

# Foresight and Effective Evaluation 2020

## The Strategy of Finnish Education Evaluation Centre

### Premise for the strategy

The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) is an independent government agency responsible for the national evaluation of education. FINEEC operates in the administrative branch of the Ministry of Education and Culture and it started its operations on 1 May 2014. FINEEC was established by combining the evaluation activities of the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council, the Finnish Education Evaluation Council and the Finnish National Board of Education into one, internationally unique evaluation agency that covers the entire educational system.

The aim of FINEEC is to implement evaluations related to education as well as the operations of education providers and higher education institutions (later 'education providers'). The evaluation activities cover early childhood education, pre-primary and basic education, general upper secondary education, vocational education, liberal adult education, art education, adult education and higher education. Evaluation activities may also be implemented across different educational levels. Moreover, FINEEC supports education providers in evaluation and quality management, as well as develops the evaluation of education. Provisions on the duties and the organisation of FINEEC are enacted in act [1295/2013](#) and Government decree on the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre [1317/2013](#).

The objective of the evaluations is to support the development of education and learning as well as guarantee the quality of education. A further objective is to produce evidence-based evaluation information that can be utilised in the local, regional and nationwide decision-making processes regarding education; in development activities; as well as international comparison. Based on the evaluation information, analysis may be made concerning the impact of educational policy decisions. Moreover, evaluation information may be utilised to produce information about learners' learning path as well as various transition phases.

The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre implements evaluation projects as set out in the Education Evaluation Plan confirmed by the Ministry of Education and Culture for years 2016–2019. FINEEC may also conduct other evaluations, which are in line with its strategic focus areas regarding evaluation, in order to meet evaluation needs that arise during the current evaluation plan period. FINEEC also conducts evaluations as fee-based service.

The key operating principles of FINEEC are:

- expertise
- evaluations are conducted independent of external parties
- enhancement-led evaluation

- evaluation principles are published
- stakeholders are heard
- evaluation results are published and spread
- impact of evaluation is improved
- internationality
- own operations are subject to regular external evaluation

The work of FINEEC is supported by the Evaluation Council appointed by the Government, the Higher Education Evaluation Committee appointed by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Other committees and advisory boards can also be established.

## **Operating environment**

The Finnish society has a strong background regarding competence and skills. Education is for the most part free of charge, and it combines high-level competence, equality and efficiency. By international comparison, Finland's educational level is high and the learning outcomes are good. However, recent studies have shown that the learning outcomes have declined. In order to reverse this trend, we need to find solutions also with the help of evaluation.

In the global redistribution of work, Finland specialises in operations and tasks that require know-how and creativity. Reform generated by innovation is the basis for making the Finnish economy more versatile. The society is differentiating and becoming more unequal. The values and ways of life are changing, and unity is dissolving. Finland has become ever more multicultural. The population is ageing and work-based immigration is necessary to fulfil the need for labour, in particular in the service sector, healthcare and caretaking.

Finland is shifting to a digital service economy. The industrial internet, robotisation, big data, open data, cloud services, 3D printing and other technologies have a deep impact on the formation of people's knowledge, skills and attitudes, their image of the world and social actions. Digital technologies offer an opportunity to enhance education, research and innovation and make these more significant to people and the society.

The changes in the operating environment concerning education and learning form great challenges to the educational system and the content of education. As the age cohorts become smaller and the population and the need for labour concentrates in growth centres, it is necessary to respectively redirect and rescale educational offering. The halt in the improvement of the population's educational level, Finland remaining below the comparison countries in the comparison of educational levels, the decline in learning outcomes and ever greater effect social background has on educational and learning levels are examples of phenomena that require actions and evidence-based evaluation information to provide background information on them. Equality regarding education in the different parts of the country is a significant challenge. Financial adjustment measures and savings requirements concern also education.

As a whole, changes in the operating environment have an ever stronger impact on the evaluation activities of education. That is why it is necessary for FINEEC to analyse the operating environment of education and learning and its changes with systematic methods.

## Vision

Finland develops education based on the versatile and up-to-date evaluation information produced by the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre.

## Mission

FINEEC is a nationally significant and internationally desired evaluation partner in the field of education and an inspiring developer that produces evidence-based evaluation information that has an impact on the development of education.

## Operating principles

FINEEC develops, experiments, reforms, involves, and serves.

## Service promises

Reliability – We base our evaluation activities on objectively collected data

Equality – We treat education providers equally in our evaluation activities

Transparency – We act openly and make our operating principles and practices transparent

Reform – We reform and inspire our partners to reform

## FINEEC's scorecard

<p><b>Processes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improving the efficiency of evaluation processes</li> <li>Improving communication on and usability of evaluation results</li> <li>Standardising electronic evaluation environments</li> <li>Improving the data management of evaluation activities</li> <li>Continuous analysis of the operating environment concerning education and learning</li> <li>Strengthening partnership relations</li> </ul>	<p><b>Results and impact of evaluations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development and reform of the educational system</li> <li>Development of the quality of learning and competence</li> <li>Improvement in the operations of educational organisations</li> <li>Utilisation of evidence-based evaluation information in decision-making concerning education</li> </ul>
<p><b>Resources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Securing budget funding</li> <li>Increasing external funding</li> <li>Ensuring cost-efficiency</li> <li>Developing HR processes</li> <li>Appropriate sizing of personnel structure and volume</li> </ul>	<p><b>Competence and reform</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good reputation as an employer</li> <li>Ensuring competence</li> <li>Learning and well-being community</li> <li>Development of methods</li> <li>Strengthened internationalisation</li> </ul>

## Strategic goals

- *Accuracy*: We succeed in selecting the evaluation targets.
- *Impact*: The evidence-based evaluation information we produce is utilised in decision-making and development at different levels of the educational system. Based on the evaluation information, improvements are made to learners' learning path.
- *Efficiency*: Our evaluation processes are streamlined, and the operations are profitable.
- *Competence of personnel*: Our personnel is competent and its well-being is a priority. We maintain a positive atmosphere and encourage each other.
- *Reputation*: We are a well-known and respected evaluation organisation both nationally and internationally.
- *Development*: We act as the centre of expertise for evaluation. We support education providers in matters pertaining to evaluation and quality management. We actively spread information regarding good practices as well as offer new types of forums for development.

## Critical success factors

- Forecasting changes in the operating environment and the accuracy and timeliness of the evaluation targets based on the analysis
- Successful recruitment of personnel and evaluators as well as continuous development of competence
- Allocating funds so that they enhance the impact of evaluations
- FINEEC's organisation model supports learning and development across different educational levels
- Timing evaluations and developing processes so that the evidence-based evaluation information produced is up-to-date and useful
- Reporting and communicating the evaluation results to the beneficiaries in a versatile, timely and clear manner
- Successful external communication

## Focus areas regarding evaluation

FINEEC's evaluation activities have four strategic focus areas that are determined on the one hand by the analysis of the changes in the national and international operating environment and on the other hand by foresight and effective evaluation:

1. *Developing learning and competence with evaluation*. Evaluations implemented with different enhancement-led methods aim at improving learning outcomes and competence at all educational levels in both official language groups.
2. *Functionality and development of the educational system*. Evaluation activities that cover all educational levels provide information on the functionality of the entire educational system and policy. The evidence-based evaluation information forms a basis for development work.

Evaluations are also targeted at the educational level boundaries and various transition phases.

3. *Themes which are central and critical in the society.* Evaluations are targeted at societally important and critical themes. Based on an analysis of the changes in the operating environment, significant development targets in education which are not included in the Evaluation Plan may be raised for evaluation.
4. *Supporting education providers in quality management and in strengthening an operating culture based on enhancement-led evaluation.* FINEEC supports education providers in developing quality management by evaluating their quality systems and producing information on good practices in quality management and development, as well as by spreading the information across different educational levels. Moreover, FINEEC supports schools, educational institutions and higher education institutions in utilising national evaluations and self-evaluations as well as in strengthening the enhancement-led evaluation approach.

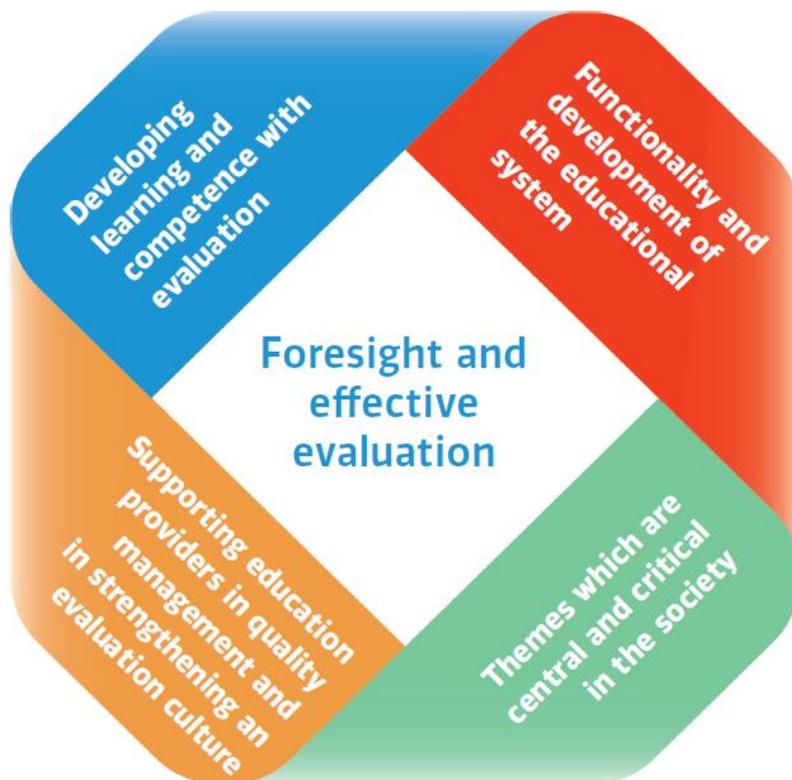


Figure 1. Strategic focus areas of FINEEC's evaluation activities

### **Partnerships that support the strategy**

Partnerships that support FINEEC's strategy are divided into four categories:

1. *Strategic partners* with which FINEEC carries out joint evaluation and/or development projects, simultaneously developing its evaluation processes and evaluation methodology. FINEEC

primarily participates in such national and international cooperation that produces added value to the development of the quality of education and learning as well as the Finnish educational system.

2. *Tactical partners*, such as evaluators and education providers that FINEEC involves in the planning and implementation of evaluation as well as the utilisation of evaluation results.
3. *Stakeholders* that FINEEC hears to in order to find out and analyse national evaluation needs, with which FINEEC discusses the utilisation and impact of evidence-based evaluation information as well as aims to secure sufficient financial resources for the evaluation activities.
4. *Domestic and international networks* that are central for evaluation activities and in which FINEEC is actively involved. Being active in the networks strengthens the visibility of Finnish evaluation activities and enables influencing the development of European evaluation activities.