

Evaluation of Education Reforms in Finland

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Evaluation of Education (and Innovation) Strategies in Finland

INTRODUCTION

1. Finnish Education Reforms
2. Evaluation Principles and Challenges
3. Three Cases

CASE 1: Innovation Strategy Evaluation 2009

1. Evaluation Themes, Objectives and the Evaluation Group
2. Evaluation Outcomes

CASE 2: University Reform Evaluation in 2011-12

1. Evaluation Themes, Objectives and the Evaluation Group
2. Evaluation Outcomes

CASE 3: University Reform Evaluation in 2015-16

1. Evaluation Themes, Objectives and the Evaluation Group
2. Evaluation Outcomes

INTRODUCTION



1. All Major Education Reforms must be evaluated

Comprehensive School Reform

-> Education Research Institute (ERI)

Secondary VET Reform

-> Evaluation Research by ERI

Polytechnics Reform

-> Evaluation of Polytechnics experiment
by ERI

-> Evaluation of pilot Polytechnics by
FINHEEC

Adult Education Reform (NOSTE)

- Follow-up and Evaluation Research by
the University of Joensuu (present
University of Eastern Finland)



2. Process, Principles and Challenges of the Evaluation of Education Reforms

Process and Main Principles

1. **Impact assessment of Government proposals** is an obligatory part of bill drafting process
 - Economic impact
 - Impact on public administration,
 - Environmental impact
 - Social impact
2. **Participatory follow-up during the implementation**
3. **After the reform, evaluation of achieving the outcomes and impact**

Challenges

- Assessment of long term impact
- Indicators of success / impact – Measuring quality with quantity?
- Influence on intervening variable – How to distinct?
- Influence of implementers – What universities make to reforms?
- Resilience of resistance to change
- Unexpected consequences

3. The Cases

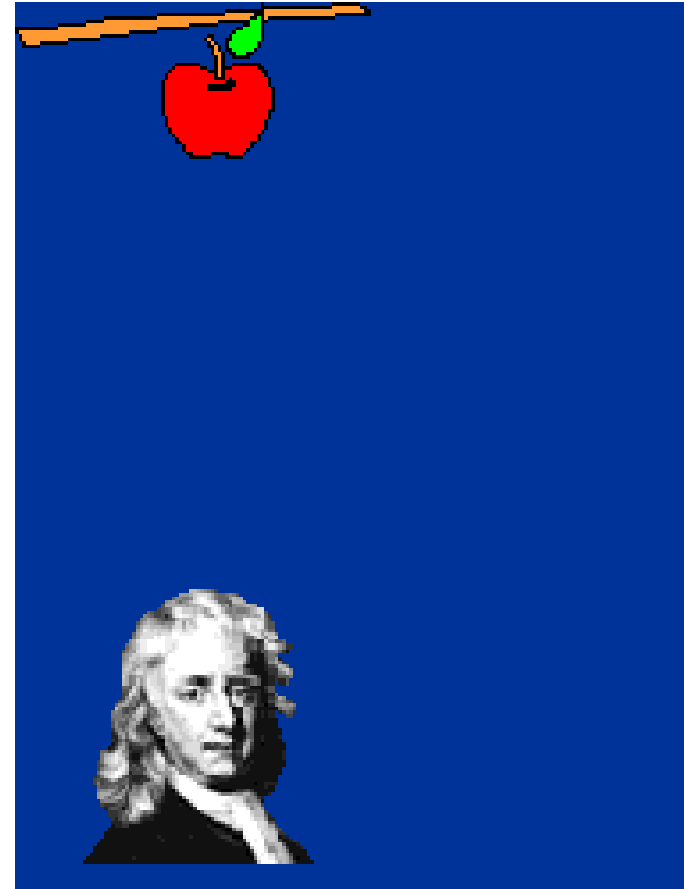
- **National Innovation strategy 2008**
 - Evaluation of National Innovation System 2009
- **University (Act) Reform 2009–12**
 - Evaluation of University Act Reform of 2011 - 2012
- **University (Act) Reform 2009–15**
 - Evaluation of University Act Reform of 2015 - 2016



CASE 1. National Innovation Strategy Evaluation in 2009

Government's Communication to the Parliament in 2008

1. Reinforcing the competence base
2. Broad-based innovation activity
3. Internationalisation
4. Strong networked innovation centres
5. Internationally competitive higher education
6. Support growth businesses
7. Strengthen demand and user orientation
8. Central Government corporate steering
9. Resources for innovation activity
10. International review of the innovation system



1.1. Evaluation Themes, Objectives and the Evaluation group

Evaluation Themes

- *Broad-Based Innovation Policy*
- *Demand- and User-Driven Innovation*
- *Globalisation and Business*
- *Growth Entrepreneurship and Finance*
- *Local Innovative Activity and Regional Productivity*
- *Education, Research and the Economy*

Evaluation Objectives

- Help to implement the National Innovation Strategy
- Provide an independent view of the innovation system

Evaluation Group

- Six international and twelve national panelists, a sounding board and a research and support team
- Each theme was evaluated by a group of one international and two national panelists

1.2. Evaluation Recommendations

Recommendations to education and public research

- Increasing the quality of research
- Streamlining the sectors to reduce fragmentation and overlapping
- Increasing internationalisation
- Tackling late graduation
- Enhancing efficient knowledge dissemination from sectors to the rest of the society

Unexpected intervening variable



CASE 2: University Act Reform 2010

Evaluation in 2011 - 2012

General Objectives of Higher Education Reforms

- Increase top international expertise
- Establish more effective higher education units
- Improve competitiveness of the higher education system
- High quality research to bolster innovation capacity of the economy



University Act Reform 2010

Evaluation in 2011 - 2012



University Reform Targets

- **New University Act**
 - Financial Autonomy
 - Professional Management
 - Legal Status
 - MoE Steering
- **Structural Development**
 - Stronger HEIs
- **Quality and Quality Assurance**
 - Qualification Reform
 - Enhancing basic and applied research
 - Internationalisation

2.1. Evaluation Themes, Objectives, Methods and the Evaluation group

Evaluation Themes and Objectives

- Success of implementation and impacts
- Main focus the impact of new legislation inside the universities
 - Internal changes in universities
 - Strategic management
 - Staff policies

Methods of Evaluation

- Interviews and questionnaires
- Content analysis of university documents on strategies and rules of procedure
- Evaluation forums
- Problems with comparability of assessment materials

Evaluation Group

- GAIA Consulting Ltd and Innovus Ltd Evaluation Team (5 external experts)

2.2. Evaluation Conclusions and Recommendations

Evaluation Outcomes

- Changes more significant in strategic management than in staff policies
- Focus mainly on administration and management than on staff policy
- Boards are smaller, with more external member, focusing more on common interest than interest groups
- Strategic management strengthened
- Department level influence decreasing
- Members of administrative bodies more satisfied, staff more critical

Critical points

- Staff influence
- Top-down management
- External expectations and autonomy
- Targeting resources
- Resources and instruments of management (Vice rectors and Deans)
- Economic autonomy and fund raising
- MoEC steering of universities

CASE 3. University Act Reform 2010

Evaluation in 2015 - 2016

General Objectives of Higher Education Reforms

- Increase top international expertise
- Establish more effective higher education units
- Improve competitiveness of the higher education system
- High quality research to bolster innovation capacity of the economy



3.1. Evaluation Targets, Objectives, Methods and the Evaluation Group

Evaluation Targets and Objectives

Evaluation Targets

- Autonomy of universities
- Financial basis
- International funding

Evaluation Objectives

- Universities' internal administration
- University – state vs. autonomy
- Steering of the MoEC
- Research and innovation system
- Objectives of the Act

Evaluation Methods and the Evaluation Group

Evaluation Methods

- Interviews of universities' management, staff, students and stakeholders
- Questionnaires to the staff and students
- International comparison

Evaluation Group

- VTT Ltd: 2 Finnish experts and a joint international / national expert group (3+3)

3.2. Evaluation Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

1. A significant structural and cultural change
2. Universities' economic and administrative autonomy have strengthened
3. Financial autonomy has increased
4. Decision-making has become more efficient
5. Interaction of Universities and the MoEC functions generally well
6. Requirements of profiling have improved

Critical Comments

1. Significant differences of view btw management and staff
2. All opportunities of the strengthened autonomy have not yet been utilised
3. MoEC finance is strongly steering
4. Decision-making has moved further away from the staff
5. MoEC steering is still too detailed
6. Reform has had little impact in making stronger and more internationally competitive HEIs

Find more information in:

<http://www.minedu.fi>

