



FINNISH EDUCATION
EVALUATION CENTRE

National education
evaluation plan

2020–2023

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Photo: Kuvitelmiä, Hanna Tarkiainen

1 The task of the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre

Operating principles and task

The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) acts as an independent expert organisation responsible for the evaluation of education and early childhood education and care. FINEEC produces evaluation-based information to support decision-making in education policy as well as the development of education and early childhood education and care. Independence refers to the freedom of third-party interest in terms of evaluation methods, organisation, results, conclusions and development recommendations. The Finnish evaluation system of education is built on trust, openness and interaction.

FINEEC's task is

- to implement evaluations related to education and early childhood education and care, and the activities of education and training providers, and higher education institutions in accordance with the education evaluation plan;
- to carry out evaluations of learning outcomes in accordance with the national core curricula and qualification requirements issued under the Basic Education Act and General Upper Secondary Schools Act, the Vocational Education and Training Act and the Act on Basic Education in the Arts;
- to education and training providers, and higher education institutions in matters concerning evaluation and quality management;
- to develop the evaluation of education; and
- to take care of other tasks that are issued or given to the FINEEC.

FINEEC, with its long-term approach to developing the evaluation system and the methods, aims to strengthen the impact of the evaluation activities and to support the organisation and continuous improvement of the evaluations. This work is carried out in close interaction with the beneficiaries and key stakeholders.

The evaluation plan and its follow-up

FINEEC's activities are guided by the national education evaluation plan, which describes the evaluation activities during the four-year evaluation plan period. The Evaluation Council appointed by the Government is responsible for preparing the evaluation plan and any changes to the plan. (The Act on the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre 1295/2013, Government decree on the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre 1317/2013.)

This evaluation plan for 2020–2023 was prepared in extensive cooperation with key stakeholders. Issues considered in preparing the plan include FINEEC building a shared national knowledge base on education, utilising previously obtained data, and information produced by other actors, and promoting the impact of the evaluation activities.

The Evaluation Council monitors the implementation of the evaluation plan and if needed draws up proposals on amendments to the evaluation plan for the Ministry of Education and Culture. The evaluation plan may be revised and supplemented during the period of its validity in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Culture. A mid-term review of the evaluation plan is carried out in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Culture. This involves discussing the completed evaluations and their results as well as any revisions, additions and specifications to the evaluation plan.

Financing

The annual costs of the evaluations conducted under the National education evaluation plan are approximately EUR 4.8 million. The costs are covered with the annual appropriation for operational expenditure, allocated to the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre in the Budget, an appropriation for development expenses, and other separate funding. FINEEC also receives funds from paid services, which are divided into performances under public law (Decree of the Ministry of Education and Culture 87/2020, Section 3) and performances under private law.

As paid services, FINEEC carries out evaluations and supports early childhood education and care providers, education and training providers, and higher education institutions in developing their quality management and evaluation activities. The different forms of paid services include learning outcomes evaluation services, commissioned evaluations and audits related to education and training, accreditations providing higher education institutions with the EUR-ACE quality label for degree programmes in engineering, and evaluations of education and training in the maritime sector. FINEEC may also carry out paid services outside of Finland.

Analyses and summaries on the state of education

The production of information depicting the national state of education and related analysis functions are strengthened at FINEEC. The aim is to produce analyses of the state of early childhood education and care, and education and training, by utilising the knowledge base comprising national evaluation and research information as well as statistical and register data. Moreover, FINEEC regularly produces and publishes summaries of evaluation results in accordance with the focus areas of its evaluation activities and concerning education offered in Swedish.

The impact of evaluation activities

The impact of FINEEC's evaluations is the result of the information and competence produced by the evaluation activities, and visible as changes in learning and competence, equality, and the functionality and continuous development of the education system. The impact of FINEEC's evaluations is multi-layered and transversal, covering the development of education and competence as well as related decision-making from the societal and education system levels to the local level. The impact of evaluation activities emerges over a long period.

On the other hand, the effects of the evaluation activities emerge already during the evaluation processes, based on the results of the projects, and FINEEC's evaluation activities on a whole. The effects of the evaluation activities include the understanding, decisions and solutions produced by the evaluation data and competence, and development measures at the national and local level. Reliable evaluation data allows making wise solutions that will produce good results in the long run. The evaluation projects also utilise enhancement-led evaluation approaches, whose effects include strengthening interaction and involvement as well as quality management among education providers.

FINEEC enhances the impacts of its evaluation activities through the use of digital evaluation systems and publication platforms, and the development of new forms of communications and interaction. FINEEC produces national analyses that utilise national statistical and knowledge bases. FINEEC also produces summaries cutting across different education levels and focus areas for different needs information. Interacting with those utilising the data and those producing evaluation and research information across administrative sectors supports producing and sharing the data.



2 Focus areas of the evaluation activities

During the evaluation plan period 2020–2023, the focus areas of the evaluation activities and the questions that these areas aim to answer are as follows:

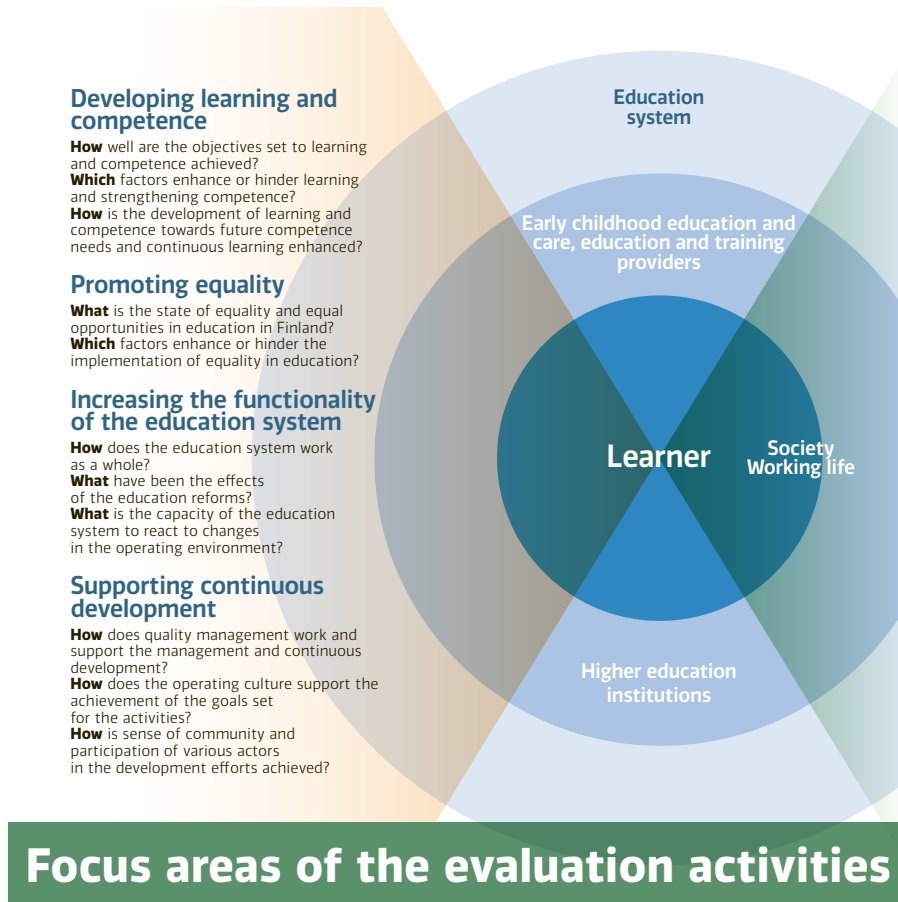


Figure 1. Focus areas of the evaluation activities, 2020–2023

3 Evaluation activities 2020–2023

This section describes the evaluation activities in the period 2020–2023 in accordance with FINEEC's focus areas. More detailed decisions on the organisation, timetables and methods of the evaluation projects will be made as the evaluation plan period proceeds. Some of the evaluations are continuation of the previous evaluation plan.

Focus area 1: Developing learning and competence

*With the focus area 1, **Developing learning and competence**, FINEEC aims to answer the following questions by producing knowledge, understanding and development recommendations:*

- *How well are the objectives set to learning and competence achieved?*
- *Which factors enhance or hinder learning and strengthening competence?*
- *How is the development of learning and competence towards future competence needs and continuous learning enhanced?*

Information will be produced for the development of learning and competence, particularly with the following evaluations:

Learning outcomes evaluations in basic education¹

The learning outcomes evaluations in basic education produce data of the level of competence in the subject and the accomplishment of equality in education. These include both individual competence evaluations carried out among pupils in grade 9 in different subjects and, increasingly often, long-term evaluations that involve following the development of competence among pupils on a longer period. The evaluations are based on the objectives defined in the national core curricula.

The learning outcomes evaluations carried out during the period of validity of the evaluation plan for 2020–2023:

1. All learning outcomes evaluation projects receive separate funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Longitudinal evaluations

The longitudinal evaluations are used to assess the development of competence among pupils and the factors affecting this at the different transition points of basic education.

- **Longitudinal evaluation of learning outcomes in basic education** (mathematics, mother tongue and literature: Finnish language and literature, Swedish language and literature, Finnish as a second language and literature, Swedish as a second language and literature), grades 3 and 6 (*evaluation of grade 1 was implemented in 2018*)

The development of the pupils' competence will continue in grade 9 and in upper secondary education during the following evaluation plan periods.

- **English** (A syllabus), grade 9 (*evaluation of grade 7 was implemented in 2018*)
- **Finska** (A syllabus and native-like syllabus), grade 9 (*evaluation of grade 6 was implemented in 2018*)
- **Small-scale longitudinal evaluation of mother tongue** (Swedish as the mother tongue) (2020)

The evaluation was carried out to determine how those pupils who participated in the evaluation of learning outcomes in mother tongue and literature at the final stage of basic education in 2014 performed in the mother tongue test of the matriculation examination three years later in 2017. In the evaluation, attention was also paid to links between the learning outcomes and the results of the matriculation examination by examining them with the help of different background variables.

For the part concerning Finnish, the results of the small-scale longitudinal evaluation of mother tongue were published at the beginning of 2020. The results of the part concerning Swedish will be published at the beginning of 2021.

Evaluations producing data on trends

The evaluations of the same subject repeated at a few year intervals among the same grade level produce comparable data on changes in competence at that grade level.

- **Mathematics**, grade 9
- **Mother tongue and literature**, grade 9 (Syllabi: Finnish language and literature, Swedish language and literature, and also the Finnish as a second language and literature syllabus as of 2023)

Other learning outcomes evaluations at the final stage of basic education

These evaluations produce data of pupils' competence and the factors influencing this at the final stage of basic education.

- **Swedish** (A and B syllabus), grade 9

Table 1. Learning outcomes evaluations in basic education, 2020–2023

	2020		2021		2022		2023	
Mother tongue and literature, grade 9								
Swedish (A and B syllabus), grade 9					Evaluation			
Mathematics, grade 9			Evaluation					
Longitudinal evaluation of learning outcomes in basic education (mathematics, mother tongue), grades 3 and 6		Evaluation grade 3						
English (A syllabus), grade 9			Evaluation					
Finska (A syllabus and native-like syllabus), grade 9			Evaluation					

The learning outcomes evaluations in basic education also produce data for the focus area of *Promoting equality*.

State and effectiveness of preparatory education and instruction in the pupil's own mother tongue (2020–2022)²

The evaluation produces national information on the current state and effectiveness of instruction preparing for basic education. It takes into account the perspectives of pre-primary education, basic education and those young people who have arrived in Finland too late to complete comprehensive school. The evaluation of the state and effectiveness of instruction of the pupil's own mother tongue looks at how the instruction has been organised. In addition, factors that promote and hinder teaching and learning will be examined. Development recommendations will be drawn up on the basis of the evaluations.

The evaluations are linked with the Right to Learn development programme implemented by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

The evaluations also produce data for the focus areas of *Promotion of equality* and *Increasing the functionality of the education system*.

Learning outcomes evaluations in vocational education and training (VET)

The evaluations of learning outcomes in vocational education and training produce data of how well students have achieved the learning objectives and vocational competence requirements set out in the qualification requirements. In addition, evaluation data is produced on the quality of education providers' pedagogical activities and on what kind of capabilities vocational education and training provides for the world of work and further studies. The objective of these evaluations is to develop education and training, support learning, and to ensure the high standard of vocational education and training. The learning outcomes evaluations are focused on vocational upper secondary qualifications, further vocational upper secondary qualifications, and specialist qualifications.

Annually, evaluations of learning outcomes in 2-3 qualifications will be launched. Pilot evaluations in accordance with the new evaluation system will be launched between 2019 and 2020 in the further vocational qualification in the transport sector, and in the vocational upper secondary qualifications in the social and health care sector and in logistics.

2. The project was added to the evaluation plan in autumn 2020. It receives separate funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Additionally, an evaluation of common units will be implemented during the evaluation plan period with an aim to produce data of the competence of students in relation to the learning objectives set out in the qualification requirements.

Learning outcomes evaluation in common units (2021–2023)

A working group of the Ministry of Education and Culture tasked to compile an action plan for making better use of vocational upper secondary qualifications and qualification certificates in student admission processes to higher education proposed that, in 2022, FINEEC should implement an evaluation of learning outcomes in vocational education and training and their relationship with the grades given to students. According to the working group, vocational education and training should pay particular attention to the uniformity of assessment and ensuring this as, unlike in the matriculation examination, the grades are not based on nationally uniform assessment. (Publications of the Ministry of Education and Culture 2017:25. *Ready for admissions II. From vocational education and training to higher education.*)

This evaluation has two potential targets:

1. The Communication and interaction competence unit's communication and interaction in mother tongue section (Finnish, Swedish, Finnish as a second language) or
2. The Mathematics and natural sciences competence unit's mathematics and application of mathematics section.

The evaluation will be focused on the students completing a vocational upper secondary qualification and will produce data of the achievement of the learning objectives determined in the qualification requirements. The evaluation will also produce data on the factors enhancing or hindering learning and strengthening competence. The evaluation also aims at discovering good practices and making recommendations for development measures.

The evaluations of learning outcomes in vocational education and training also produce data for the focus area of *Promoting equality*.

Study on the quality of knowledge and skills demonstration activities (2022)³

The quality of all VET providers will be examined as part of the development programme *Oikeus osata* ('Right to competence and skills') by evaluating the implementation of knowledge and skills demonstrations and the learning outcomes shown in the demonstrations. In addition, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of demonstrations will be examined. The report will provide information on how well the new VET legislation that entered into effect on 1 January 2018 is implemented in the demonstration activities of VET providers.

Evaluations of fields of study in higher education (2020–2023)

Evaluations in different study fields in higher education will produce an overall picture of the strengths and development areas in the examined degree programmes in relation to the competence produced by the qualifications and their relevance to working life as well as continuous learning. The evaluation will also produce information about the capacity of higher education institutions to develop the education they offer to correspond to the changing requirements for competence and the future operating environment.

Evaluations will be carried out in the fields of social and health care, and law in the period 2020–2021, and in natural resources and in the key bioeconomy sectors (agriculture, forestry, food processing and the environmental sector) in the period 2021–2022.

The state and reform of higher education pedagogy (2022–2023)

The evaluation will produce information about the current state of higher education pedagogy, for instance the pedagogical policies and operating models of higher education institutions, the role of digitalisation in teaching and learning, the internal activities for developing teaching and education, and cooperation between higher education institutions aiming at pedagogical development. Information will also be produced about supporting teachers' pedagogical competence and related incentives. The evaluation will support higher education institutions in developing and renewing higher education pedagogy. The Vision for higher education and research in 2030 and the development projects for competence in higher education pedagogy of the Ministry of Education and Culture form a background for the evaluation.

3. The project was added to the evaluation plan in spring 2022. The report will receive separate funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture

Literacy training for immigrants (2020–2021)

The responsibility for providing literacy training for adult immigrants was transferred from the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment to the administrative branch of the Ministry of Education and Culture at the beginning of 2018. Subsequently, educational institutions providing liberal adult education have been able to provide new kind of literacy training aimed at adult immigrants. The reformed adult basic education now also includes a separate unit on literacy.

The evaluation will produce information to support the planning, implementation, assessment and development of literacy training for immigrants for the educational institutions providing the training, education providers and national steering system. The evaluation focuses on the liberal adult education and basic education for adults.

The evaluation will also produce information for the focus area of *Increasing the functionality of the education system*.

Evaluation of the pedagogy of five-year-olds and the current state and development needs in education in art and practical subjects in early childhood education and care (2020–2021)⁴

The project has been commissioned by the Ministry to examine ECEC pedagogy, especially the pedagogy of five-year-olds, and the position of art and practical subjects in early childhood education and care in Finland. The objectives of the evaluation are twofold. The first objective is to produce a description of the current state to serve as a basis for the development measures for the pedagogy of five-year-olds and for how the pedagogy will be implemented. The second objective is to explore the current state of art and practical subjects in early childhood education and care. A survey including both multiple choice and open-ended questions aimed at staff in early childhood education and care (and possibly pre-primary education) will be implemented as part of the evaluation. As specified in the commissioned assignment, the experiment for providing five-year-olds with free early childhood education and care and the experiment for two-year pre-primary education must be taken into account in the report. The collection of data will partly be implemented in conjunction with the evaluation of the experiment on free early childhood education and care.

The evaluation also produces data for the focus areas of *Increasing the functionality of the education system* and *Promotion of equality*.

4. The project was added to the education evaluation plan in spring 2020. It receives separate funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture.



Photo: Kari Leo

Focus area 2: Promoting equality

With the focus area 2, **Promoting equality**, FINEEC aims to answer the following questions by producing knowledge, understanding and development recommendations:

- What is the state of equality and equal opportunities in education in Finland?
- Which factors enhance or hinder the implementation of equality in education?

In addition to the evaluations of learning outcomes in basic education and vocational education and training, the following evaluations will produce information for the focus area 2, *Promoting equality*:

Evaluation of phase 2 of the experiment for providing five-year-olds with free early childhood education and care (–2020)⁵

In the period 2018-2020, the Ministry of Education and Culture is implementing an experiment for providing five-year-olds with free early childhood education and care (ECEC). The evaluation will produce information about the achievement of the goals set for the experiment. The purpose of the evaluation is to also produce knowledge to support political decision-making and help find answers to the question of whether providing ECEC free of charge will affect children's participation in ECEC. The evaluation will also produce information about issues related to organising ECEC free of charge to support local development work.

The evaluation will also produce information for the focus area of *Increasing the functionality of the education system*.

Follow-up of phase 3 of the experiment for providing five-year-olds with free early childhood education and care (2020–2021)⁶

The project assesses how the objectives of the third phase of the experiment for providing ECEC free of charge have been achieved. The three phases of the evaluation form an evaluation continuum in which separate focus areas have been defined for each year. In the third phase of the experiment, the monitoring of

5. The project receives separate funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture.

6. The project was added to the evaluation plan in spring 2020. It receives separate funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture.

the participation rate in all age groups continues nationally and a survey aimed at guardians is conducted to find out the possible impacts the experiment may have had on the employment of the guardians of five-year-olds and on the care solutions of their younger siblings. The operating models of ECEC and the current pre-primary education are also assessed from the point of view of five-year-olds, and pedagogical solutions for the provision of free ECEC or the possible two-year pre-primary education are further discussed. The third evaluation stage provides cumulative follow-up data on participation in ECEC and on organising the experiment. The report will also contain a metasynthesis based on all three phases of the experiment regarding how the goals set for the experiment have been achieved.

The evaluation will also produce information for the focus area of *Increasing the functionality of the educational system*.

Study on the causes and background factors of differences in learning outcomes between and within the genders (2020–2021)⁷

The study produces information on the causes and background factors of the differences in learning outcomes between and within the genders. In addition, the project examines gender differences and differences in learning outcomes from the points of view of education policy, gender equality policy and employment policy.

The results of the study can be used in the development of basic education by producing information on the factors that promote or hamper the realisation of equality in education and methods that could be used to level out the impacts of these underlying factors of differences in learning outcomes. For example, the results can be used in education policy in the preparation and implementation of the objectives the Government and the Ministry of Education and Culture have set for competence and education, such as development measures promoting equality of education.

The evaluation will also produce information for the focus area of *Developing learning and competence*.

7. The project was added to the evaluation plan in spring 2020. It receives separate funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Evaluation of the distance learning pilot for Sámi languages (2022)⁸

The evaluation will provide information on the functionality of the distance learning pilot organised between 1 August 2018 and 31 August 2023 from the points of view of the education providers, schools, teachers and students. In the evaluation, the realisation of the pedagogical objectives of instruction, the functionality of the funding model and the accessibility of teaching will be examined.

Development recommendations will be drawn up for considering the continuation of the operating model.

The project will also produce information for the focus areas *Learning and competence development* and *Increasing the functionality of the educational system*.

Flexible learning pathways in higher education (–2021)

Finland participates in UNESCO's project *SDG4: Planning for Flexible Learning Pathways in Higher Education*. The project will produce international comparative data of solutions in education policy related to flexible learning pathways in different countries, the effectiveness of the solutions and their impacts on admissions to studies, progress in studies, transitions between degree programmes, graduation, and transition to working life. A joint international assessment frame will be applied in the data collection and analysis. FINEEC and the Finnish Institute for Educational Research of the University of Jyväskylä are responsible for Finland's contribution to the project.

The project will also produce information for the focus area of *Increasing the functionality of the education system*.

Students' growth into active and critical citizens in upper secondary education (2020–2021)

One of the objectives of vocational education and training and general upper secondary education is to support the students in growing into good, balanced and well-educated persons and members of society. This evaluation will produce information about the capacity of vocational education and training and general

8. The project was added to the evaluation plan in spring 2022. Separate funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture will be received for the implementation of the evaluation project.

upper secondary education to strengthen students' participation, sense of community and development of competence related to exerting an influence to enable the students to grow into active and critical citizens. The evaluation also examines the role of student organisations as part of this process.

In vocational education and training, the evaluation is focused on the students completing their vocational upper secondary qualification.

The evaluation will also produce information for the focus area of *Supporting continuous development*.

Impacts of the exceptional teaching arrangements on the realisation of equality and equity (2020–2021) ⁹

The evaluation produces information on the impacts of the state of emergency on the realisation of equality and equity of education and the functioning of the education system. The starting point for the evaluation is that every child and young person must have equal opportunities to acquire high-quality education and training regardless of their family background and place of residence. The targets of the evaluation are the impacts on learning, assessment, support, guidance and the well-being of children and young people. The evaluation produces information on both positive and negative impacts on the equality and equity of preconditions for learning. The evaluation focuses on early childhood education and care, basic education, general upper secondary education, vocational education, higher education and liberal adult education.

The evaluation will also produce information for the focus areas of *Developing learning and competence* and *Increasing the functionality of the educational system*.

Evaluation of methods that prevent bullying and improve wellbeing and the working atmosphere (2021–2022)¹⁰

The evaluation lays down the criteria and methods for assessing the functioning and effectiveness of methods that prevent bullying. In addition, a body in accordance with the development proposal of the Ministry of Education and Culture's working group on bullying will be set up to assess the methods used in early

9. The project was added to the evaluation plan in spring 2020.

10. The project receives separate funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture.

childhood education and care and basic education. The aim is to introduce the best-working and most viable methods for preventing bullying and improving wellbeing and the working atmosphere to early childhood education and care units and schools.

The evaluation will also produce information for the focus areas of *Increasing the functionality of the education system* and *Supporting continuous development*.

The Social cohesion research project (2021–2024)¹¹

Together with the Centre for Learning Analytics at the University of Turku, FINEEC participates in the Social cohesion ('Sosiaalinen yhteenkuuluvuus') research project exploring 5th-graders' and teachers' experiences of bullying and prejudices related to multiculturalism. The surveys to be conducted will also measure pupils' mathematical competence, literacy and interaction skills. The study is conducted by researchers from Aalto University and Harvard University. As part of a larger research project, the research group will also evaluate Walter ry's workshops on prejudices, which are offered to some of the schools.

Evaluation of commitment building in school communities (2021–2022)¹²

The aim of commitment building in school communities is to support pupils and school staff in preventing school dropout, promoting commitment to school attendance, mending the effects of absences and strengthening the wellbeing of the school community. FINEEC implements an evaluation project assessing the implementation and effectiveness of those projects on commitment building in school communities that receive discretionary government transfers. The evaluation will produce information for the development of a nationwide operating model for commitment building in school communities. In addition, the evaluation project will produce a proposal stating that compiling statistics on and monitoring pupils' absences at the national level should be made permanent activity.

The evaluation will also produce information for the focus area of *Supporting continuous development*.

11. External funding will be received for the project.

12. The project receives separate funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture.



Photo: Kuvitelmia, Hanna Tarkiainen

Focus area 3: Increasing the functionality of the education system

With the focus area 3, **Increasing the functionality of the education system**, FINEEC aims to answer the following questions by producing knowledge, understanding and development recommendations:

- How does the education system work as a whole?
- What have been the effects of the education reforms?
- What is the capacity of the education system to react to changes in the operating environment?

Information will be produced for the enhancement of the education system's functionality, particularly with the following evaluations:

Evaluation of the implementation of the national core curricula for pre-primary and basic education (–2020)

This evaluation involves examining how the reforms, objectives and contents of the national core curricula for pre-primary and basic education are implemented and operate in the local curricula and working approaches. The evaluation will produce information about the functionality and impact of the steering system of education, the factors affecting the achievement of the objectives of the national core curricula, and the development needs in the steering system of education and the national core curricula.

The evaluation will also produce information for the focus areas of *Developing learning and competence* and *Promoting equality*.

Immigrants' educational pathways (–2020)

In its integration programme for 2016–2019 and action plan on integration, the Government of Finland set the target of accelerating the education and employment pathways of immigrants. To implement this goal, the service system for immigrants was considerably renewed in the government term 2015–2019. Additionally, structural, legal and funding-related reforms applying to different levels of education were carried out

in the education system. The most significant of these included enhancing the flexibility of language skill requirements for vocational education and training, renewing adult basic education, and flexible literacy and Finnish language training in liberal adult education institutions. The Parliament has required for the Government to prepare a comprehensive action programme on the needs for renewing the integration measures and the implemented reforms. The action programme must be submitted as a report to the Parliament by the end of 2020.

The evaluation will produce information about the effects of the reforms of the education system on immigrants' education pathways and on whether the access to education and training, and education pathways have improved in accordance with the set goals.

The evaluation also produces data for the focus area of *Promoting equality*.

The capacity of the education system to respond to rapid structural changes (2020–2021)

The evaluation will produce information about the capacity of the education system to respond to the challenges for continuous learning in situations involving a sudden structural change. The evaluation particularly examines conversion training implemented with separate funding at different levels of education as well as vocational education and training aimed at adults as a retraining opportunity. Information is also produced on the capacity of the education system to anticipate education needs to avoid the emergence of mismatch problem of labour market in situations involving structural changes.

The evaluation will also produce information for the focus area of *Developing learning and competence*.

Differentiation in basic education (2021–2023)¹³

The national core curriculum for basic education is partly built on the pedagogy of individualisation: on the differentiation of learning, support for learning and taking diverse learners into account. The project investigates the theme through the following subprojects:

13. The project receives separate funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture.

- **Pedagogical differentiation and flexible teaching arrangements**

The evaluation will produce information on the principles, forms and functionality of pedagogical differentiation and flexible teaching arrangements from the point of view of equality of education.

- **Literature review**

In the past few years, studies and reports have already been produced on differentiation in basic education. The information produced by different parties in their research, studies and evaluations concerning differentiation at the school level in question is analysed, assessed, combined and interpreted, compiling a review that supports the development of education and training and political decision-making.

The evaluations also produce data for the focus area of *Promoting equality*.

The evaluation of the themes of differentiation will be possibly continued with assessing the flexible model for basic education (Flexible Basic Education activities). A decision on the implementation of the evaluation will be made at the halfway point of the period of validity of the evaluation plan together with the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Extending compulsory education: Evaluation of the new forms of guidance counselling¹⁴

The evaluation focuses on the new or enhanced forms of guidance counselling brought about by the extension of compulsory education. It will cover the continuum of guidance counselling from basic education up to the study guidance following the completion of an upper secondary qualification. The evaluation will cover basic education, basic education for adults, preparatory education for upper secondary education (TUVA), liberal adult education, vocational education and training (VET) and general upper secondary education.

Phase 1 of the evaluation (2022–2023): The evaluation will focus on the implementation of guidance and counselling as a whole, support of the completion of an upper secondary qualification and the resources of guidance. An interim report on the results will be published in early 2023.

Phase 2 (2023–2024): The evaluation will focus especially on the rates of completing a qualification, prevention of drops-outs (effectiveness), and the role of enhancing guidance counselling and well-being in the promotion of the objectives of extending compulsory education.

14. The project was added to the evaluation plan in spring 2022. The evaluation will receive separate funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture.

The evaluation will also produce information for the focus area of *Supporting continuous development*.

Evaluation of the key projects for higher education (2021–2023)¹⁵

During the last government term, the Ministry of Education and Culture granted project funding for the development of higher education (EUR 65 million in total) and teacher education (EUR 27.7 million in total).

The Ministry of Education and Culture will examine the impacts and effectiveness of the development activities through an evaluation carried out by the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC). The aim is to obtain a broad situation picture and evaluate the functionality of the development model and the impacts of the results and operating models on higher education.

The evaluation will also produce information for the focus area of *Supporting continuous development*.

Evaluations concerning early childhood education and care reforms:

The current state, strengths and development areas in the management of early childhood education and care (2020–2023)¹⁶

The Act on Early Childhood Education was renewed in 2018. In connection with adopting the Act, the Parliament issued a requirement that the Government must monitor and evaluate the effects of the legislative reform. The evaluation produces information about the management of early childhood education and care and its connection with prioritising the best interests of the child and implementing equality in municipal and private early childhood education and care services. More detailed evaluation targets include the local management systems for early childhood education and care, the management of pedagogy, working hour structures, child group structures, and assessment and development structures.

The evaluation will also produce information for the focus areas of *Developing learning and competence* and *Promoting equality*.

15. The project was added to the evaluation plan in spring 2022. The evaluation project will receive separate funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture for the period 15 December 2021–30 August 2023.

16. The project receives separate funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Evaluation of education in the ECEC sector (2022–2023)

The evaluation of education in the early childhood education sector is timely as major changes have occurred in the steering system. The evaluation will produce information about development needs in the contents of education and training providing eligibility for teaching, management, education and care positions in early childhood education and care. The evaluation also investigates whether the quality of the education for early childhood education and care instructors and other personnel is consistent at the regional level. The evaluation examines education in the early childhood education and care provided by universities, universities of applied sciences and vocational institutions.

The evaluation will also produce information for the focus area of *Developing learning and competence*.

Evaluation concerning the general upper secondary education reforms:

The state of general upper secondary education (2020–2024)

General upper secondary education has been, and will be, subject to many changes, including the General Upper Secondary Schools Act and General Upper Secondary Schools Decree, which entered into force in 2019, and the new national core curricula and matriculation examination reform. These education policy reforms will also increase the need for evaluating the changing activities and their impacts. There is need for current information about, for instance, general upper secondary schools as a learning and working environment and as part of the education system, and also information about how well the general upper secondary education does in serving the needs of individuals and the society. The evaluation of the state of general upper secondary education is focused on the following themes:

- **Evaluation of the experiment for the distribution of lesson hours in general upper secondary education (2020–2021)¹⁷**

In autumn 2016, the Ministry of Education and Culture launched an experiment for the distribution of lesson hours. The aim of the experiment was to gain experiences of the functionality of a distribution that is based on more optionality and more individual choices of studies than before and to produce information for developing the distribution of lesson hours in general upper secondary education. The experiment focuses on

17. The project receives separate funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture.

general upper secondary education for young people and subjects in the humanities and natural sciences. Twenty-eight upper secondary schools with a total of 6,495 students who had started their studies in 2016 and 2017 were selected to the experiment. The current evaluation mainly focuses on the students who started general upper secondary education in 2017.

To improve the distribution of lesson hours, evaluation data will be produced on the impacts of the experiment on the subjects chosen and, subsequently, on general knowledge and ability, the tests chosen in the matriculation examination and performance in the examination. In addition, the evaluation is aimed at obtaining information on the implementation of the experiment and its impacts on the position of staff in upper secondary schools of different sizes and with different operating cultures. The evaluation also examines students' and staff's experiences of the experiment, and students', staff's and stakeholders' views of how the distribution of lesson hours should be developed in the future. This way, information is also obtained on how the core tasks of general upper secondary education, i.e. strengthening transversal general knowledge and ability, the educational task and providing students with capabilities for further studies have been implemented in the experiment.

- **Evaluation of the implementation of the renewals of the General Upper Secondary Schools Act (2021–2024)**

The aim of the key renewals of the General Upper Secondary Schools Act that entered into force in 2019 was to strengthen the support for learning, well-being, and guidance counselling in general upper secondary education. A further goal was to develop teaching and to promote transversal competence, the internationality and cooperation with higher education institutions, working life and other education providers in general upper secondary education. As a result, the significance of guidance is highlighted in general upper secondary school education, in addition to which students' international competence, and working life and entrepreneurial skills must be supported. The evaluation will provide information about factors promoting and preventing the achievement of the goals set for the renewals. In connection with the evaluation, the implementation of the renewals will be monitored and good practices related to their implementation will be collected.

The evaluation of the state of general upper secondary education also produces data for the focus area of *Promoting equality*.

Evaluations concerning the vocational education and training reform

Working life orientation and cooperation in vocational education and training (2021–2022)

The renewed vocational education and training puts emphasis on the working life orientation of the education and training and the significance of work-based learning. The planning and organisation of the education and training as well as anticipation of competence needs must be carried out in cooperation with the working life and the business community. The vocational education and training reform aimed at intensifying the interaction between education and training and the working life to better ensure that the education offered and development services correspond to the needs for change at workplaces and in the business community.

The evaluation is focused on the working life orientation of vocational education and training and the processes and practices related to cooperation with workplaces. The evaluation will produce information about the implementation of education and training organised at workplaces, the approaches used in the implementation, and the functionality and impacts of the education and training. Information on the structures and forms of the cooperation between education providers and workplaces, and their functionality and development needs will also be produced.

The evaluation will also produce information for the focus area of *Developing learning and competence*.

Individual learning pathways in vocational education and training (2020–2022)

Vocational education and training aims at increasing a student-centred approach, individual studies, and flexibility. Emphasising identification and recognition of prior learning has allowed shifting the focus of the education and training on acquiring the missing competence. For instance, cooperation between education providers has been increased to enhance students' opportunities for choices and better flexibility of studies. The evaluation is focused on the realisation of individual learning pathways. The evaluation will produce information on the functionality of the practices related to the personalisation, identification and recognition of prior learning as well as guidance, and students' opportunities for choices.

The provision of special support in vocational education and training is assessed as part of the evaluation of individual learning pathways. The evaluation will particularly produce information about the arrangements

made for special support and their functionality, including identifying needs for support, the forms of support and guidance, the availability and accessibility of support, and the practices for adjusting assessment and making exceptions to qualification requirements.

The evaluation also produces data for the focus area of *Promoting equality*.

Overall evaluation of the qualification system of vocational education and training (2022–2023)

The qualification system of vocational education and training was renewed as part of the vocational education and training reform. The current qualifications are more transversal than before and some qualifications included in the previous qualification structure, at times highly narrow, were abandoned. The reform involved including competence from the previous qualifications to the new qualifications based on the needs of the working life. The qualifications provide a more extensive range of opportunities for choosing to direct one's competence according to individual and working life needs.

The overall evaluation of the qualification system of vocational education and training will produce information about the functionality of the qualification system from the perspectives of both individual and working life needs. The evaluation involves examination of the entire qualification system and its actors, including the Ministry of Education and Culture, Finnish National Agency for Education and Working Life Committees, and aims at answering questions such as whether the qualification structure is developed flexibly according to the needs and whether the process for preparing and updating the qualification requirements is appropriate.

The evaluation will also produce information for the focus area of *Developing learning and competence*.

In addition, between 2022 and 2023, FINEEC will produce information on the functionality of the transition point between upper secondary and higher education and the ability of the education system to provide young people with an education and flexible transitions from upper secondary to higher education. For example, it will do this by using analyses of the national evaluation data produced during the evaluation plan period, studies and reports focusing on the reform of admission criteria in higher education and the availability of higher education, and statistical and register data on matters such as student flows.

Focus area 4: Supporting continuous development

With the focus area 4, **Supporting continuous development**, FINEEC aims to answer the following questions by producing knowledge, understanding and development recommendations:

- How does quality management work and support management and continuous development?
- How does the operating culture support the achievement of the goals set for the activities?
- How is sense of community and participation of various actors in the development efforts achieved?

FINEEC supports early childhood education and care providers, education and training providers, and higher education institutions in their efforts to continuously develop their activities. In its evaluations, FINEEC takes into account the principles of enhancement-led evaluation and ensures that evaluation targets are supported in the development of their activities throughout the evaluation process. FINEEC also supports early childhood education and care providers, education and training providers, and higher education institutions in questions related to evaluation and quality management, for instance, by organising events that provide support for quality management.

Information will be produced for the focus area 4, *Supporting continuous development*, particularly with the following evaluations:

Developing quality management support for early childhood education and care and supporting ECEC providers (–2023)¹⁸

The project will continue to systematically develop the evaluation of the quality of early childhood education and care at both the national and local level. During the project, a national quality assessment system will be created for early childhood education and care, and quality assessment tools will be prepared to support local evaluation. The digitally implemented quality assessment system and the accompanying assessment tools will produce evaluation and monitoring data for the systematic and long-term development of early childhood education and care. Moreover, FINEEC will train and support early childhood education and care pro-

18. The project receives separate funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture.

viders and private service providers in implementing their self-assessment tasks and quality management.

The evaluation will also produce information for the focus area of *Increasing the functionality of the education system*.

Evaluation of the quality management systems of vocational education and training providers (–2022)

The evaluation produces information about the state of the quality management systems of vocational education and training providers. The aim of the evaluation is also to support and encourage education and training providers in the continuous development of their quality management endeavours. An evaluation model and criteria for quality management systems developed for the evaluation will be tested in the period 2019–2020.

The evaluation will also produce information for the focus area of *Increasing the functionality of the education system*.

Audits of higher education institutions (–2023)

The third cycle of audits of higher education institutions is currently underway in Finland (2018–2024). The audit assesses the functionality and effectiveness of the quality systems of higher education institutions (HEIs). The focus of the audit is on the procedures used by the HEI to maintain and enhance the quality of its activities. The audit covers the core duties of higher education institutions.

The purpose of the audit is

- to evaluate whether the quality work in the HEI meets the European quality assurance standards,
- to assess whether the quality system produces relevant information for the implementation of the strategy and the continuous development of the HEI's activities, and whether it results in effective enhancement activities,

- to encourage internationalisation, experimenting and a creative atmosphere at HEIs, and
- to accumulate open and transparent information on quality work at Finnish HEIs.

The audits of an estimated 29 higher education institutions will be carried out during the evaluation plan period 2020–2023.

Analyses of the national state of HEI activities will be carried out based on the audits. The analyses may cover, for instance, the following themes:

- Planning, implementation and development of education (incl. the competence-based education and working life relevance),
- Student-centred approach and promotion of students' well-being,
- Quality management of research, RDI activities and artistic activities,
- Societal impact and the mechanisms of societal engagement,
- Quality system and strategic management,
- Operating culture and sense of community,
- Support for the development of staff competence and well-being.

The audits will also produce information for the focus area of *Increasing the functionality of the education system*.

During the plan period, preparations will be made to reform the system of audits and evaluation of higher education.



Photo: Kuvitelmia, Hanna Tarkiainen

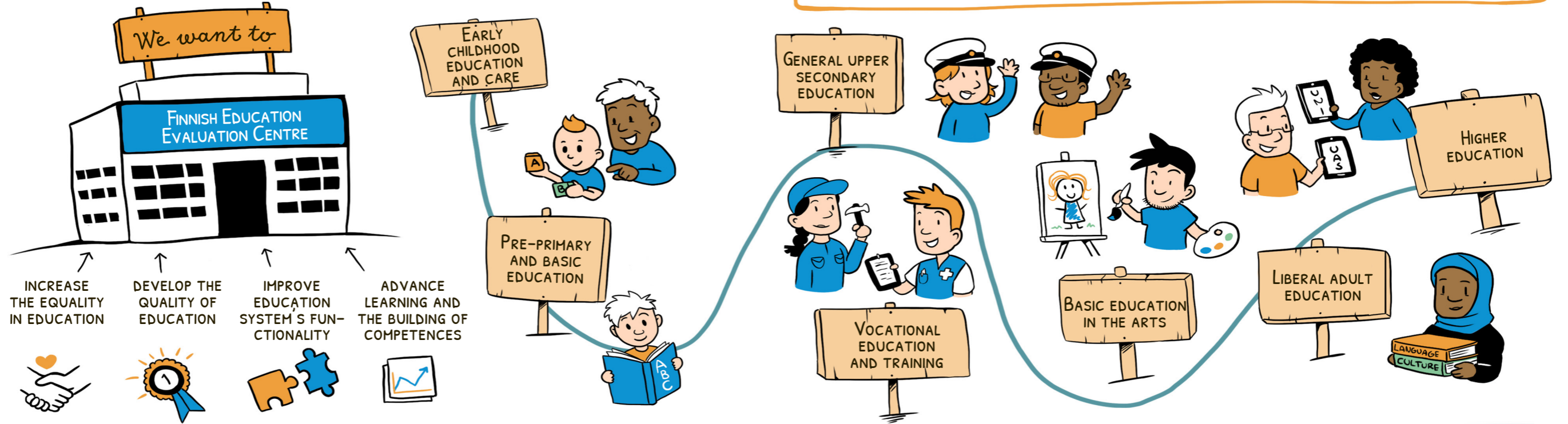
Appendix: Summary of evaluation projects in 2020–2023

Evaluations	2020	2021	2022	2023
Early childhood education and care				
Evaluation of phase 2 of the experiment for providing five-year-olds with free ECEC				
Quality management support for early childhood education and care providers				
The current state, strengths and development areas in the management of early childhood education and care				
Evaluation of the pedagogy of five-year-olds and the current state and development needs in education in art and practical subjects in early childhood education and care				
Follow-up of phase 3 of the experiment for providing five-year-olds with free early childhood education and care				
General education				
Longitudinal evaluation of learning outcomes in basic education (mathematics, mother tongue), grades 3 and 6				
Evaluation of learning outcomes in basic education: Swedish (A and B syllabus), grade 9				
Evaluation of learning outcomes in basic education: Mother tongue and literature (FIN, SWE, also Finnish as a second language and literature as of 2023), grade 9				
Small-scale longitudinal evaluation of mother tongue (Swedish as the mother tongue)				
Evaluation of learning outcomes in basic education: Mathematics, grade 9				
Evaluation of learning outcomes in basic education: English (A syllabus), grade 9				
Evaluation of learning outcomes in basic education: Finska (A syllabus and native-like syllabus), grade 9				
Evaluation of the implementation of the national core curricula for pre-primary and basic education				
Differentiation in basic education				
Study on the causes and background factors of differences in learning outcomes between and within the genders				
State and effectiveness of preparatory education and instruction in the pupil's own mother tongue				
Evaluation of methods that prevent bullying and improve wellbeing and the working atmosphere				
The Social cohesion research project				
Evaluation of commitment building in school communities				

Evaluations	2020	2021	2022	2023
The state of general upper secondary education				
Evaluation of the distance learning pilot for Sámi languages				
Vocational education and training				
Evaluation of the quality management systems of vocational education and training providers				
Evaluations of learning outcomes in vocational education and training				
Learning outcomes evaluation in common units				
Working life orientation and cooperation in vocational education and training				
Individual learning pathways in vocational education and training				
Overall evaluation of the qualification system of vocational education and training				
Report on the quality of knowledge and skills demonstration activities				
Higher education				
Evaluations of fields of study in higher education: social and health care				
Evaluations of fields of study in higher education: law				
Evaluations of fields of study in higher education: natural sciences and the key bioeconomy sectors: agriculture, forestry, food processing and the environment				
The state and reform of higher education pedagogy				
Flexible learning pathways in higher education				
Audits of higher education institutions				
Evaluation of the key projects for higher education				
Liberal adult education				
Literacy training for immigrants				
Evaluations cutting across the levels of education				
Immigrants' educational pathways				
The capacity of the education system to respond to rapid structural changes				
Evaluation of education in the ECEC sector				
Students' growth into active and critical citizens in upper secondary education				
Impacts of the exceptional teaching arrangements on the realisation of equality and equity				
Extending compulsory education: Evaluation of the new forms of guidance counselling				



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