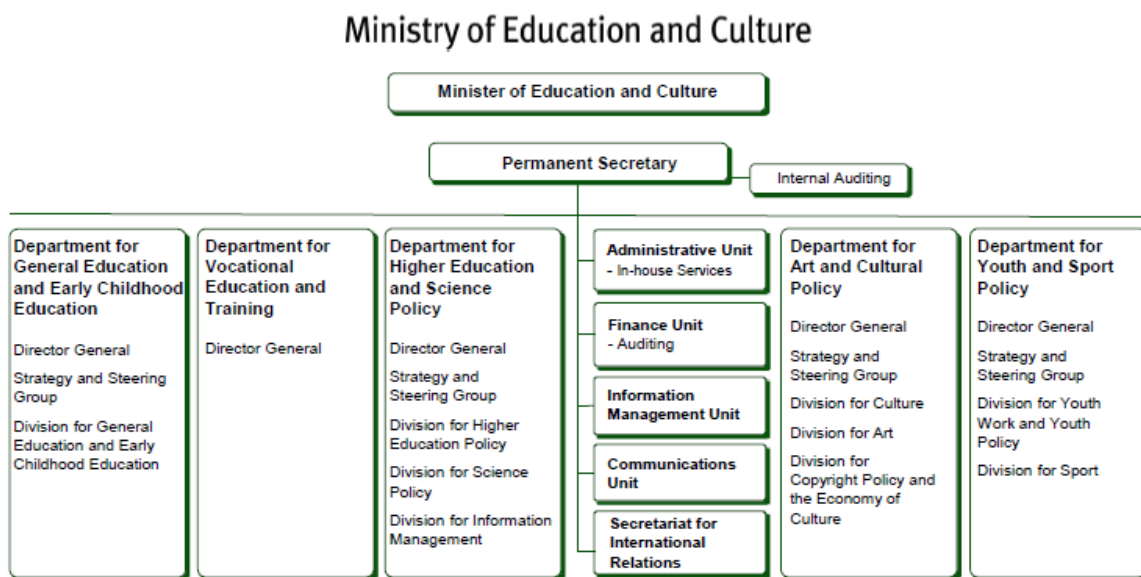
Figure 1: Organization chart of the Ministry of Education and Culture, 2015

The agencies under the ministry's supervision are divided under two categories, i.e. agencies subordinate to the Ministry, and advisory councils and boards. The category of agencies subordinate to the Ministry comprises 15 institutions, such as the Academy of Finland and the NBE, all regional state administrations (the Regional State Administrative Agencies and the Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment), the 14 universities and the 24 polytechnics. The category of advisory councils and boards comprises 21 institutions such as the Matriculation Examination Board, the National Sports Council and the Advisory Council for Student Financial Aid.

The Ministry of Education has four major roles, i.e. to prepare educational policies and legislations, to apply decisions taken by the parliament, to collaborate with the Ministry of Finance for the elaboration of the state budget, and finally, to supervise all central agencies under its authority (Aro et al., 2010, p. 18).

The Ministry of Education and Culture's main task is to create the appropriate environment for Finnish education to prosper. In order to do that, the ministry develops strategies and programs that aim to put into practice the priorities decided by the Finnish society and present in various legislations. The most important policy program developed by the ministry of education is the development plan for Education and Research. This plan is renewed every four years and needs to be approved by the government. The development plan gives directions for the implementation of education and research policy goals mentioned in the government program. The Ministry also acts as an expert in educational matters in the context of parliamentary work.

The budget of the Ministry of Education and culture was around EUR 6.5 billion in 2014, which represents 12% of the state's budget (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2014). Of this amount, EUR 957 million was dedicated to general education, which represents 14.5% of the ministry's budget. Of course, since local authorities also levy taxes, they fund general education partially. In 2014, local authorities have invested EUR 402 million in general education. Therefore, it can be concluded that in 2014, 70% of general education was funded by the state, and 30% was funded by local authorities.

According to the Basic Education Act, the financing of basic education must be done in accordance with the Act on government transfers for local basic services (1704/2009)[28]. This act stipulates that the financial transfers to local authorities must be decided according to the *basic public services program* while taking into account appropriate legislations, such as the Act on the Financing of Education and Culture (1705/2009). The budget is directed by the Ministry of Finance in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Culture, and all other ministries for issues related to other transfers. The Local Government Act (365/1995) gives the status of permanent expert to the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities during the budget planning process.

In 2013, the average of expenses for basic education was EUR 8 780/pupil (Ministry of Finance, 2015a). The amount of transfer to municipalities is influenced mainly by the number pupils in each municipalities, but also by the density of the population, the size of schools, the number of pupils

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[28] See Basic Education Act, section 43

who receive special-need education, the number of pupil receiving education in Swedish, the number of pupils with a mother tongue other than Finnish, Swedish or Sami, and the number of student with disabilities (Aro et al., 2010, p. 21).

The transfer is done by the Ministry of Finance. Even though the budget is calculated according to specific needs for specific programs, the transfer includes all transfers from all programs together and local authorities do not need to respect the division of funding elaborated by the ministry of Finance (Ministry of Finance, 2015a).

National Board of Education

The NBE is directed by the Board of directors. The organization is then divided into five departments, i.e. the general education and early childhood education and care, the vocational education and training, the services for the education sector, the administrative services, and the education in Swedish. The departments are then subdivided according to specialties.
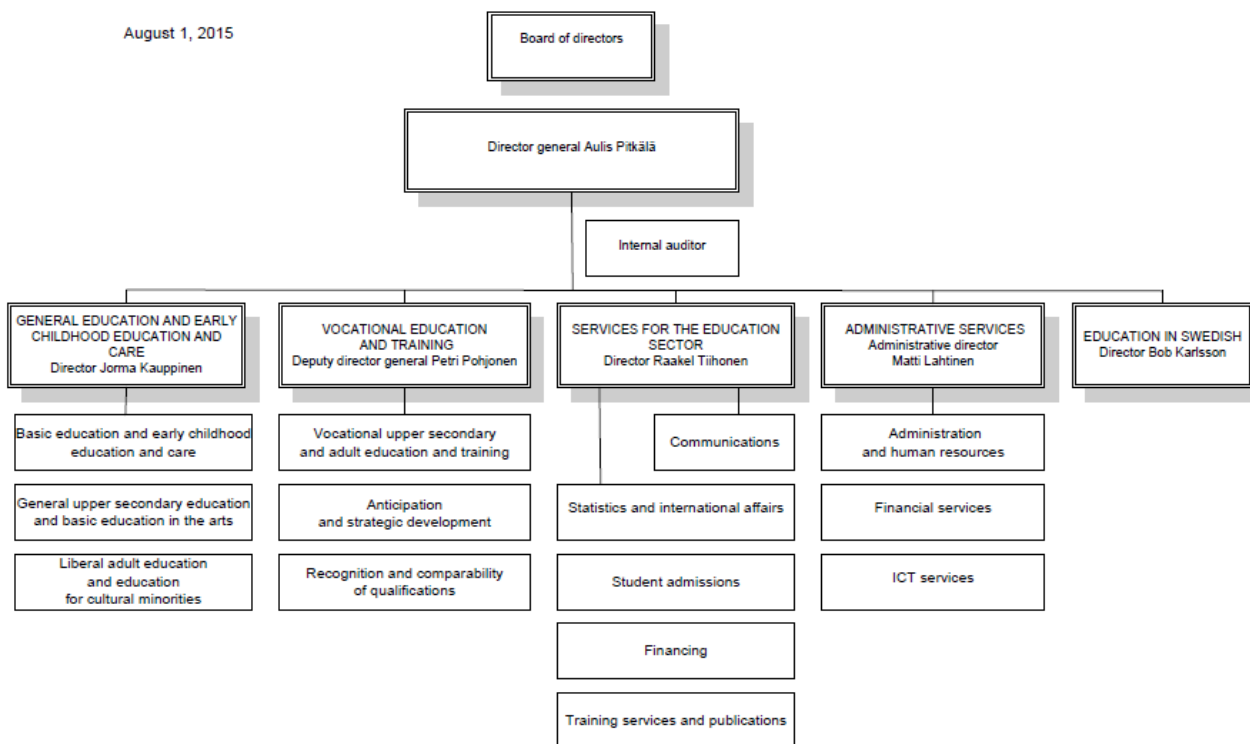

Figure 2: Organization chart, National Board of Education, 2015

The NBE is a national development agency who is responsible for the development of pre-primary, basic, upper-secondary and adult education (Aro et al., 2010, p. 18). It was created in 1991 with the fusion of the National Boards in accordance with the National Board of Education Act (182/1991).

According to the Basic Education Act, "The National Board of Education shall determine the objectives and core contents of different subjects and cross-curricular themes, guidance counseling and other education referred to in this Act and the basic principles of home-school cooperation and pupil welfare under the purview of the local education authority (core curriculum)." (Basic Education Act, 2010, section 14). The NBE is therefore responsible for developing the curriculum content every ten years (Aro et al., 2010, p. 18). However, the Basic Education Act stipulates that the education provider (the school) must adopt a curriculum based on the national curriculum[29]. Indeed, the core curriculum only gives general guidelines and local institutions need to develop a specific curriculum with teachers, headmasters, school boards, students, and other participants. The NBE is also responsible to develop "the aims and central content of before- and after-school activities" (Basic Education Act, 2010, section 48a), as well as the curriculum for preparatory education for immigrants (OPH, 2015). The other main responsibilities of the NBE are to develop qualification framework and to develop education. Finally, other tasks of the NBE are to follow the development of educational objectives, content and methods, to implement national education policies, to develop teaching staff, and to provide various services to other educational bodies (OPH, 2015). It also plays a role of expert in consultative contexts.

In terms of everyday tasks, the NBE produces a great amount of studies and reports in order to follow the development of education and to have a good knowledge of the situation in general. The NBE produces statistics and indicators regarding repartition of pupils, funding, and so on. In order to participate to the development of education, the NBE often lunches pilot projects or development projects in order to implement new educational approaches. The NBE organizes often consultations regarding the various projects they develop. Many consultations take place in the local level of education, including teachers, parents, students, headmasters, local administrators, and other stakeholders. These consultations shape the development of these projects. The NBE can also provide services and advises to local institutions. For instance, the NBE may help creating forums and discussions among stakeholders. They may also work with local institutions regarding new national legislations that need to be implemented.

The National Core curriculum is based on the syllabus prescribed in the Basic Education Act (628/1998), the distribution of lesson hours prescribed in the Decree on the Objectives and Distribution of Lesson Hours in Basic Education (1435/2001) and on the priorities prescribed in the

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[29] See Basic Education Act, section 15

Development plan for Education and Research. Other legislations and policies may define the core curriculum.

The content of the curriculum includes "objectives and core contents of different subjects, as well as the principles of pupil assessment, special-needs education, pupil welfare and educational guidance. The principles of a good learning environment, working approaches as well as the concept of learning are also addressed in the core curriculum." (European Commission, 2015).

The elaboration process for the core curriculum is very interactive. The process consists of working groups made of educational officials, researchers and teachers. Groups focus on various elements of the curriculum such as structure, objectives, learning approaches, and teaching content. The results are published throughout the process and the educational community is encouraged to follow the process and provide feedback. Parents and children are also encouraged to participate in this way (European Commission, 2015).

Finnish Education Evaluation Centre

The Education Evaluation Centre is a new central agency that has been created by the fusion of the evaluation responsibilities of the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council, the Finnish Education Evaluation Council and the NBE. The creation of this agency in 2013 has been officialized in the Act on National Education Evaluation Centre (1295/2013) and the Decree on National Education Evaluation Centre (1317/2013).

The role of this agency is to conduct evaluations related to education, education provider and higher education provider. Indeed, the Evaluation Centre assesses learning outcomes as well as education processes, content, and planning. The agency consists of the Evaluation Council, the Higher Education Evaluation Committee and units. The Evaluation Council is responsible to develop and implement evaluation policies. The Committee is responsible for evaluation planning and execution for higher education institutions.

The purpose of evaluation is to "develop education and to support learning while ensuring the quality of education. The evaluations also produce information for local, regional and national decision-making on education as well as development work and international comparison." (Karvi, 2015).

Local authorities

Municipalities/joint municipalities

The power and duties of local authorities in matters of education are stated in the Basic Act of Education as well as the Local Government Act. According to the Basic Education Act, the local authority is the provider of education and is responsible to ensure the delivery of the service[30]. Local authorities must follow the rules established by the Constitution, the Basic Education Act[31] and the Core curriculum, in the planning and distribution of educational services. Outside of these regulations, they are free to organize it as they wish.

Municipalities can create an education board as well as committees and divisions, in order to organize education efficiently (Local Government Act, 2012). Some municipalities create joint municipalities, an organizational body that organizes local services for multiple municipalities (Local Government Act, 2012, section 3). This happens often when municipalities within a specific area have a small population and want to organize their services in collaboration.

The municipality's budget comes from local taxation and transfers from the central authorities. Municipalities are not required to use educational funding from central authorities for educational purposes (Local Government Act, 2012). Transfers represent around 70% of the budget for comprehensive education[32]. The budget must include all expenses related to education such as the salary of educational staff, the provision of meals and pupil's transportation, and the planning of infrastructure. The budget must be approved by the local Council (Local Government Act, section 13). Local authorities receive supplements if they participate in development projects initiated by the NBE or the Ministry of Education, as mentioned in the Basic Education Act.

Local authorities are responsible to hire teachers and educational staff. However, their working conditions are established nationally by collective conventions (Aro et al., 2010, p. 26). Local authorities also decide if they participate to before- and after- school activities and to which extent (Basic Education Act, 2010). If they decide to do so, they must follow the basic regulations established by the NBE and the Basic Education Act. Local authorities are also responsible to ensure the quality of infrastructures and manage the planning of renovations.

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[30] See Basic Education Act, section 14

[31] The above section describing the Basic Education Act mentions the specifics details that cannot be overlooked by local authorities, such as the provision of special-needs support, the condition for pupil's transportation, and so on.

[32] See section on the Ministry of Education and Culture

Finally, local authorities act as a collaborator for school management and development. They create networks among schools and collaborative projects. They offer teacher training and headmaster training; they organize seminars and forums, and invite experts to give lectures. Municipalities often help schools in the curriculum construction process with these types of activities. They support schools in their tasks when needed, and they can initiate their own development projects, in collaboration with schools.

Schools

According to the Basic Education Act, each school is required to have a head teacher responsible for the operations, sufficient teachers and staff member to provide appropriate education services. The organization of the school, within the frame of all applicable legislations, is arranged in collaboration with the school and the municipality. Many schools have a school board who is responsible to organize, develop and administer education (Aro et al. , 2010, p. 19). School organization depends on many variables. For instance, not all schools provide education of all grades. Some school only provide education services for grades 1-4 or 7-9, while others provide services for all grades (1-9). The work structure is also up the schools. There are no rules on how to organize parents meeting or teachers meeting. However, the importance of working in collaboration with parents is stated in the Basic Education Act. The general work conditions for educational staff are established in the collective convention and therefore impact the working structure as well.

Teachers are very autonomous in their practice. They are free to use the teaching approach that they consider to be the best, and plan teaching lessons as they wish. They also have, included in their working time, weekly hours for professional development (European Commission, 2015). This time can be used for meetings, discussions, trainings, courses, seminars, participation in studies or committees.

The school may decide, from the initiative of its teachers or the headmaster, to implement various working groups among the staff of a school (or in collaboration with other schools). These groups may have various purposes and may consist of a selection of employees from the school. For instance, a welfare group consists of teachers from different background who discuss particular student behavior issues and other issues. The purposes of these groups are to enhance communication and cooperation among educational staff and find better solution for specific issues or general concern.

Other staffs in the school might include a vice headmaster, pupils counselors, special needs assistants, social worker, school psychologists, school nurses, and school doctors (Aro et al., 2010, pp. 27-28).

Schools are responsible to develop their own curriculum, as stated in the Basic Education Act[33]. Each school may use its own process to do so. Local curriculums are often research based, and its construction process often involves many schools of the same area who work in collaboration with each other, as well as with the municipality, the NBE and other experts. The time for professional development for teachers is often use for this purpose when a new curriculum comes. The preparation for a new curriculum can start early, because the NBE publishes early results of the consultation process, which allow schools to start gradually their own curriculum construction process. This process usually involves teachers, parents, pupils, and various stakeholders.

Other stakeholders

Other stakeholders that influence the comprehensive school system are teachers unions and parents' associations. In Finland, the concept of association is very strong, and trade unions have been important actors in the political and social development process for a very long time. Indeed, around 70% of Finnish employees are members of a trade union. Three main central organizations represent the 70 trade unions in the countries, i.e. the Central Organization of Finnish Trade Unions (SAK), the Finnish Confederation of Salaried Employees (STTK), and the Confederation of Unions for Professional and Managerial Staff in Finland (Akava) (OAJ, 2015, p. 4).

The unionization rate for teachers is around 95%, and the main teacher's union in Finland (member of Akava) is the Trade Union of Finland (OAJ), with 120 000 members, from pre-school teachers to university lecturers (OAJ, 2015). OAJ plays an important role in negotiations for collective agreement for educational staff, is an influential body in educational policy, informs the teaching community on various topics regarding teaching education and offers multiples services to its members.

As a negotiator for collective agreement, the OAJ negotiates directly with the employers on a national level. There are 14 different types of contract, according to the agreement sector. These negotiations concern mainly the salaries and the working hours. Then, local union representation negotiates specific terms with the municipalities (OAJ, 2015). As an influential body in public

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[33] See Basic Education Act, section 15

policy, the OAJ cooperate strongly with the Parliament, the Ministry of Education, the NBE, teacher education institutes and research on education, as an expert. Its concerns are focused toward guidelines for educational policies, principles of teaching programs, content of teaching, and so on. The organization also works closely in collaboration with parents associations (OAJ, 2015). To inform its members on issues regarding teaching education, the OAJ produces a magazine called "Opettaja" (teacher) which is available to all members of the organization as well as MPs and other educational bodies. Finally, OAJ offers services to its members such as consultation regarding teaching work and other matters, a supplement for unemployment allowance, legal protection, various insurances and other benefits (OAJ, 2015).

The Basic Education Act states the importance of working in close collaboration with parents. Parents can take part in various ways to the education system, such as participating in parent's meeting and other schools consultative processes, as well as communicating regularly with the school and the teachers. However, in the spirit of association, parents also have created many parents' associations throughout the country.

One main organization, called the Finnish Parents League, regroups around 1 400 parent's associations and aims to "combine the resources of parents in order to build a good learning and growing environment for all children and young people" (Suomen Vanhempainliitto, 2015). The organization and its associations work with education, social and health institutions and participate to consultations, organize lectures, work groups, and training activities. The League offers parenting support and home-school cooperation. The League is also a member of the European Parents Association and produces a magazine called "Koti ja koulu" (home and school) in order to provide useful information to parents regarding educational issues. Parent's associations are very involved in communication processes with schools and educational staff.

Other types of association can be created in a specific context to answer to a specific need. These associations can be temporary or can become permanent associations. A good example of this would be the association called "Suomen Yhtenäiskouluverkosto" (Finnish United Basic Education) who was created with the initiative of headmasters who wanted to improve the UBE reform in the early 2000s (Suomen Yhtenäiskouluverkosto Ry, 2015). This association will be described in more details in a later section.

4.2.3 Culture of the education system

The culture of the education system consists of the main values that are present in the education system among its various actors and that shape the decisions and actions within the system. Throughout the presentation of the external and internal environment, many values have been established. This section will summarize the core values of the education system in four categories. The first category is that of equality, accessibility and quality. The second one the respect for teachers. The third one is decentralization and self-governing. Finally, the fourth one is trust and consensus.

4.2.3.1 Equality, accessibility and quality

The values of equality and accessibility in education are present in every legislations regarding education, starting from the Constitution. As it was stated earlier, the Constitution of Finland stipulates that "everyone has the right to basic education free of charge. […]" and that authorities must "guarantee for everyone equal opportunity to receive other educational services in accordance with their ability and special needs, as well as the opportunity to develop themselves without being prevented by economic hardship." (Constitution of Finland, section 16).

In order to implement equality and accessibility of education, the school system is completely free of charge and the access to an educational institution is guaranteed in the whole country, which can be a challenge when the population is distributed in many small towns throughout a large territory. This is a way to make sure that all pupils receive the same education, regardless of the economic background or the place of residence. The attention to special-need education, very present in the Basic Education Act, expresses the importance to include pupils with all types of disabilities and learning difficulties, leaving no one behind. The right to receive education in all four "native" languages and to receive religious education according to the pupil's belief (Basic Education Act, sections 10 and 13), also shows the importance of treating every pupils with the same advantages regardless of individual background. The concept of equality is also perceived in the idea of a single learning path of all students, which was the concept of the UBE reform. This value is now in the Basic Education Act, the Basic Education Degree and the national core curriculum.

The quality of education can be presented in various perspective. According to the Basic Education Act, the core mission of education is "support pupils' growth into humanity and into ethically responsible membership of society and to provide them with knowledge and skills needed in life,

[…] [to] promote civilization and equality in society […] [and] to secure adequate equity in education throughout the country." (Basic Education Act, section 2). This means that a quality education produces responsible citizens within Finnish society and the world, skilled workers, and an equal society. In order to achieve these goals, the content of teaching has to be selected appropriately, but also teachers have to elevate their knowledge transmission techniques. Indeed, the teacher training has been transformed during the last decade in order to produce the best quality of teachers (Toom et al., 2010). For instance, the selection of students for teacher training programs is very selective, in the sense that only the best students have access to teacher education. During the training, the emphasis is put on developing a variety of teaching methods in order to connect with all types of students and to stimulate to a greater extent students' learning abilities. Finally, teachers have to continuously develop their skills by participating to weekly professional development activities that can take various forms such as meetings, trainings, discussions, and forums. Details regarding teacher's expertise will be described in more detail in the next section.

The combination of these three core values are said to be the main reason for the Finnish success in the PISA test (Kuusilehto-Awale & Lahtero, 2014). Indeed, the high performances of Finnish students not only show the presence of quality education in Finland, but they are the results of the contribution of equality and accessibility policies to the development of the Finnish education system.

4.2.3.2 Respect for teachers

Teachers in Finland have a high social status and are greatly respected among society (Kuusilehto-Awale & Lahtero, 2014, p. 10). Indeed, they are considered to be the most important cause of education success in Finland (Kuusilehto-Awale & Lahtero, 2014).

Since the end of the 1970s, teachers are required to have a master's level degree and their training is research-based (Toom et al., 2010). This means that "all courses are integrated with research" and that the aim is to "educate autonomous and reflective teachers who are capable of using research in their teaching and can be defined as pedagogically-thinking teachers" (Toom et al., 2010, p. 333). The purpose is not to create researchers but rather to integrate researcher's' skills in teachers' tasks, such as observing pupils and analyzing pupil's thinking. This logic allows teachers to "base their pedagogical decision-making on a theoretical foundation" (Toom et al., 2010, p. 333), which create a better learning environment for pupils.

The teacher training in Finland is based on a systematic analysis of education, research-based teaching methods, research skills development, and activities that allows students to develop skills in argumentation, decision-making and solving pedagogical problems. During their teaching related activities, teacher students have reflective discussions with their supervisors. They also have to observe and analyze their own teaching, as well as other students' teaching methods. Finally, they have to relate their observations and reflections with theoretical concept of teaching (Toom et al., 2010).

The access to teacher education is restricted and depends on entrance examination that takes form as written examination, aptitude test and interviews (Aro et al., 2010, p. 23). Teaching is a very popular profession in Finland. Indeed, in 2000, teaching was the first career choice of upper-secondary school graduates (Kuusilehto-Awale & Lahtero, 2014, p. 14). In 2013, out of 12 493 applicants for teacher education, only 886 were selected, which means that the acceptance rate was 7% (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2014a). Finally, a continuous training is very important in order to keep teacher's knowledge up to date, which is compulsory in Finland (Aro et al., 2010). All these aspects contribute to make teachers the experts of education in Finland, which creates a great level of trust from central authorities and society in general towards their work, and allows them to work in a free and autonomous environment.

The high performances of Finnish pupils in international assessments are said to be the results of high quality teaching practices (Kuusilehto-Awale & Lahtero, 2014). Indeed, studies have suggested that various pupil's achievements are the result of higher teacher qualification level, participatory classroom management, and early intervention methods (e.g. Andersen, 2010; Sahlberg, 2006; Välijärvi, 2011).

4.2.3.3 Decentralization and self-governing

The concept of self-governing for local institutions is a core idea present in the whole political system in Finland. The Basic Education Act states that local authorities are the provider of education and are responsible for delivering properly all of its services (Basic Education Act, section 4). The transfer of curriculum responsibility to the school level (Basic Education Act, section 15), which was introduced in 1985, is a good example of the level of decentralization of the Finnish school system. The Local Government Act also expresses the level of decentralization of the system, as it states the responsibility and power of the municipality. The municipality does not have to report its budget to the Ministry of Education or Finance for approval (Local Government

Act, 2012), nor has the school to be authorized by central authorities for the use of teaching methods and implementation of activities.

4.2.3.4 Trust and consensus

The concept of trust can be express in many ways. The Ministry of Education and the NBE trust local authorities in their decisions and actions regarding education and the society trust teachers in their teaching approach.

The system would not be able to function in such a decentralized matter if central authorities did not have a great level of trust in the local authorities (Kuusilehto-Awale & Lahtero, 2014, p. 18). But the concept of trust does not appear only in the education system; it is present in all spheres of the Finish society. This is why the level of control and accountability is not as high as in many other countries, and this is why the people have a perception of corruption among the lowest in the world (Transparency International, 2015). In education, this level of trust can be explained by the fact that experts in education are considered to be those on the field, that is, in local institutions. The curriculum can be developed in local level because the actors concerned by its development are experts in education. Therefore, local curriculum are of great quality and the outcomes are as well.

The best example of trust in local institutions would be the lack of school inspections (Kuusilehto-Awale & Lahtero, 2014, p. 9) and national systematic evaluation (European Commission, 2015). Indeed, while many countries, such as Canada and America, have standardized tests that are compulsory of all grades, Finland has only one standardized test (the Matriculation exam), and applies national evaluations only with a sample-based method (Karvi, 2015). These results are not in the student's report card and only aim to evaluate the general performance of the system. Central authorities trust that schools assess correctly their pupils (there are some regulations in the curriculum), but they do not collect that information. In Finland, assessment are used for a purpose of following the pupil's learning development rather than scoring the level of knowledge (Kuusilehto-Awale & Lahtero, 2014, p. 9).

The idea of consensus, also perceptible in all sphere of society, is very important for the development of the Finnish education system. The collaborative work method is very popular in various level of authority. Indeed, the NBE often creates consultation groups for the elaboration process of the new curriculum (European Commission, 2015). Local authorities also develop networks and collaborative groups in order to develop educational projects. Finally, the use of

group work among teachers is very present in schools throughout the country. This allows cooperation and communication between various types of teacher, which results in a better understanding of various teaching methods, conflict resolution and an expansion of perspectives among teachers.

5. UBE reform

This section aims to describe the elements of the UBE reform that took place before the implementation process. These elements can be referred to as agenda-setting, elaboration and decision-making. The purpose here is to understand the series of events that led to the creation of the UBE reform and to understand the reform in itself. In order to achieve that, this section will first view the events in education that brought UBE ideas to life in the few years prior to the reform. Then, the form, content and goal of the reform will be described.

5.1   History of Undivided Basic Education

The context in which the UBE ideology was developed is located in the 1990s, which is a context of general decentralization in the field of education. Indeed, the new curriculum in 1994 transferred the responsibility of curriculum construction to school level and the new Local Government Act voted in 1995 transferred a lot of responsibilities to municipalities such as budget and planning. The message was that local authorities were responsible to develop and apply educational approaches and structures. The 1990s was also a time of financial difficulty throughout the country.

After going through a radical change in the 1970s, the comprehensive school system in the 1990s was well established. The core principle of having a nine year path of basic education was greatly applied, even though lower grades and upper grades of basic education followed different curriculums and were provided, in many cases, in different schools. The lower grade pupils were being taught by class teachers and upper grade pupils by subject teachers. Upper grade teachers did not teach in lower grade class, and lower grade teachers did not teach in upper grade subject (Aho et al., 2006, p. 93). Finland's demography was also subject to change in this time, as small village schools emptied and the need for new schools appeared in urban areas. Smaller schools were more expensive to maintain and not enough pupils were present, as lower grades and upper grades were separated. In the decade of 1990, one thousand basic education schools closed for this reason (Aho et al., 2006, p. 92).

The UBE principles appeared concretely in 1991, when the government approved for the first time the Development Plan for Education and Research. Aho et al. cite from the development plan the following sentence:

"The education system will be developed according to the principle of continuing education. The emphasis is on raising the level of education, on renewing of the contents of education, on the individualizing of education, and on increasing freedom of choice." (Aho et al., 2006, p. 90)

This development plan would influence the core of the New Framework for National Curriculum of 1994. This curriculum brought important changes for the role of teachers and the autonomy of schools. Indeed, the new curriculum described teachers as counselors of learning and designer of learning environment for individual learners (Simola, 2015, p. 7). The curriculum provided general guidelines for content and methods of teaching but aimed mainly for schools to develop their own curriculum. Indeed, schools were "encouraged to create their own pedagogical profiles" (Aho et al., 2006, p. 92). With individual learning paths and decentralized curriculum, the challenge of providing continuing basic education as imagined by the reform of basic education and the development plan grew deeper.

The solution for this challenge was formed in a development project called "aquarium project" directed by the NBE. This project took place from 1995 to 1998 (Hellström, 2004) and was created in order to "build a national network to improve education" (Tella & Tirri, 1999, p. 40). The purpose of this network was to stimulate innovation in a framework of developmental project by promoting local interactions and breaking the traditional border of collaboration by stimulating exchanges between different schools as well as different levels of education. This project created sixteen school networks which exchanged on various topics related on learning and teaching innovations (Loukola, Isoaho, & Lindström, 2001, p. 15). These networks developed hundreds of local projects and the exchanges could take form as training sessions, meetings, personal contact, publications and magazines (Loukola, Isoaho, & Lindström, 2001). The NBE provided support in the form of meetings (Tella & Tirri, 1999).

The aquarium project promoted local appropriation of the national curriculum by focusing on local collaboration and construction of innovations regarding of teaching and learning approaches, which was the main goal of school-based management introduced in the core curriculum. Furthermore, the development project put to light the need to extent the concept of unified basic education as a mean to ensure a continuing education experience for all pupils. Indeed, the physical and pedagogical separation of lower grades and upper grades was identified as an obstacle to the continuity principle in basic education.

The issues of transition from lower grades to upper grades were not only observed on the field, but also among educational researchers. In the USA, the negative impacts of school transitions on pupil's learning had been demonstrated in a large number of studies since the early 1990s (Anderson;Jabocs;Schramm;& Splittgerber, 2000). Similar results were found in Europe and Finland (Pyhältö;Soini;& Pietarinen, 2011).

In Finland, studies have established that there are systematic differences between the learning environments of lower grade schools and upper grade schools (Pietarinen, 1998). These differences create transition issues for pupils that are "connecting mainly to the school's social relationships – to the peer-group and teachers, and the changes in teaching" (Huusko & Pietarinen, 1998). It can be explained by the fact that the changes in the learning environment in a time of transition from lower to upper grades is not taken into consideration sufficiently. Indeed, as pupils experience official and unofficial changes in school organization, they are not provided with the appropriate skills in order to cope with these changes (see Karjalainen, 1992; Huusko, 1997; Pietarinen, 1998). In other words, they are not well prepared to go through these changes.

The solution put forward in order to provoke a change in pupils' experiences regarding these specific issues was to reform the comprehensive school system to create a single school culture by integrating the two different school systems (lower and upper grades) into one united system (Huusko & Pietarinen, 1998). Researchers have also shown that in order to achieve this purpose, the issues of teacher's cooperation needed to be addressed (Huusko, 1997). The importance of finding common interests between teachers of different grades is stated as being the first step of creating a common teaching culture, as it would increase the level of dialogue, professional friendship, development work, and cross cooperation (Huusko & Pietarinen, 1998).

Based on the results of research on school transition issues, the government released a new development plan for 1995-2000 which included a new degree of unification of lower grades and upper grades by increasing the flexibility of teaching (Pietilä, 2001) as well as removing border between grades (Pietilä & Vitikka, 2007). In order to apply the development plan, the Ministry of Education announced in 1996 that a new comprehensive school development project would be applied. In 1997, the "SIRA project" was implemented in 117 schools of 17 municipalities (Pietilä, 2001). The project created a unified basic education using one curriculum for the whole basic education process. It also created a stimulating learning environment, in which students would receive support according to their own objectives and abilities. The project aimed for structural

changes, but more importantly for pedagogical changes (Pietilä & Vitikka, 2007). The project resulted, for instance, in merging schools of lower and upper grades together, adding gradually grades that were not taught in some schools, or reinforcing cooperation between schools of different levels by combining student welfare or evaluation tasks. The most important action proposed by the project was to reinforce cooperation between teachers of different background, i.e. class teachers, subject teachers, pre-school teachers, and special education teachers (Pietilä & Vitikka, 2007). This development project defined the concept of unified basic education and brought the legislative power to finally include it in the law.

The education system was about to live a great period of change in to coming years; the laws legislating education were about to be reviewed completely. However, these changes did not aim to transform the system but rather to strengthen its cohesion. Since the 1960s, the series of reform applied to the system had fragmented the structure and needed to be re-organized following the unified principles of education. With this logic, the Parliament prepared in 1997 a bill for legislation on education that would bring the total number of legislations on education from 26 to 8 laws (Government bill for Legislation on Education, 1997).

In this bill, some of the main operational reforms mentioned are the abolition of the separation of the lower and upper stage in the comprehensive school and the reform of teacher regulation (section 3.3). Indeed, at this moment, the Primary Education Act stipulates that comprehensive school is formed by two types of schools, i.e. the lower grade (1-6) schools and the upper grade (7-9) schools, and that this division brings also an operational and administrative division, such as physical separation of schools, different headmasters and management teams. The bill states clearly that the division of levels harms the development of comprehensive schools and that the step between these two stages is too large. Indeed, lower and upper grade schools do not cooperate adequately together, which creates a transition phase for pupils that can lead to various learning difficulties and illnesses. The bill mentioned that these changes are not compulsory by law, but rather will be implemented by development projects. Indeed, education provider would be free to decide which grades would be taught in their school. Finally, it mentions that the state funding system of local education will be changed to take into account this new reality.

As for teacher's regulation reform, the bill mentions that teachers would now be allowed to teach in various schools and their task description would be more flexible. The teachers' qualifications

requirement would also include a new possibility for teachers to teach across the border of lower and upper grades.

The bill for legislation on education was the premise of the changes in legislations that would come in the following years, as all legislations on education would be transformed. This piece of documentation gave a great insight into why and to which extent these reforms were needed. The next section will describe how UBE actually took form in legislations and other regulations.

5.2 UBE national reform

The first legislation to bring UBE concepts into law was the Basic Education Act (628/1998). This act replaced the Basic School Act (476/1983), in which the separation between lower grades and upper grades was clearly established (see *Peruskoululaki 476/1983*, section 4). This separation was abandoned in the new Basic Education Act, voted in 1998. Furthermore, the Basic Education Decree (852/1998) specified that, most of lower grade classes should be taught by class teachers and most of upper grade classes should be taught by subject teacher, which confirmed the new possibility for teachers to teach in different levels. This new flexibility for teachers was also confirmed by the Decree on the Qualifications of Educational Staff (986/1998). In 1998, these simple changes in the legislation would change gradually the conception of basic education in order to unify the path of lower and upper grades in one continuous path.

In 1999, the NBE reviewed the pupils' assessment criteria in the core curriculum. The assessment would now be considered according to "end-of-programme" for different subjects (Ministry of Education, 1999, section 3.2.2). In the same year, the ministry of education released the Development Plan for Education and Research 1999-2004 and included unified basic education concepts very clearly. The development plan introduces the comprehensive schools as a system developed as a "whole" (section 1.2). It states the right for students to have "sufficient teaching and guidance geared to their own level of development" (section 2.1) and that the school "supports and encourages pupils' individual learning according to their own needs" (section 3.2). The school environment is also taken into consideration, as it is stated that "the learning environment plays an important part in children's and young people's learning. Special attention will be paid to students' well-being, especially in regards of physical working conditions (school buildings), work atmosphere and safety at school" (section 2.1). The issues regarding transitions are clearly addressed. The development plan explains that the new Basic Education Act should be used to improve upper grades education and that a particular attention must be paid to transitions from the

second to third grade, from the sixth to the seventh grade, and to the 9th grade to upper-secondary studies (section 3.2.2). The concept of school cooperation (school network) is mentioned as an approach that needs to be intensified (section 3.2). The emphasis is put on rural areas, as the use of network is seen as a solution to maintain high quality and accessible education.

In 2001, the Decree on the objectives and distribution of lesson hours in basic education (1435/2001) established the need to create a learning environment that would allow pupils to grow and learn according to their individualized learning plan. In 2003, the Basic Education Act was amended in order to add in the legislation that education must promote "healthy growth and development in the pupil" (section 3). In the same year, the Ministry of Education released the new Development Plan for Research and Education 2003-2008, in which was mentioned that the "content development in the training of general education teachers will highlight transition to unified basic education and the curriculum reform in basic [...] education" (Ministry of Education, 2004, p. 26). The teacher education training must now include the concept of unified basic education. Local institutions are also encouraged to participate in regional cooperation for development of education such as support services and task requiring multi-professional expertise. The development plan states also that cooperation impacts a lot the quality of welfare services for pupils (Ministry of Education, 2004, p. 35). The development plan explains that the "abolition of the boundary between the lower and upper stage in the comprehensive school was made for unified basic education" and resulted in general positive experience, even though there have been only "few projects and solutions concerning unified comprehensive schools" (Ministry of Education, 2004, p. 35). Indeed, the plan states that unified basic education from 1st to 9th grade needs to be promoted by flexible education solutions and teacher education.

The new core curriculum of 2004 produced by the NBE included many core principles of the UBE reform from previous legislations and development plans. In the first section of the curriculum, it is stated that local education providers must pay attention to the coherence of the basic education when developing their own local curriculum. Indeed, the coherence of the basic education curriculum requires the cooperation of many teacher groups (National Board of Education, 2004, p. 8). The curriculum is described as forming an integral whole. The objectives are no longer established for lower grades and upper grades separately, but rather for "subject, or subject group for segments falling between curricular transition points" (National Board of Education, 2004, p. 13). The curriculum also states that the "learning environment must support the pupil's growth and learning" (National Board of Education, 2004, p. 16) by being safe for the pupils physically,

psychologically and socially. The learning environment must support interactions and promote dialogue. The curriculum expresses that the school operational culture should promote uniform school practices and cooperation with the school and among the community (National Board of Education, 2004, p. 17). The guidance and counseling activities are described in the curriculum as being a continuum that last for the duration of the basic education. Teachers participate to the guidance work with study counselors in order to guarantee that "pupils get guidance and counseling services during their studies and in transition phases of the study path" (National Board of Education, 2004, p. 21).

To summarize, the UBE reform consisted of a progressive change of conception of basic education that did not take form into a formal reform plan, but rather in few legislative changes and guidelines. The main changes appeared in the abolition of boundaries between lower and upper grades in the Basic Education Act, the new possibility for teachers to teach in a different level, the establishment of curriculum objectives according to subject groups or "modules" instead of lower and upper levels, and finally, the new conception of continuous learning plan covering all nine basic school years. The development plan and the curriculum suggested implementing these changes by reinforcing cooperation among schools and levels in various ways. They strongly emphasized the implementation of cooperation structures for teachers of all background in teaching related activities, but also in activities related to students care and students learning plan.

In this decentralized education system, the responsibility to apply these changes would fall on the municipalities and the schools. This study aims to see how the reform was implemented by all actors of the education system. Indeed, even though the changes had to be implemented locally, it is interesting to see the support and guidance from all actors of education, as well as the reaction of implementers and the variety of implementation approaches used.

6. Methodology

In order to produce this study, data were collected using three different methods, i.e. a documentary research, interviews, and questionnaires. The next section will present these data collection methods as well as the analysis methods that were applied in order to produce de results.

6.1   Documentary research

The documentary data collection consists of various types of documentation. They can be put in three main categories. First, there are official legislations (n=10). They can take forms as bills, acts or decrees and they can be active or repealed. Then, there are official publications from authorities (n=5). These publications can take form as official reports, documents of information or simply data collected by authorities, such as official statistics. They are produced by governmental institutions in Finland, central agencies and other participating actors. The third category represents research and studies published by researchers in Finland (n=3). They take form as research articles. Here is the list of all documentation collected and analyzed.

category	Name	Language
Data collection: Documentary research		
official legistations	Peruskoululaki 476/1983	Finnish
	Decree on the objectives and distribution of lesson hours in basic education 834/1993	Finnish
	Local Government Act 365/1995	English
	Government bill for Legislation on Education 86/1997	Finnish
	Basic Education Act 628/1998	English
	Basic Education Decree 852/1998	English
	Decree on the Qualifications of Educational Staff 986/1998	Finnish
	Decree on the Financing of Education and Culture 806/1998	Finnish
	Decree on the objectives and distribution of lesson hours in basic education (1435/2001)	Finnish
	Act on the Financing of Education and Culture 1705/2009	Finnish
official publications	Development plan for Education and Research 1999-2004	English
	National Core curriculum 2004	English
	Budget of the Finnish Government: 2002 to 2013	Finnish
	Suomen Yhtenäiskouluverkosto	Finnish
	Tarinoita yhtenäisestä perusopetuksesta	Finnish
research	A horizontal approach to school transitions	English
	A systemic perspective on school reform	English
	Do comprehensive school teachers perceive themselves as active professional agents in school reforms?	English

Table 1: List of documents collected

The priority had first been giving to documentation available in English, but the lack of data collected brought me to include as well a larger quantity of documentation in Finnish. The documentation has been selected according to the value of its data in terms of reliability and the type of data provided. The advantage of using documentary data collection is that it allows getting reliable information regarding a past event that has been documented. For this study, documentary data collection was used to gather information regarding legislative setting, official curriculum and other regulations regarding the implications of UBE, official funding and statistics, and finally, official evaluation of the development project. The data collected are considered to be extremely reliable because they come from official sources, such as Official Statistics Finland, Ministry of Finance, Finlex database, NBE, and Helsinki University.

The type of analysis produced on these data was a content analysis using a deductive approach. Each document had a purpose of information and was classified regarding its purpose. The categories of information needed were put together according to the implementation analysis approach. The official legislations were used to find information for the vertical implementation, mainly for the goals, the resources available, and the degree of authority of each actor. Official publications were used mainly to find information regarding means of implementation and expected outcomes, support from central authorities and evaluations of outcomes. Finally, researches were used to find information regarding various phases of implementation, specific context of implementation, role of actors and evaluation of outcomes. The quantity of information that would be available was unknown at the beginning of the process, and the data collection took place over a period of one year, since the new information provided by the first documents gave directions for further documentary data collection.

6.2 Interviews

The purpose of collecting data with interviews was to validate, complete and confirm/counter information already obtained with documentary analysis. The sample was a nonrandom selective expert sampling (Poupart et al., 1997). The selection of the sample was based on the expertise of the interviewees on the UBE reform and the role they played in the reform. By using this sampling method, the purpose is not to gain representative information, but rather to find data that is not available through documentary data collection. Since the purpose of this research is not to generalize but rather to describe a process, this data collection method has more advantages (the

relevance of information gained) than disadvantages (sampling not representative because of the selection type and the size).

I have interviewed a total of four persons. The people that were interviewed were all concerned by the reform at some degree. The sample includes two researchers and two administrators. One researcher is specialized in Finnish legislation and educational change in the 1990s, and the other researcher was in charge of the research project responsible for the analysis of the UBE development project. One administrator is at the national level (NBE) and the other administrator is at the municipal level (department of education). The second administrator was a headmaster during the time of the reform. Both administrators had the task to implement the reform in their level of authority. The interviews were conducted between 28th of April 2015 and 21st of May 2015. The interviews were around one hour of length and took place in the interviewee's office. If more time and more resources had been available, it would have been very interesting to have a larger sample that would include teachers.

The interviews that were conducted were semi-structured., as the questions were open and adapted to the direction taken by the interviews (Gauthier, 1997). The interview was recorded (audio only) and the interviewer also took notes at the same time. The questions were used as a reminder of the topic that needed to be elaborated during the interview since the purpose was to create a conversation, and not to create a rigid frame of question-answer path. I started all my interviews with an introduction of myself, the purpose of the research and my understanding of the UBE reform, to make sure the interviewee understood what I needed to know. The questions were also adapted according to the expertise of the interviewee, but all the themes were similar (events prior to the reform, communication between levels of authorities, expected outcomes, actions of implementation). The interviewees did not know the questions before the interview, but they all knew the theme and the purpose of the interview since this description was included in the interview request email sent to them. The interview questions can be found in appendix 1.

The analysis was a content analysis using a deductive approach. The categories were elaborated according to the themes of the interviews (level 1 = 3 categories). Each interview has been transcribed with the help of the audio record which produced 37 pages of transcription. Each interview was read, and each part of sentence (or complete sentence) that gave information regarding one of the themes was copied into the document related to the theme, and key words were produced and associated with each data. This process was repeated for all interviews. A total of 217

data were collected this way. Then, a second analysis of each data was done. Each data was associated with a subcategory that was created according to the information revealed (level 2 = 8 categories). The final categories can be found in appendix 2. Most of the information collected by interviews was used to locate more documents that were harder to find, mostly because they were in Finnish. The insights given by the interviews allowed this research to be more detailed. However, some information provided by interviews had no way to be confirmed by documentary data collection, because this information did not exist on the form of a document, which confirms the value of using interviews.

6.3   Questionnaires

The last data collection method is a questionnaire. This questionnaire was developed and used in a research project related to the UBE development project managed by the NBE. The research project was applied from 2004 to 2009 (Pyhältö;Soini;& Pietarinen, 2011). This particular questionnaire was addressed to school principals and municipal education officer in order to evaluate their interpretation of the UBE reform. The questionnaire was distributed in December 2005 by email to all participants of the development project (N=237 schools), and received a total of 121 answers, which represents a response rate of 60% for principals and 55% for municipal education officers (Pyhältö et al., 2011). The questionnaire had background questions and six open-ended questions in which the participants had to describe various processes related to UBE in their own words. The themes of the questionnaire were the perception about the aim of the reform, the perception about the challenges of the reform and the means used to apply the reform. These data were obtained with the authorization of the researcher in charge of the research project, who allowed me to use it for the purpose of this research. The data obtained were raw (not previously categorized or analyzed) and consisted only of the answers of each participant, without any comments from the researcher who gathered and analyzed these data for their own research). The purpose of using this data collection method was to find information related to specific local methods of implementation, which cannot be found in documentation. This information gives a large view on local implementation process in terms of concrete actions.

The answers were in Finnish, and therefore needed to be translated. Initially, it was thought that three questions out of six would be translated because of the relevance of these questions, but the limitations in terms of time and resources brought a modification to the original plan, which resulted in the translation of only one question. This affects greatly the validity of the results,

because the participants could have understood the question differently and given only partial answers; using three questions would have ensured a more complete answer from the participants. The question that was selected concerned directly implementation measures. The open-ended question asked directly to these local administrators: How do you implement UBE? Each of the 121 answers was translated. For each answer, key words were produced in order to summarize the implementation actions. A total of 565 data were collected this way. The analysis method used was a content analysis using an inductive approach. Even if I had a general idea of the type of answers that would be given because of the suggestions of the NBE regarding implementation methods, I did not want to create any categories beforehand and be open to any information I would get. The use of an open-ended question led to very unbalanced answers, as some of participants answered in two words and others in two pages. This is also an indicator of the level of commitment to the UBE reform.

The content analysis led to the construction of 8 categories containing a total of 22 different types of actions explained by the participants. The first category is that of "school environment" which contains actions related to school culture, ground rules and shared facilities. The school culture refers to implementing common practices, having common morning messages, common values and common guidelines. The shared facilities can relate to common break areas, classrooms, cafeteria, or the sharing of tools and equipment. The second category is that of "student path", which includes activities related to unified curriculum, learning plan, student welfare, knowledge transfer, transition plan and pedagogical unity. Knowledge transfer refers to all types of communication related to a pupil's situation. Activities related to transition plan can be the construction of a specific transition plan, simply focusing on transition issues or having meetings regarding the planning of various transition periods. The pedagogical unity refers, for instance, to the use of the same series of school books or learning approaches. The third category is "school administration", which includes unification or cooperation of school executive, staff, PTA, school board and operational culture. The fourth category is that of "teachers' cooperation", which includes cross-teaching, teachers' meetings and teachers' room. Cross-teaching refers to the ability of teachers to teach at various levels (lower grades and upper grades). Teachers' meeting refers to the construction of groups (or events) that are made of teachers from various backgrounds (lower grades, upper grades, special education, and pre-school). Teachers' room refers to the idea of having a common room for teachers from different backgrounds. The fifth category is that of "students' cooperation", which includes common events and parties, students' initiatives and aged-mixed classes. Common

events refer to, for instance, theme days and school activities that include the participation of pupils from various levels (lower grades and upper grades). Students' initiative refers to having a students' union made of pupils from various levels, upper-grade students mentoring lower-grade students, and upper-grades students organizing break activities with lower-grade students. Aged-mixed classes refer to a combination of students from various levels for specific classes or the collaboration of different aged groups. The sixth category is that of "school network", which refers to the collaboration between schools in various levels, such as common curriculum, common teachers, common events, and the use of facilities. The seventh category is that of "merging soon", which only means that certain schools have specified that they were about to merge with another school in the near future. Finally, the eighth category is that of "special education", which refers to the integration of special education in various levels.

After the categories were elaborated, the data were summarized in percentages, density and frequency. The data were analyzed according to all schools but also were separated between unified schools (grade one to nine) and separate schools (either lower or upper grade) in order to see if these two types of school prioritized different types of action. A total a 121 schools answered the questionnaire, which consists of 73 undivided schools (60%) and 48 separate schools (40%), either lower-grade schools or upper-grade schools.

The participants were selected because they participated to the development project in charge of UBE implementation, which represents already a sample of the population. This development project was applied throughout the territory and divided in 10 networks of implementation. I consider that the sample of this questionnaire is representative to a certain extent, because the participants of the development project were involved to a greater extent in the implementation process and had access to better resources than the general school population, which means that there is a possibility to consider that the participants were more committed to the UBE reform than the general school population. However, these data are the only information related to specific implementation actions by local authorities in the whole Finnish territory, and it was elaborated and executed by a very skilled team of researchers already involved in the evaluation process of the UBE development project. The information gathered by the questionnaire can therefore give a great insight regarding local implementation what could not be gathered otherwise.

7. Results

The results of this study will be presented according to the hybrid approach of implementation analysis that has been described earlier. First, the vertical part of the implementation process will be described. The variables of goals, outcomes, resources, standards and evaluation will be presented. Then, the horizontal part of implementation will be described with the variables of degree of autonomy and ability to create change. The zone of bargaining will be described, followed by the presentation of the methods of implementation chosen by local authorities in order to apply the UBE reform.

7.1 Vertical implementation

7.1.1   Goals and expected outcomes

The goals and expected outcomes of this reform are present in various legislations and other educational documentations. The reform is not the result of a specific plan, but rather of permanent change in educational structure and conception due to the renewal of education system in Finland. The UBE reform "plan" is established through the following documentation:

- Government bill for Legislation on Education (1997)
- Basic Education Act (1998)
- Basic Education Decree (1998)
- Decree on the Qualifications of Educational Staff (1998)
- Development plan for Research and Education 1999-2004
- Decree on the objectives and distribution of lesson hours in basic education (2001)
- National core curriculum (2004)

The mission of the UBE reform is to create (or improve) a unified basic education system. The UBE consists of filling the gap created by the two school systems in place for many decades. This gap can be filled by creating a unified learning environment where pupils won't be affected by transition issues in any point during their whole basic education experience.

The means identified to solve transition issues can be found in two categories. The first categories are the official changes applied by the central authority, which affect legislations. These means are the official abolition of the boundary between the lower and upper stage in the comprehensive school, the creation of an individual unified learning plan and unified curriculum, the use of cross-teaching, and the creation of objectives by module. The use of cross-teaching affects legislation in a

way that it is now a legal practice, but it is not a mean that has to be used by local authorities (not compulsory).

Here are the legislations that are affected by these changes. First, let's see how the Basic Education Act was changed in 1998 in comparison to its older version of 1983:

> "Basic education is a uniform nine-year school. The six lowest years constitute the primary school and the three upper years constitute secondary school." (*Peruskoululaki 476/1983*, chapter 1, section 4.1)

> "Education shall be governed by a unified national core curriculum in accordance with this Act." (Basic Education Act 628/1998, chapter 1, section 3.1)

The division of the lower grades and upper grades has been abolished in the new Basic Education Act. Regarding the concept of cross-teaching:

> "In year-classes 1-6, the teaching shall primarily be class teaching and in year-classes 7-9 primarily subject teaching unless otherwise provided in the curriculum." (Basic Education Decree 852/1998, chapter 1, section 1.2)

Also, in chapter 3 (section 4.3) of the Decree on the Qualifications of Educational Staff (986/1998), it is mentioned that a subject teacher can be qualified to be a class teacher. The change in the Basic Education degree means that subject teachers are authorised to teach lower grades, and class teachers are authorized to teach upper grades, which was not possible before. The change in de Decree on the Qualifications of Educational Staff authorized subject teachers to be also considered as class teachers. In terms of the objectives by modules, the previous Decree on the objectives and distribution of lesson hours in basic education (834/1993) presented the distribution of lesson hours as well as objectives according to lower grades and upper grades. In the new Decree on the objectives and distribution of lesson hours in basic education (1435/2001), the distribution of lesson hours were presented according to subjects:

> "The time spent on comprehensive school education is divided into different subjects and from those groups of subjects are formed teaching planning and student guidance […]" (Decree on the objectives and distribution of lesson hours in basic education 1435/2001, chapter 3, section 6)

From this change in regulation, the core curriculum was amended in 2001 in order to change is objectives by level to objectives by module, which can be found in the official core curriculum of 2004:

> "The objectives and core contents of the instruction are defined in the national core
> curriculum by subject of group for segments falling between curricular transition points
> […]" (Core Curriculum 2004, section 2.3)

Finally, the creation of a unified individual learning path is mentioned in the core curriculum of 2004, stating that it must be based on the curriculum, which is now unified.

The second category of means consists of suggestions from central authorities to local authorities. These suggestions are to create common operations, create common school culture, increase teacher's cooperation, increase cooperation between schools or between levels, and provide unified pupils' care. Various ways are proposed to achieve these goals, such as uniting schools (or adding grades gradually), uniting administrative units, uniting executive units, creating shared space, creating school networks, having one common teachers' room, applying common teachers' meeting and common teacher's developmental groups (e.g. for transition plan group, learning plan group, and welfare group), creating a transitional plan, and so on. If these means are clearly suggested by central authorities in their various publications listed earlier, they are by no mean compulsory, and it is the responsibility of the local authorities to apply what they considered to be the best option(s).

> "It was both the top-down and bottom-up approach, in the sense that a very general
> framework was provided by the National Board of Education and by the legislations,
> but the actual meaning of the reform and practices were created in schools, in
> collaboration within the school districts and within the municipalities" (Interview 2)

In terms of expected outcomes, central authorities expected local authorities to develop their own unified basic education. They expected local authorities to construct their own solutions with local actors. The only compulsory tasks that local authorities had to apply were the construction of a unified curriculum and a unified learning plan.

7.1.2 Resources

Central authorities have provided various types of resources in order to implement the UBE reform. First, the Ministry of Education has put together a development plan in order to implement the concepts of unified basic education. Second, legislations regarding the funding of education have a

special section of building construction and renovation funding. Third, the NBE has provided counseling in order to help local authorities to make sense out of the UBE ideology and find their own solutions. Let us describe in more details these three types of support from central authorities to local authorities.

Development project

The development project was applied from 2004 to 2006 and was monitored by the NBE (Pietilä & Vitikka, 2007). The participants to the project were basic education schools, municipalities, universities and teacher training institutions. The goal of the project was to support local education provider to find the most appropriate way to implement the UBE reform according to the new legislations (Basic Education Act, Distribution of Lesson Hours and Objectives Decree, core curriculum of 2004). In total, 87 municipalities (237 schools) participated as well as 10 teacher training institutions (Pyhältö et al., 2011). Participants were divided into 11 regional networks throughout the country. The funding made available for this project was EUR 45 000 per year. The main activities related to this project were the organization of meetings within each network and national seminars. Throughout the project, meetings have brought together around 2500 school principals and teachers each year (Pietilä & Vitikka, 2007). Participation of researchers was also very important in order to implement research-based solutions to UBE. In 2005, the Ministry of Education allowed a complementary funding for a research project in order to study in more details the results of the development project. Local activities have also been strongly supported by organizations such as SYVE and OPEKO[34].

> "The idea [of the development project] was to just to develop the practical ideas and the pedagogical ideas connected to this UBE, how teachers work together and how they together are in a way responsible for building a unified learning path to children, and so on. […] The idea of this project is to get people together, help them to find their enthusiasm, help them to develop and share ideas together, sometimes even find totally new things, but mostly, it's helping people to learn from each other, and to maintain their enthusiasm, their willingness and commitment to develop their own work." (Interview 3)

The purpose of this project was to provide sufficient support for the implementation of UBE on four levels. First, municipalities and schools needed to adjust their practices in order to be in accordance with the new legislations. Second, local institutions had to integrate the concept of UBE in order to

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[34] SYVE is an organization of principals who have worked to implement unified basic education, and OPEKO is an organization that provides educational training and used to work under the authority of the NBE

develop their own undivided learning environment. Third, special education needed to be integrated in the UBE concept. Finally, the teacher training institutions had to integrate the UBE ideology in the training of teachers (Pietilä & Vitikka, 2007). The project was clear on one major aspect: the work had to be done by local implementers with coordinated development work. The NBE was only there to manage the networks, provide the necessary information regarding legislation and pedagogy, and organize national seminars. Each network was provided with a coordinator. The NBE did not impose any ways of implementing UBE, but rather gave advises about what would be good solutions according to local specificities.

Special funding

The Act on Financing Culture and Education voted in 1998 provided instructions for funding of education. In chapter 5, the legislation gave instructions on how to receive funding for renovation or construction projects. Municipalities needed to present their construction or renovation project to the Ministry of Education in order to receive a special funding (Funding of Education and Culture Act, 1998). Central authorities did not created a special funding program in order to help municipalities who wanted to proceed to school merging, but rather they used the normal procedure already included in the legislation. This legislation only specified the procedure for applying for these types of funding, without explaining the decision-making process. However, the finance committee explains in the budget that the choice of grants for these projects are influenced by the development plan for education and research (Ministry of finance, 2015b), which included already the UBE idea starting from 1995 and more thoroughly in 1999.

The figure 3 shows the funding for projects of construction and renovation of educational facilities under the chapter 5 of the legislation, between 2002 and 2013 (Ministry of finance, 2015b). Unfortunately, budgets are not available before 2002. In 2004, the budget started to include information related to the amount of pupils concerned by construction and renovation projects (Ministry of finance, 2015b). This information appears in figure 4.
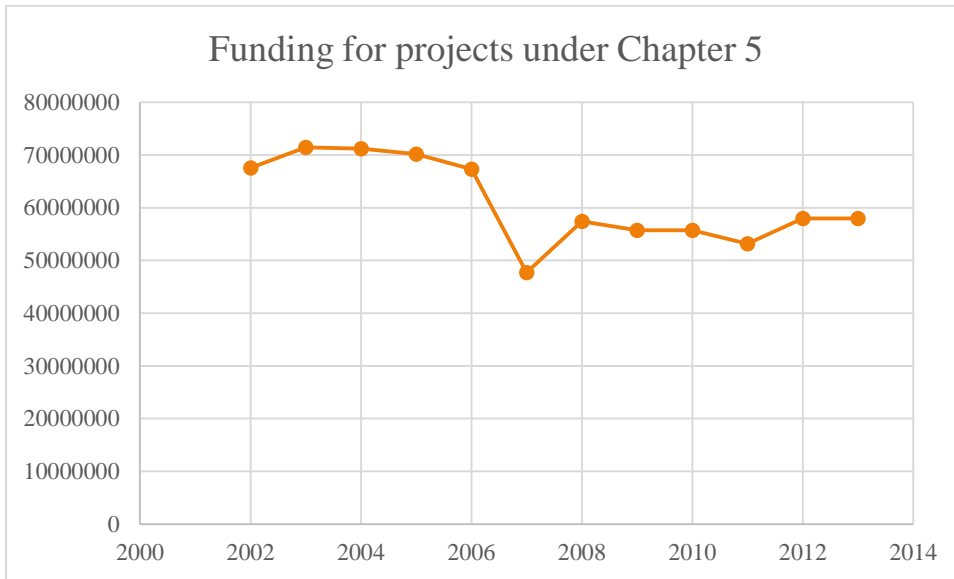
Figure 3: Funding for construction or renovation projects between 2002 and 2013 (Ministry of finance, 2015b)
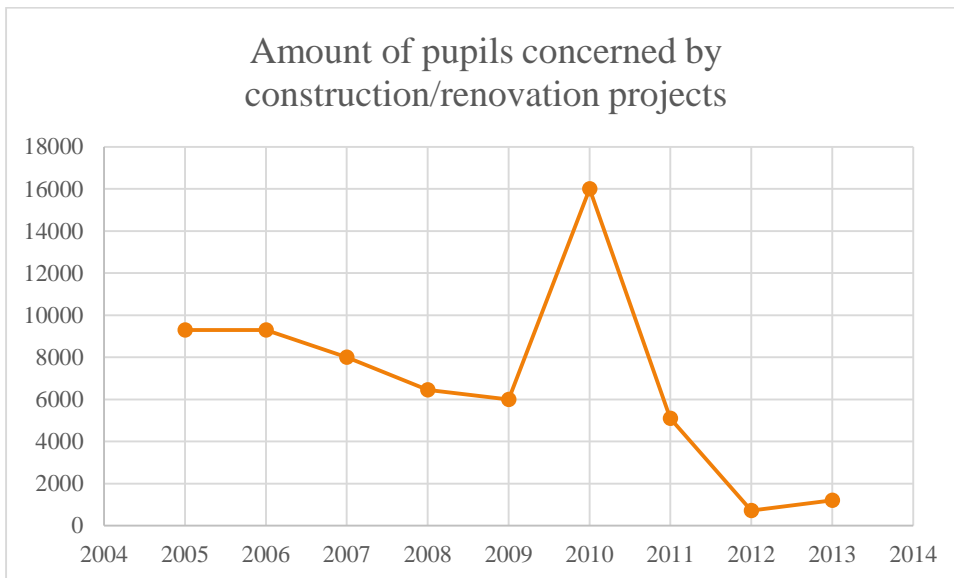

Figure 4: Amount of pupils concerned by construction or renovation projects between 2005 and 2013 (Ministry of finance, 2015b)

The two figures show that until 2006, there was a larger amount of funding for such projects, and that renovations and constructions projects concerned a greater amount of pupils. However, I do not have any information regarding the purpose of these project, i.e. what percentage of these projects were applied in order to implement UBE concept of school merging/common facilities. The years 2003 and 2004 had the largest project funding in the years 2002 to 2013.

In 2009, a new legislation regarding Funding of Education and culture was adopted, but the instructions related to funding of construction and renovation projects stayed the same (Act on the Financing of Education and Culture, 2009).

Counseling

The NBE also provided support for local implementers outside of the development project lunched in 2004. This supporting task is one of the responsibilities of the NBE and they apply it on a constant basis, but more frequently when there are changes in legislations, when there is a new development plan, and when there is a new curriculum. In the case of the UBE reform, the NBE provided counseling in two ways. First, they organized elective seminars for school headmasters and teachers. Secondly, they acted as experts invited in local meeting organized by local authorities. As for the development project, they provided useful information regarding UBE and suggested ways to implement the reform. Here is how the role of the NBE was explained by a head of the organization:

> "[…] it is our role to help them [local actors] to find each other, to create forums for them to come together, to share their experience, to learn from each other. And of course, we have presented what the law says, what the basic education act says, what the government decree says, what the national core curriculum says, and what it means in their practices. But they have to find their own ways to do that [implement the reform]. They are best experts." (Interview 3)

7.1.3   Standards

No standards were established to measure the outcomes by central authorities. The only two expected outcomes (or compulsory outcomes) were the development of unified curriculum and unified individual learning plan. The central authority expected local actors to develop their own implementation strategy. Therefore, if there are standards used to measure implementation, they would be found at the local level, and they would reflect their own understanding of the UBE ideas.

7.1.4   Evaluation

There was no evaluation of the reform implementation process that was performed. However, there were a series of evaluation that applied to the development project of the NBE. Indeed, the 237 schools, 87 municipalities and 10 teacher training institutions have participated to many evaluations in order to follow the process. The NBE produced a report in 2007 where the 11 networks were described, as well as their respective approaches to UBE (Pietilä & Vitikka, 2007). Researchers

from University of Helsinki, Tampere and Joensuu also produced a series of research articles regarding various aspects of the UBE reforms. This research project called "Learning and Development in Comprehensive Schools" was carried out from 2004 to 2009. Data were collected from municipal education officers, school principals, teachers and pupils. The data collection methods consisted of inquiries, interviews, and discussions (Pyhältö et al., 2011). Publications in English related to this research project concern various pupils' transitions issues, teachers' professional agency and implementation approaches from principals (see Pietarinen et al., 2010; Pyhältö et al., 2011; Pyhältö et al., 2012). Pyhältö et al. (2011) aimed to see how local administrator perceived UBE and how they promoted the reform, which could be considered as a form of evaluation of implementation process in the framework of the development project of the NBE.

7.2 Horizontal implementation

7.2.1   Degree of autonomy

The legislations in place in Finland (Basic Education Act, Local Government Act) show a very high level of decentralization and autonomy of local authorities. In the case of the UBE reform, the implementation was applied according to the structures and culture already present, which means that it was applied in a very decentralized manner by respecting the autonomy of municipalities, schools and teachers.

> "It is quite typical that reforms are implemented in a very decentralized way. One idea at
> the time was that schools need to develop their own solutions for promoting undivided
> basic education" (Interview 2)

The core curriculum 2004 mentions that "in the local curriculum, decisions are made regarding the educational and teaching task of basic education, […] as well as other factors bearing on provision of the education […]" (National Board of Education, 2004, p. 8)

The curriculum also mentions that UBE must be present in aspects such as the learning environment, the school culture, and the teaching methods. But again, there are no specifications regarding the methods that need to be utilized in order to implement UBE. It rather mentions that it is the task of local authorities and educational providers to develop methods in order to make sure these goals are achieved. Therefore, the degree au autonomy of local authorities resides in all other applications of UBE besides their obligation of creating a unified curriculum and a learning path. They might decide to unify school facilities, apply cross-teaching, develop teacher's cooperation by having only one teacher's room or mixing teachers' development groups, unifying school culture by

creating common areas or common event, or unifying students social environment by unifying student activities and organization (such as student union). Local authorities have the autonomy to apply the UBE reform at the level they consider to be needed and using the methods they consider to be useful.

The implication of local actors in the implementation process influenced a lot the type of methods used by local authorities. Indeed, in order to apply the reform, local actors had to understand the concept of UBE and make it their own. The reform was understood on two main levels, i.e. from a structural perspective and a pedagogical perspective.

> "In the ground level, there was more talk about the structures than about the pedagogy, but it quite soon changed. […]. The solutions varied, depending on what the professional community perceived as central and important and what they perceived as strengths and weaknesses and what they identified the departmental challenges to be." (Interview 2)

> "Municipalities have different solutions. Sometimes they forced schools to merge. […]. If you merge two schools, you have to put much resources and energy on the development of the new working culture, because they come from different cultures, school cultures, and teachers need to fill supported in that change. […]. The problem often was that municipalities also used this merging as a mean of making saving. They were saving money, not finding the best pedagogical solution, so teachers had a negative feeling towards UBE if they had experienced that." (Interview 3)

Among those who participated in the development project, the perception of the UBE reform is divided into pedagogical and structural priorities (Pyhältö et al., 2011). Indeed, 65% of the principals considered the reform to be a pedagogical reform, and 35% considered the reform to be more of a structural reform. As for teachers, studies showed that they had a "positive and convergent views about the main ideas of undivided basic education, […] though different meanings and interpretations […]" (Pyhältö, Pietarinen, & Soini, 2012, p. 106). Indeed, if the majority of teachers focused on pupil's learning path and collaborative school culture, the study shows a division in the level of understanding of the reform, as 52% of teachers had a fragmented and narrow view on the process, while 48% had a systemic and coherent perception of the reform.

7.2.2   Ability to create change

In order to develop their own conception of UBE and their own solutions, local authorities operated mostly in local meetings. Meetings are a very usual way of operating changes in Finland. The same

method was therefore used for the reform. Meetings can take place in one school, in a network of schools, be organized by a school, by a municipality, involve only teachers, only principals, only administrators, or a mixture of educational staff. In the case of the UBE reform, these meetings were very different from one another according to the type of actors present and the level of participation, motivation and commitment of each participant.

> "Often also the schools did use the time reserved for the development work to process the questions related to undivided basic education. They invited, for example, researchers to talk about undivided basic education with them. Or they might decide to use that time to have this group work within the school, or within the area to develop a plan for themselves, how to proceed." (Interview 2)

In these meetings, local actors discussed about the UBE reform, its meaning and how it applied to their local reality. The UBE concept could not be applied the same way everywhere because the challenges were different, for instance, in small towns and in urban areas (Pietilä & Vitikka, 2007). The participation to these meetings could involve experts from the NBE or universities as well as other organizations. According to the debates and discussions that took place in these meetings, feelings towards the UBE reform evolved and shaped the solutions put into place by local authorities. There is a large diversity in the types of meetings that were done for the UBE reform. Indeed, some municipalities made decisions without consulting teachers and principals, while other municipalities included all local actors in the implementation process. The shape and form of these meetings have influenced a lot the actions of UBE, but also the perception of local actors towards UBE and finally, the outcomes of UBE.

Official actors at the local level are teachers, principals and municipal administrators. However, the core curriculum encourages local authorities to include pupils, parents and other local stakeholders to take part in the development of decisions, which was applied in various degrees, according to the operational culture of each region (Pietilä & Vitikka, 2007). One important stakeholder that needs to be mentioned here is the group *Suomen Yhtenäiskouluverkosto* (SEVY). This group was created after the UBE appeared in the legislation and has promoted the idea of undivided basic education (Suomen Yhtenäiskouluverkosto Ry, 2015). This group was formed by school principals throughout the country on their own initiative. Their purpose was to develop efficient ways to apply the UBE reform because they highly supported this ideology. They worked in close collaboration with the NBE, in the development project and with municipalities and schools as an expert body. They also published documentation regarding UBE and produced national seminars.

"Its influence [Suomen Yhtenäiskouluverkosto] has been very good, because it has created enthusiasm to develop basic education, and it has created different forms of how to do unified basic education in practice, and how to develop it pedagogically, how to create, develop learning environments so that learning environments support the idea of this unified basic education." (Interview 3)

The ability to create change is based on the fact that local actors know what is best for pupils. Indeed, Finland is characterized by a strong feeling of trust and respect toward teachers. This is why teachers are considered to be the most important actor for the elaboration of implementation actions regarding educational reforms. By letting full autonomy to local institutions, central authorities ensured high level of commitment from local actors, promoted a diversity of implementation methods and also took the risk of having incomplete implementation in some institutions.

7.3 Bargaining zone

The bargaining zone takes form where central and local authorities meet. In the case of the UBE reform, this can be seen where the NBE and local actors worked together in various ways. First, collaborative work took form as transmission of information. This transmission of information has been the initiative of central authorities as well as local authorities. For instance, the NBE has organized national seminars in order to provide necessary information regarding the change in legislations, the new development plan and the new curriculum, as well as providing relevant information regarding pedagogical approaches to UBE implementation. The NBE has also provided information on requests of local institutions. Indeed, as local authorities were developing local UBE meaning and solutions, many of them invited experts from the NBE in order to gain a better understanding of the UBE. The NBE also provided extensive information to SEVY on their requests.

The second type of collaborative work between central and local authorities took place in the development project put together by the NBE (Pietilä & Vitikka, 2007). In this context, the collaboration did not only include transmission of information but rather collaborative participation in the implementation process. In this project, the NBE developed networks or schools in order to stimulate collaboration among local actors. The construction of ideas was done by local authorities in a framework supported by a central agency. Furthermore, SEVY participated in the project. The project was therefore a place of collaborative work between all actors and stakeholders of education, in which ideas for UBE implementation were developed and promoted. The networks

were managed both by members of NBE and local actors such as municipal administrators, school principals and teachers.

7.4 Results of implementation

The results of implementation are the actual actions that resulted from the reform. As it has been explained, the reform was very decentralized, and local authorities were free to apply the reform according to their own perspective on the reform. There was no national evaluation of the reform that was applied, which means that it is difficult to know how each local authority implemented the UBE concept. However, some data are available to measure some implementation activities. In terms of structural changes, there are statistics available regarding the amount of comprehensive schools that exist in Finland, as well as the grades they teach[35]. The comparison between the amount and type of schools before and after the reform describes to what extent was applied the structural change proposed by the reform.
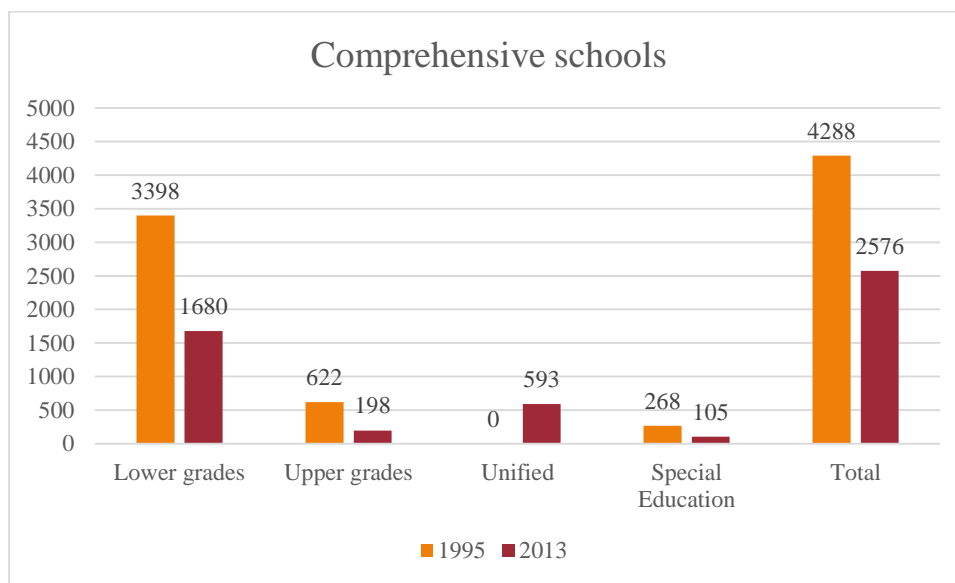

Figure 5: Amount and type of comprehensive schools in Finland, years 1995 and 2013

Figure 5 shows that the total amount of basic education schools have decreased of 40% from 1995 to 2013, as 1712 schools have either closed or merged during these years. Indeed, the transformation of separate systems into a unified basic education brought 1718 lower grade schools and 424 upper grade schools to close (or merge), and 593 unified schools to be created, either by merging schools, adding grades slowly, or by creating a new school. These data do not tell us why

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[35] Statistics for 1995 were available through legislative documentation (Government bill of Legislation on Education, 1997) and statistics of 2013 were available through Official Statistics Finland (Official Statistics of Finland, 2014)

schools have closed. It could have been because of sanitary reasons or demography changes, but the results do show that when a school needed to close, it probably served the purpose of UBE, since the creation of 593 undivided schools in less than 20 years is the proof of a great structural change. Indeed, the proportion of undivided schools went from 0% to 24% of all comprehensive schools from 1995 to 2013. The decrease of special education schools shows also an increase in the integration of special education in regular comprehensive schools.

The results regarding the change in school culture, teachers' cooperation, and other pedagogical changes are harder to describe, as no national data are available. However, data are available regarding the development project, which gives a great insight into how local actors made sense of the reform and how they implemented it.

The results show that a large variety of methods were used to implement the UBE reform. I have identified 22 actions that were classified in 8 categories of implementation methods, including 6 major and 2 minor categories. Figure 6 represents all implementation actions for all schools who answered the questionnaire.
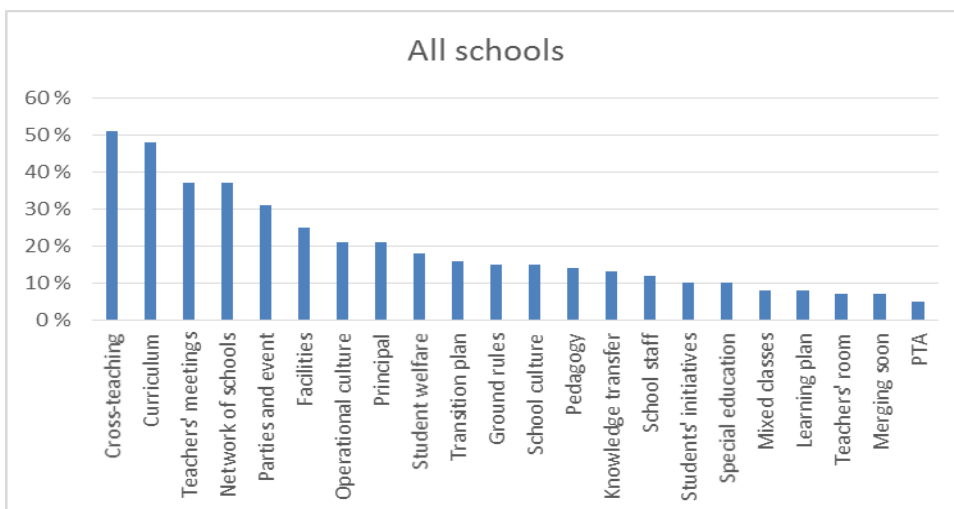

Figure 6: Activities applied to implement UBE

Cross-teaching was the most UBE action used, as 51% of all schools mentioned that at least some cross-teaching was used in their institution. The unified curriculum was mentioned by 48% of all schools as being a part of UBE implementation. The collaboration of teachers was a great priority for many local actors, as 37% of all schools mentioned that teachers from different background had common teachers' meetings. The cooperation between schools is also a great implementation action as 37% of all schools mentioned that they cooperate to some extent with other schools of their

municipality or region. Other important activities are unified events, parties, and theme days, the use of common facilities, the implementation of a common operational culture, the cooperation or merging of administration, the implementation of a unified student welfare, the focus on transition issues (i.e. developing a transition plan, having meetings before students transition from a level to another), unified ground rules, unified pedagogical ideology (i.e. common book series), increased communication among educational staff regarding students' situation, cooperation or unification of school staff, unified students' initiatives (i.e. upper-grades students mentor lower-grade students, unified student union, common break activities organized by students), integration of special education, cooperation between classes of different levels or creation of mixed-level groups, development of unified learning plan, common teacher's room (for teachers of all levels), and the unification or cooperation of parents' associations. Few schools also mentioned that a new merging was planned for the year coming. These actions have been developed by local authorities in order to implement the idea of UBE, one year after the new curriculum was introduced.

The results are a little bit different if with separate the answers between schools that are undivided and schools that are divided. Figure 7 shows the variation of results from each group of schools.
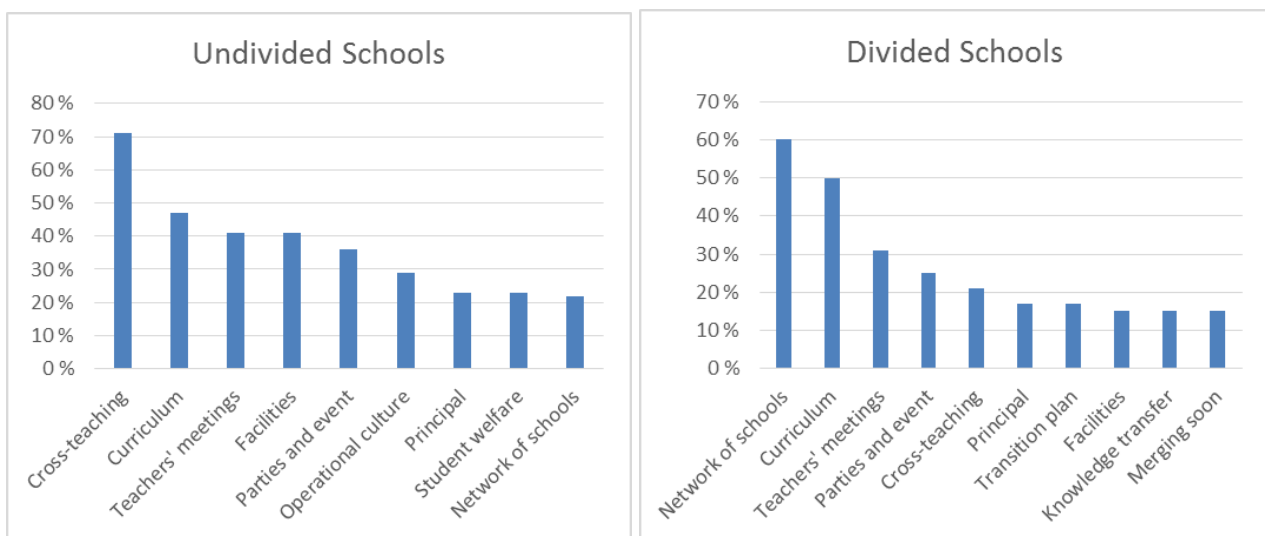

Figure 7: Most popular activities of undivided schools and divided schools used to implement UBE

In the case of undivided schools, the action of cross-teaching is now applied by 71% of all undivided schools. The development of a unified curriculum is stable, but the participation of school networks decreases at 22%, which means that 22% of all undivided schools still work in cooperation with other schools. Common teachers' meeting and common parties and events for pupils are also stables. The use of common facilities increases at 41%, which means that 41% of

undivided schools have at least a portion of shared space in the school, which can be the cafeteria, the break area, or event the classrooms. The implementation of a unified operational culture also increases with 29% of all undivided schools who apply it. In the case of divided schools, the use of cross-teaching is still present, but only used by 21% of the divided schools. The use of a network of schools becomes the most popular tool for UBE as it is used by 60% of all divided schools. The development of a unified curriculum is stable, but the cooperation between teachers of various level decreases with 31% of divided schools applying common teachers' meetings. There are less common parties and events for pupils of different levels, less shared facilities, and less operational culture than for undivided schools, but there are still considered by 25%, 15%, and 10% of divided schools respectively as tools to improve UBE.

These activities show the wide variety of ideas that local actors have to implement UBE. In order to understand the logic behind it, these activities have been divided into 8 categories of implementation methods. Figure 8 shows the methods of implementation put forward by local authorities.
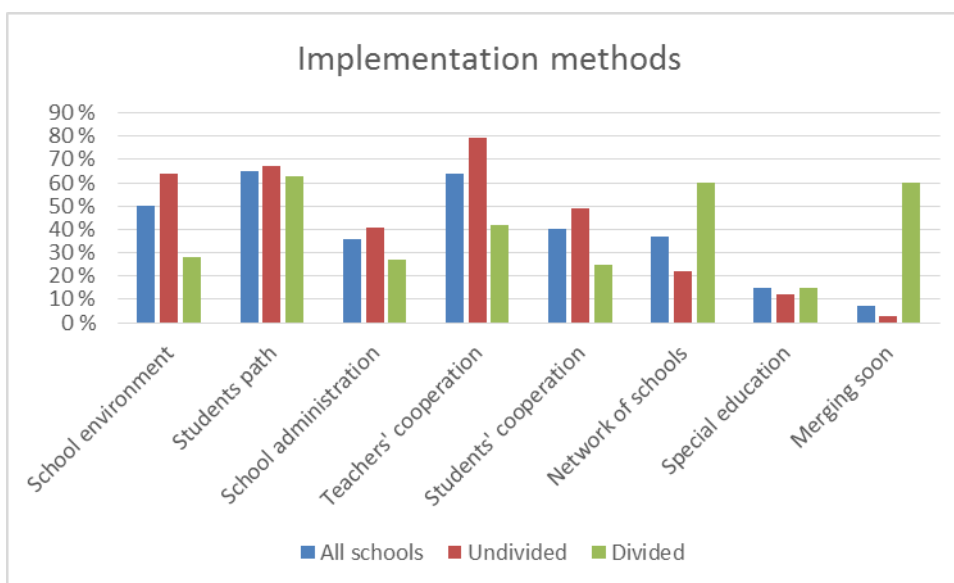

Figure 8: UBE implementation methods

The results shows that 50% of all schools have applied some activities in order to create a united school environment, 65% have applied activities to unify the student' path, 36% have applied activities in relation to the unification of administrative tasks, 64% of all schools have applied activities in order to improve teachers' cooperation, 40% have applied activities in order to improve pupils' cooperation, 37% are part of a school network to some extent, 12% have integrated special education students and 7% will be merging with other schools. The graph also shows the variation

between undivided and divided schools. This graph does not mention the intensity of each method, but rather shows the presence of each category, which only expresses the difference of interpretation from local authorities. The next figure shows the density of actions present in each of these interpretations, which gives a better understanding of the results.
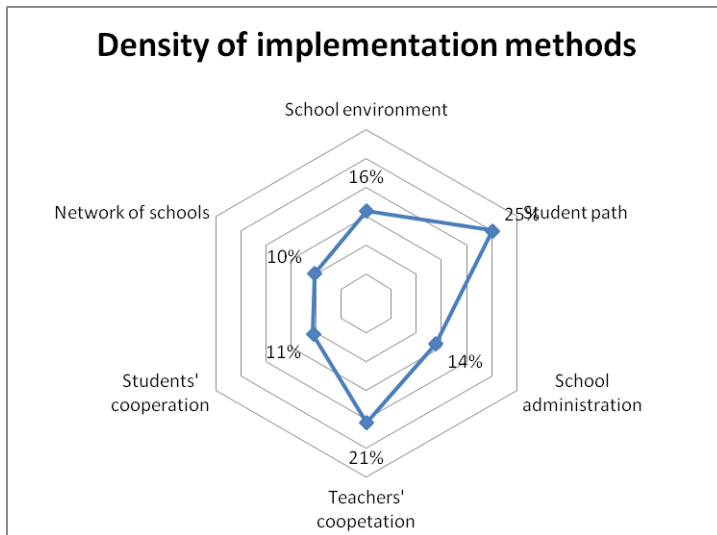

Figure 9: Density of implementation activities within implementation methods

Figure 9 shows that activities related to improve the student path represent 25% of all implementation actions, while activities applied to improve teachers' cooperation represent 21% of all actions. The previous graph showed that 65% of all schools did at least one action regarding students' path, and 64% did at least one action regarding teachers' cooperation. Now, it can also be stated that a larger amount of actions were actually applied in order to achieve a unified student path.

Finally, the last information relevant for this study is related to the diversity of methods implemented by each school. Did schools implement UBE only regarding one method or did they implement it according to a variety of perspectives? The next figure expresses the proportion of schools who applied UBE using various methods.
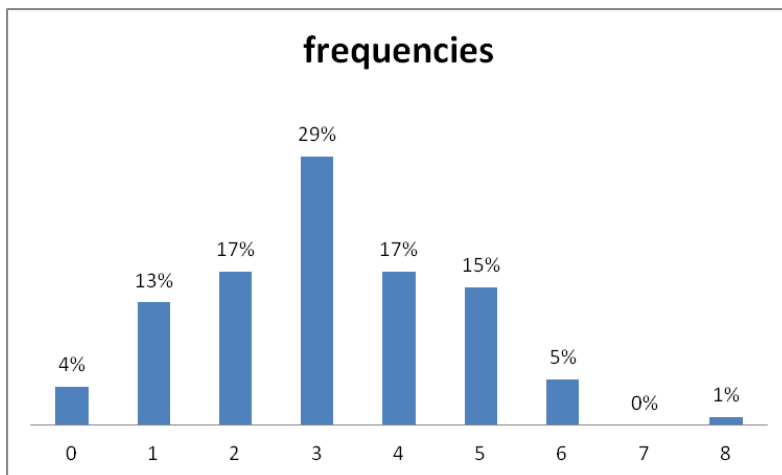
Figure 10: Number of methods used by schools for UBE implementation

Figure 10 shows that 4% of schools did not implement in any way the UBE reform, 13% only implemented UBE using one approach, 17% of all schools used two approaches, 29% of all schools used three approaches, 17% used four approaches, 15% used five approaches, 5% used six approaches, and 1% of all school used all eight approaches. This shows that 66% of all schools implemented UBE using at least three different perspectives.

To summarize, implementation of UBE was based on the decision of local authorities in collaboration with all local actors in the field of education. From 1995 to 2013, 24% of basic education schools were structurally unified. In 2005, UBE was implemented mainly in regard of creating a unified student path, improving teachers' cooperation and creating a unified school environment. The actions put forward to achieve implementation were very diverse and seem to have been greatly affected by the local reality of each school.

8. Discussion

The purpose of this research was to produce a descriptive analysis of the implementation process of the UBE reform. The framework of this analysis needed to produce a complete understanding of interactions between all levels of authorities in order to evaluate which authority played a bigger role and to what extent. The hybrid approach was the best model of analysis that could lead to this purpose. Therefore, the analysis includes the components of the vertical implementation, the horizontal implementation and the zone of bargaining. The context is taken into account in order to identify the level of cohesion between the reform and its environment.

Implementation process analyses are usually inspired by a pluralist approach, and this study is not an exception. The results show the strong participation of all actors of the education system to the implementation process, in opposition to the control of a minority of central actors promoting specific interests. The UBE reform is a perfect example of a collaborative process with very large distribution of decision-making power. Furthermore, the Finnish approach promotes a structuralist approach of policy process, as the elaboration process was greatly influenced by the social context and built according to rising interests of various groups. Furthermore, the reform was implemented following a procedure already present. The structural change resulting from the reform was also greatly influenced by similar changes in demography. Institutionalism can also be considered, as the history of the policy process explains greatly the change process used in this reform. Indeed, this is great example of a society that builds on its previous accomplishments, rather than going against its institutions. Let us now see the level of cohesiveness of the implementation process with the context in which it was implemented, i.e. the context of the policy (agenda-setting and elaboration process), the context of the education system (other policies in place and general values of the system) and the context of the system (structure already in place).

Context

The UBE reform was continuous and evolutionary rather than conflictual and revolutionary. Indeed, the reform followed an ideology already present in the education system, was in harmony with other educational and welfare changes happening at the same time, and was applied following the existing structure of the system. These aspects are very important, as it shows that a reform is not considered to be a radical change, but rather an improvement of an existing system.

The idea of the reform, i.e. having an undivided basic education, was already present in the education system for the last 50 years, as explained earlier. The concept was developed and its relevance became clear in the 1990s, when transition issues became apparent to the eyes of local actors as well as researchers and policy-makers. The idea of implementing UBE came both from the field and from research, which brought a common understanding of the necessity of this action. At the same time, the change in demography asked for a change in basic education structures. These two needs legitimated the elaboration of the UBE reform. The reform was therefore not revolutionary, as Finland has worked for unifying basic education for a very long time.

The reform also did not contradict other educational and social policies. Indeed, the reform was part of a greater reform that was happening in the end of the 1990s. The reform was elaborated at the same time as many educational reforms regarding other levels of education (upper-secondary level, higher education level) and various topics (i.e. funding, content, organization, structure, legal frame). The general reform of the educational system in 1998 was indeed the result of many years of work that led to the creation of the bill on legislation of education in 1997. The reform in 1998 followed a purpose of adjusting the present system to a more simple and efficient system. The various reform happening in education were therefore following a cohesive transformation plan, led by similar values, i.e. the values of quality of education, accessibility of education and equality of chances, as well as new influences of liberalism due to globalization and financial restrictions due to the recent economic crisis.

The implementation process was also applied according to similar values. The main values that can be identified here are the values of autonomy of local authorities and the respect and trust of teachers. The history of Finland explains the strong presence of autonomy, which have often influenced the direction of decentralization of structural reforms, as observed in the Local Government Act, the Basic Education Act, decentralization of the curriculum, the freedom and autonomy of teachers. History also explains the presence of the value of respect of teachers, as Finland has emphasized on the quality of teacher education since the first general reform of education in the 1960s. Finland considers the teachers to be the best experts in education. This value is present in central authorities as much as in the population in general. These two values are very present in the implementation process of the UBE reform. Indeed, the central authority was very clear that it was the task of local institutions to develop their own solution for implementing the UBE reform, as they have the autonomy and they know what is best for their specific situation.

The UBE reform was implemented following the traditional structures of the education system. Indeed, the UBE reform was implemented according to the structure already in place, as there were no new structures created to implement the reform, and no actors were attributed more decision-making power than they usually have. This explained why a very decentralized system implemented a very decentralized reform.

It can therefore be stated that the reform was elaborated and implemented in cohesion with the values and the structures of the system. The change implemented was consistent with other policies and with the general evolution of the education system by strengthening the ideology already in place and by respecting the role of each actor. It is also safe to state that the process was the result of a large distribution of power. The particularities of the vertical and horizontal implementation will now be analyzed, which will show the level of power and responsibilities of each level of authority.

Vertical implementation

The central authority played a much smaller role than what the contributors to hybrid implementation suggest. Indeed, the goal of the reform was clear in its general idea, but not regarding expected actions and expected outcomes. For this reason, standards were not established, nor was an evaluation process. Goals were established by extensive work on the field as well as research, which resulted in a common acceptance of the goals from actors on the field. Central authorities did not impose any specific actions except regarding the development of a unified curriculum and a unified learning path. The local unified curriculum needs to be framed on the national core curriculum which had been unified. The national curriculum can be considered as a direction from the central authority, even though is consists only of general guidelines rather than specific directions.

Central authorities did not participate to the implementation process by controlling the process and imposing specific actions and expected outcomes, but they participated greatly by giving resources to local authorities. The main resource given by central authorities was information. Indeed, as local authorities needed to develop their own understanding of the reform as well as actions to implement it, the central authorities provided a wide range of information to guide and support the local implementation process. This information was transmitted mainly by documentation, seminars, and meetings. It is not clear if a financial support was provided in order to apply the structural change of the reform, as the data regarding the "construction or renovation" budget does not provide enough

information. However, it seems that more construction funding was given in the years 2002 to2006. This might be the result of a decision from central authorities to provide sufficient funding for those who wish to merge schools in order to create a unified basic education school. Finally, the last resource provided by the central authority was the development project, which aimed to develop networks of UBE implementation. The use of a development project or a pilot project seems to be the norm in Finland when it comes to implementing new policies or to improve the quality of implementation with new approaches. It is a good way for the central authority to keep an eye on the implementation process without interfering and without proceeding to a national implementation and evaluation plan.

Central authorities cannot by understood as being a coordinator, but rather can be described as being a supporter of implementation processes. Central authorities provided a clear vision but no clear actions, and most importantly, they provided support for local authorities to make sure local actors had all necessary information to make the best decisions. This shows a great respect for local autonomy and for the intelligence and skills of local actors, and mostly teachers. The education system is considered as very decentralized, which was respected by central authorities, who did not interfere in the responsibilities of local authorities.

Previous research on implementation have shown that a lack of clear directions and expectations was one of the main reason for the failure of an implementation process, as local authorities would not know what to do and to what extent (Fullan, 2005). This case study contradicts this statement, as no clear directions and expectations were given, but it did not lead to the consequences of confusion for local actors. This can probably be explained by the focus of central authorities on providing extensive information, support and advises to local authorities. The use of this type of resource is also coherent with the context, since values and structures of the education system support the idea of autonomy and expertise of local authorities. Furhman (1993) had also stated that in most cases, teachers and schools do not have the ability to elaborate and implementation their own change, which can also be contradicted in this case study, as it is schools and teachers who have the responsibilities to develop alongside municipalities the meaning of the reform and the solutions to implement it.

Horizontal implementation

Local authorities played a major role in the implementation process of the UBE reform. The hybrid approach suggests that a certain level of autonomy must be given to local authorities since they will

try to change the plan established by central authorities in any cases. However, this case shows that the level of autonomy was given to a much bigger extent than what is suggested by the contributors to implementation process analysis. The level of autonomy can be measured by the level of flexibility left for local actors to shape the reform process and the level of accountability of local authorities to central authorities. In this case, the level of flexibility was almost considered as total flexibility, as local actors had to develop their own understanding of the reform completely and come up with their own solutions. Central authorities only imposed a change in the framework of the curriculum and the learning path and did not impose accountability measures with it, as they trust local authorities to develop appropriate curriculum and learning path. As other measures of implementation were left to the decision of local authorities, it is safe to say that the level of autonomy in this case is greater than what is expected from implementation analysts. The concept that has been greatly considered by these analysts is that of the expertise of teachers (Fuhrman, 1993; Fullan, 1994; Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Bonami et al., 1996). Indeed, they understand that their level of expertise and access to the field gives them an extensive knowledge that policy-makers don't have. This concept is applied to its fullest in the case of the UBE reform, where teachers were asked to develop their own understanding of the reform and find their own solutions.

The structure established to create changes were the use of meetings and networks. This process is often used in Finland, and used again in this case. Since local authorities had the responsibility to develop their own understanding of the reform and to develop their own solutions, it was necessary to develop places and forums for discussion, debate and transmission of information. The collaboration of actors in meetings and networks brought a great ability to create change for local authorities. These meetings involved many actors and resulted in a variety of understanding and actions. Studies shows that the reform was understood to be structural and pedagogical (Pyhältö et al., 2011), and that parts of teachers understood the reform to its fullest while others only understood one perspective of one application of the reform (Pyhältö et al., 2012). The necessity for local authorities to develop their own understanding of the reform and to include teachers in the process created a "positive and convergent views about the main ideas of undivided basic education [...]" (Pyhältö et al., 2012, p. 106). This statement sustains the conclusion of Fullan and Fuhrman, who stated that decentralization also ensures the implication of local actors and the creation of networks of collaboration and discussions in order to support and participate to the implementation process (Fuhrman, 1993; Fullan, 2007).

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The main critics regarding the application of a decentralized implementation concern mainly the lack of coordination, superficial changes, uneven level of efforts, lack of time, lack of focus, lack of pressure, low level of efficiency, lack of effect on teaching or learning, and so on (see Gather-Thurler, 2000; Elmore, 2004). The results of the implementation process for this case study provide an interesting view on each of these assumptions. The lack of coordination refers to the fact that each municipality would apply the reform differently. The results show that schools applied the reform with different angles of application, but certain angles were used by a greater percentage of schools than others. For instance, actions related to the creation of a unified students' path and action related to the improvement of teachers' cooperation were applied by more than 60% of all schools. Actions related to the creation of a unified students' environment was applied by 50% of all schools and actions related to the improvement of students' cooperation was applied 40% of all schools. These numbers shows that some perspectives of the reform were understood by a large portion of all schools, while others did not seem relevant. When looking at the specific actions of implementation, it can be noted that more than 50% of all schools applied cross-teaching. Structural changes seemed to by also popular as 24% of all comprehensive schools in 2013 were undivided schools.

The fact that certain features of the reform were more popular than others shows indeed that the reform was not implemented equally everywhere. However, the purpose of this implementation process was to make sure local authorities applied the reform with actions that they considered to be relevant for their specific contexts, which means that a lack of coordination is not considered to be a bad consequence but rather a normal aspect of educational change. Specific context can be expressed, for instance, by the size of the school and the size of the municipality. The results show an interesting difference between the implementation of the reform in schools that are undivided and schools that are divided. Indeed, among undivided schools, the use of cross-teaching is present in more than 70% of all institutions, while the use of school networks is used by 60% of all divided schools. This last result can be explained by the necessity of collaborating between schools in order to apply UBE concepts when schools are not in presence of a unified environment (physical unified school). These results show that is it important to let local institutions decide how to implement the reform, as they have different realities and different priorities.

The level of effort also appears in the results. Indeed, the reform has been applied on various levels. The results show that 4% of the schools haven't applied the reform at all, while 13% have only applied the reform according to one perspective. This shows a low level of commitment and

motivation from these schools. However, the results show that 67% of all schools applied the reform using three perspectives or more. This shows a true desire from local authorities to implement the reform effectively.

Central authorities had suggested to schools to create a unified learning environment in order to provide a unified basic education path for pupils and therefore prevent transition issues. By providing local authorities with advises and information, they created a positive response which led to the implementation of many suggested ideas from central authorities such as the use of cross-teaching, common teachers' meetings, school networks, common events, common facilities, common operational values, common principals, the elaboration of a transition plan, a common school culture, a unified pedagogy, and many more. Without imposing any of these actions, the system implemented a variety of actions to respond to the vision established by the central authority. If contributors to the hybrid implementation process indicate that the presence of a variation of implementation actions is a negative outcome of a decentralized implementation, Finland rather considers this variation to be the reflection of the diversity of local realities. The results show that even though the reform was implemented in different ways, certain features can be found in a majority of implementation methods, which shows that certain parts of the reform were understood in a similar way and similar solutions were elaborated.

This research does not evaluate the outcomes of the reform, i.e. if the changes resulted into positive outcomes, e.g. the decrease of transition issues. Therefore, I cannot measure if these different implementation methods led to different outcomes, and if these methods led to a general improvement of the initial situation.

Bargaining zone

The bargaining zone can be partially applied to the case study. Indeed, the UBE reform was in a presence of a place of collaborative work between local and central authorities. However, this place did not led to the bargaining of decision-making power and responsibilities, as these aspects are already established by the structures and values of the system and are not subject to change, even in a case of reform implementation. The bargaining zone can be understood here to be a zone of collaboration.

The zone of collaboration of the UBE reform can be considered as a great feature of the Finnish change model. Indeed, the application of development projects is a great way to promote

collaboration between actors, increase the existence of networks and consensus. It is also a great way for local authorities to obtain more support and for central authorities to participate to the implementation process and to follow the evolution of the process. The development project is a formal structure created in order to ensure the collaboration of all stakeholders. The difference between the development project and an official implementation plan is that the development project does not apply for all schools concerned by the reform, but rather applies only to a sample of them. However, it is not considered as a pilot project in this situation, because the changes were applied nationwide before the beginning of the development project. Finally, the bargaining zone also features a great flow of transmission of information coming from both the top and the bottom, and creates a feeling of collaboration without interference.

The bargaining zone, in the case of the UBE reform, differs from what is considered to be a complete bargaining zone from contributors of hybrid implementation analysis mostly because actors do not need to bargain regarding their role in the process, as it is the case in many countries (Carpentier, 2010). This is explained by the fact that Finland stays in the framework of its institutions and do not create chaos during its change process. If a zone of bargaining exists, it is located in the local level of implementation process, where all stakeholders bargain in order to decide how to implement the reform.

Summary

The Finnish method of implementation process shares certain similarities with the hybrid approach of implementation, but seems to be more influenced by a bottom-up approach. Indeed, the control of central authority is very low, but the vision of change is very clear and the provision of informative resources is very present. The main actors of implementation can be found at the local level, as they are responsible for the development of both the meaning of the change and the solutions to apply. Local institutions have a great level of autonomy and the local participants are considered to be the experts in education. They develop the implementation process by collaborating among networks and group works. The collaboration between local and central authorities take place in the development project (where all stakeholders work together in developing implementation processes), as well as in the transmission of information (where local and central authorities can discuss and exchange information). The implementation processes that have been applied represent the diversity of local realities, while implementing the vision of central

authorities. Finally, the implementation process is defined by the structures already in place and the values promoted by the system.

9. CONCLUSION

This research aimed to provide a description of the implementation process of educational change in Finland. In order to achieve this, the UBE reform was analyzed using a hybrid approach of implementation process analysis. The findings have shown that the process is highly linked to the context of the reform, mainly the values and the structures in place. In the case of the UBE reform, Finland did applied continuous changes in the frame of the structures already in place, which have increased the level of commitment and the quality of its implementation. Indeed, it seems that the reform was implemented with a high level of participation of its local actors and the local actions applied were highly similar to the actions proposed by central authorities.

The implementation process is considered to be hybrid although the role of the central authority was much smaller than prescribed and the role of local authorities was much larger than prescribed. This is a reflection of the decentralized structures already present in the system, which were respected during the implementation process. The hybrid implementation process appears mainly with the establishment of a clear vision by central authorities, and by the presence of a zone of collaboration with transmission of information coming from both local and central level. Central authorities provided support to local authorities mainly in the form of information and advices, and local authorities constructed the meaning of the reform as well as the implementation methods by working in collaboration with all local stakeholders in networks and group works.

Implementation processes were not applied uniformly in the territory and varied in terms of approaches, intensity and commitment. Some approaches were more popular than others. A greater proportion of schools applied many approaches rather than one approach or no approach at all. The Finnish system encourages local authorities to apply reforms according to their own understanding and realities, which explains the difference in implementation approaches.

9.1   Research limitations

This research finds its limits in the complexity of the object of study itself. Indeed, the study of implementation process is very complex as it is a social, organizational and political phenomenon that takes place in a specific context and involves a large quantity of actors. The data collection was a great challenge for two reasons. First, the language barrier did not allow me to have access to all available data. I have no doubt that more documentation exists in Finnish, but I was not able to proceed to an extensive documentary data collection that included a large amount of data in Finnish,

even though I increased considerably the amount of Finnish documentation towards the end, as I realized that I would not be able to have sufficient data otherwise. The second challenge related to data collection was the fact that a lot of data does not exist regarding implementation processes. Indeed, in the case of a decentralized implementation processes, the most important part of the process happens in local networks. Information regarding local implementation process might exists in Finnish in local institutions or might not even have been put into written documentation at all. It would have been impossible for me to find all this information. The second best data available regarding local implementation process was the questionnaire that was used for this research. However, the large amount of answers and the difficulty of translation made impossible for me to gather all relevant data from this questionnaire. Regarding the analysis, I have used a case study, which means that I cannot generalize the conclusions of this research. Indeed, the UBE reform analysis gives a great insight of how Finland applies change in general, but it does not demonstrates scientifically the implementation process of educational change in Finland.

9.2   Future studies

This issue could be solved by studying other implementation processes of educational change. Indeed, it would be of great interest to explore implementation process through others case study and compare the results in order to discover specific patterns of implementation processes in Finland. Another object of research that could be explored in the light of these findings would be the correlation between local collaborations between all participants and the commitment to the reform. Indeed, the findings show various levels of commitment, and previous researches suppose a correlation between participation and commitment. The data collected here did not allow me to observe such correlation, as my data related to implementation actions were not linked with data regarding the local level processes, such as the identification of participants and their level of participation.

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APPENDIX 1: Interview questions

Interview 1 and 2:

1. How did the reform go from "problem recognition" to "reform elaboration"?

   1.1 Who participated?

   1.2 What did it change in terms of legislation?

2. How was the reform introduced to local authorities?

3. Was there some guidelines/timetables/budget coming with the reform?

4. What kind of actions were taken by local authorities to apply the reform?

Interview 3:

1. In what context was this reform born? (problem/solution)

2. What was the role of the NBE in the elaboration process?

3. How did this reform affect legislations?

4. What was the role of the NBE in the implementation process?

   4.1 How did the NBE help local authorities? (support/plan/money)

5. Do you know how the reform was implemented in some cases?

Interview 4:

1. Were you part of the SEVY group?

   1.1 What did this group do?

2. Did you participate in the SIRA project or the UBE project with the NBE?

3. How did you deal with the reform in your school? (Municipality/Teachers)

4. What did it change concretely?

APPENDIX 2: Categories of content analysis – interviews

Level	Categories							
1	Finland	Finland education system				UBE		
2	**context**	**History**	**structure**	**Culture**	**Change process**	**history (before 98)**	**process (after 98)**	**Objectives**
3	Demography	Ideology continuum	Decentralization	Autonomy	Decentralization	Problem recognition	Curriculum	Pedagogy
	Structure	Reforms	National level	Trust	Progression	Ideology	Elaboration	Structure
			Local level	Accessibility	Curriculum	Local Government Act	**Implementation**	
			Municipality	Equality	Pilot	Aquarium 1994	Decentralization	
			School	Identity	Collaboration	SIRA 1997	National level	
			Teacher	Quality	Stakeholders	Stakeholders	Local Level	
				Continuity		Basic Education Act	Sensemaking	
							Application	
							Other actors	
							Results	
							UBE dev. Project	
							Evaluation	