



Video: "Why Finland Has The Best Education System In The World"

A segment on the approach to education in Finland taken from "Where To Invade Next" by Michael Moore.



Read the transcript. Underline the words you don't know. Watch the video and read along with the transcript.

MICHAEL: So here's what happened. Back in the day, Finland schools sucked, on the level that ours suck on. When they tested the world's kids, both Finland and us were usually about the same, you know, somewhere down the list of Nations. But Finland didn't like that, so they tried some new ideas, and in no time, Finland shot to the top of the world. Their students were number one. How did they do that? That was the one question I wanted an answer to and I went straight to see the enemies Minister of Education. Before I could say anything, she blurted out their top secret.

KRISTA: They do not have homework.

MICHAEL: Wait, so you reduce the homework you give them in school?

KRISTA: Yes, they should have more time to be kids, to be youngsters, to, to enjoy the life.

MICHAEL: How many hours of homework did you get last night?

STUDENT: Um, about 10 minutes or something.

MICHAEL: Ten minutes of homework?

STUDENT: Yeah.

STUDENT: Maybe 15 minutes or 20 minutes.

STUDENT: 20 minutes. Well, about 20 minutes.

STUDENT: Well, if I would have gotten homework, uh, I think it would be, like, 10 minutes, tops.

STUDENT: Usually I don't really do homework that much.

PASI: The whole term, "homework," is kind of obsolete, I think. In that way...

MICHAEL: Homework is obsolete?

PASI: Yeah. In that way that these kids they have a lot other things to do after school.

MICHAEL: Like what?

PASI: Like, like, being together, like being with the family, like doing sports, like playing music, like reading.

MICHAEL: So they have no homework. What if all they want to do is climb a tree?

ANNA: They could climb a tree. Yeah. They can come climb a tree, then they learn how to climb a tree. But they'll end up, while climbing the tree, probably finding out about different insects, and they can come to the school next day (and) tell me about what they **found**.

MICHAEL: Compared to the older kids, how many hours a day do the younger ones go to school?

ANNA: Um, Mondays, three hours. Tuesdays, four hours. It **varies**. It's 20 hours a week.

MICHAEL: So they're... Oh, man. Now, does this three or four hours at school include the lunch hour?

ANNA: Yes.

MICHAEL: How are they learning anything? How are you getting anything done?

LEENA: Your brain has to, it has to **relax** every now and then. If you just **constantly** work work work, then you stop learning, and there's no use of doing that for a longer **period** of time.

MICHAEL: Finland students have the shortest school days and the shortest school years in the entire Western world. They do better by going to school less.

MICHAEL: How many languages do you speak?

STUDENT: English, yeah, Swedish, Spanish.

STUDENT: Finnish and Swedish.

STUDENT: Finnish, English and German.

STUDENT: French, German.

STUDENT: Finnish and English.

STUDENT: English.

STUDENT: Swedish and French and Spanish.
MICHAEL: So, you're an exchange Student in the US?
STUDENT: Yeah.
MICHAEL: When you got back here in school, what did you notice that you felt relieved about?
STUDENT: Uh, no more multiple choice exams. They...
MICHAEL: No multiple choice, exams here?
STUDENT: Or very few of them, if any. 'Cuz all of my exams in the US...
MICHAEL: How do you answer the question right if it isn't listed as one of the four choices?
STUDENT: You write your answer.
STUDENT: You have to know it.
MICHAEL: You actually have to know it!
STUDENT: Yeah.
MICHAEL: But there was one thing I heard over and over again from the Finns. It was that America should stop teaching to a standardized test.
FACULTY: Get rid of those standardized tests.
FACULTY: National testing.
FACULTY: Standardized tests.
FACULTY: Standardized testings.
FACULTY: What you are teaching your students is to do well on those tests and you're not really teaching them anything.
MICHAEL: No, we are teaching them. We're teaching them how to flunk a test and then a bunch of schools fail the test and those schools are turned into charter schools, and then somebody makes a lot of money.
TEACHER: But school is about finding your happiness, finding what, you know, finding a way to learn what makes you happy.
MICHAEL: They figured out about one-third of the school time the students are in school, is spent preparing for the standardized test. And, so, they've **eliminated** a lot of things that aren't on the test. So, music is gone. Art is gone. Poetry is gone.
FACULTY: Art is gone?
MICHAEL: Yeah, in many schools.
MICHAEL: Civics isn't even on the test. So, now schools are dropping civics.
PASI: Really?

MICHAEL: Yes, civics. American civics.
PASI: Okay, unbelievable!
MICHAEL: We got rid of poetry.
KRISTA: Really?
MICHAEL: Yeah. yeah.
KRISTA: Why?
MICHAEL: It's a waste of time. When are they every going to learn... When are they ever going to speak as poets when they're **adults**? How does that help them get a **job**?
FACULTY: We try to teach them everything that they need so that they could actually use their brain as well as they can, including PE, including arts, including music, anything that can actually make (the) brain work better.
FACULTY: The children need to be baking, they should be singing, they should be doing art and going on nature walks and doing all these things, because there's this very short time that they're allowed to be children.
MICHAEL: If you don't have standardized tests here in Finland, how do you know which schools are the best? And, you know, people need a list.
KRISTA: The neighborhood school is the best school. It is not different that than the school which can be, for example, situated in the town center, because all the schools in Finland, they are all equal.
FACULTY: When we move to a new city, we never ask where the best school is. It's never a question.
FACULTY: So, nobody has to shop for schools.
FACULTY: There's nothing different in any of our schools. They're all the same.
MICHAEL: It is **illegal** in Finland to set up a school and charge tuition. That's why, for the most part, private schools don't exist. And what that means is that the rich parents have to make sure that the public schools are great. And by making the 'rich kids' go to school with everyone else, they grow up with those 'other kids' as friends. And when they become wealthy adults, they have to think twice before they screw them over.
MEGHAN: In the United States, education is a business. They're **corporations** making money. Here, it's so student-centered that when we had

to redo our playground, they had the architects come in and talk to the kids.

MICHAEL: Were they listened to?

MEGHAN: Yes, yes. There are things on our playgrounds that the students really wanted.

STUDENT: (..) here is more independent.

STUDENT: We're treated more like adults than in the United States.

STUDENT: Yeah.

STUDENT: I mean we don't need a hall pass to go to the bathroom during class.

STUDENT: Yeah.

FACULTY: We'll see students commuting on the subway, even as young as seven and eight, going on their own to school.

MEGHAN: When I started doing teacher training practice back in the US, I was in these certain neighborhoods teaching these kids and telling them you can be anything you want to be when you grow up. This is kind of a lie. And when I came to Finland, a lot of my teaching is based on what the kids want and what they see for their future. So, it doesn't feel so false to say, "you can really be whatever you want to be when you grow up," because they're making it happen already. They already have such power.

MICHAEL: That's upsetting to think about that.

That our kids don't have that. That's really beautiful.

PASI S.: It's not that we have figured out something that nobody else has done in education. That's wrong. Many of these things that have made Finland perform well in education are **initially** American ideas.

FACULTY: We try to teach them to think for themselves and to be critical to what they're learning.

FACULTY: We try to teach them to be happy person. To be respect others and respect yourself.

MICHAEL: You're concerned with their happiness?

FACULTY: Oh yeah.

MICHAEL: What the hell do you teach?

FACULTY: I teach math.

MICHAEL: So the math teacher says, the first thing out of your mouth of what you wanted

these students to get out of school was to, was to be happy, have a happy life.

FACULTY: Yep.

MICHAEL: And you're the math teacher?

FACULTY: Yeah.

LEENA: When do they have their time to play and socialize with their friends and grow as human beings? 'Cuz there's so much more life around than just school.

MICHAEL: You want them to play?

LEENA: I want, I want children to play.

MICHAEL: And that was the **principle**.

MICHAEL: I'm planting the American flag right here in the middle of your school and claiming this great idea for us.

LEENA: Thanks for stealing it!

MICHAEL: Yeah! that's, that's how we roll.



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Academic Word List vocabulary (gap fill)

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initially	job	adults	eliminated	found	relax

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ANNA: Um, Mondays, three hours. Tuesdays, four hours. It _____. It's 20 hours a week.
3. Your brain has to, it has to _____ every now and then.
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6. When are they ever going to speak as poets when they're _____? How does that help them get a _____?
7. It is _____ in Finland to set up a school and charge tuition. That's why, for the most part, private schools don't exist.
8. In the United States, education is a business. They're _____ making money. Here, it's so student-centered that when we had to redo our playground, they had the architects come in and talk to the kids.
9. It's not that we have figured out something that nobody else has done in education. That's wrong. Many of these things that have made Finland perform well in education are _____ American ideas.
10. LEENA: When do they have their time to play and socialize with their friends and grow as human beings? 'Cuz there's so much more life around than just school. MICHAEL: You want them to play? LEENA: I want, I want children to play. MICHAEL: And that was the _____.