

The background is a whiteboard with children's drawings and letters. On the left, there are drawings of a fox, a squirrel, and a bird. In the center, there are drawings of a squirrel and a bird. On the right, there are drawings of a squirrel and a bird. The letters 'Ss', 'Uu', 'Ll', and 'Ee' are written in blue and red on the whiteboard.

Advocacy for Teachers' Working Conditions and Well-being

Regional Peer-learning Workshop on Teaching Excellence-
Empowering Educators, 17-20 September 2024, Helsinki

Special advisor Sara Simberg

OAJ Legal and Working Life Services

The trade Union of Education OAJ advocates for better working conditions for teachers on many levels



We influence political decisions and the legislation process



We help members with questions and challenges of working life through counseling and legal advice



We negotiate working conditions in matters related to wellbeing at work



We train occupational health and safety representatives, shop stewards and managers and support them in all issues related to wellbeing at work



We raise teachers' awareness of their rights and responsibilities in matters regarding occupational safety and health and empower them to exercise their rights to a safe and sound working environment



We provide our members with tools and knowledge to improve their well-being at work



We collaborate with universities, The Finnish Institute for Occupational Health, The National Center for Occupational Safety and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration in research- and development projects aiming to improve teachers' working conditions in collaboration



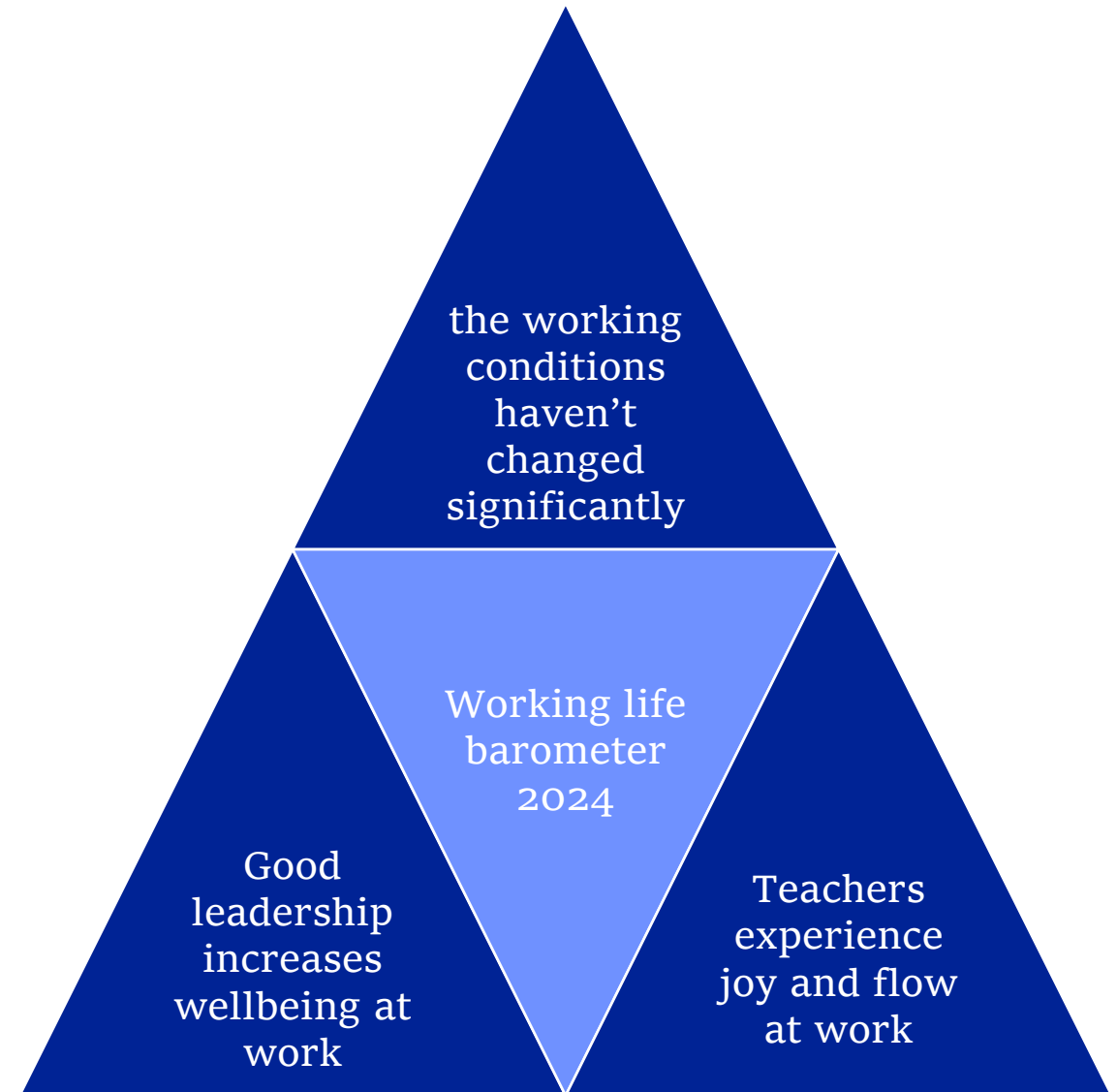
We have a fund that finances projects aiming to improve working conditions and wellbeing at work

OAJ's working life barometer survey

- The OAJ working life barometer survey is carried out every two years since 2013
- The most recent survey was carried out in November 2023 with more than 1400 respondents from various institutions across Finland, including early childhood education, primary and secondary schools, universities, vocational schools and universities of applied sciences
 - The results were published in August 2024

Key results:

- In general the working conditions have remained the same over a longer period
- Two out of three teachers have a strong sense of work satisfaction and flow
- High quality leadership correlates with wellbeing at work as well as ability to work
- The teacher's work week is 40,5 hrs and the manager's 42,9 hrs on average



The psychosocial workload is heavy

- Three out of five respondents reported that they have too much work
- Two out of five experienced work related stress
- One in five experienced serious and persistent offensive conduct or harassment
- One in ten experienced violence at work
 - One out of three teachers in early childhood education experienced violence at work!

Psychosocial stress factors	2024	2021
Too much work	3,2	3,3
Work related stress	3,2	3,3
Interruptions at work	3,9	3,9
Conflicting expectations hampering work	3,2	3,1

Likert scale 1-5

Teachers rate their own work ability on average 7,8/10. This has remained unchanged since 2021

Two out of three experience joy and flow at work

- Teachers like their work and feel appreciated in society
- Nine out of ten feel that they can use their skills and knowledge in their work
- There were some gender-related differences
 - Female respondents felt more often that the workload is unfairly distributed
 - Female respondents reported fewer possibilities to influence their own work

Work satisfaction and mastery	2024	2021
Work satisfaction	3,7	3,7
Work enthusiasm	3,8	3,7
Enjoying immersing oneself in work	3,8	3,8
Able to use skills and knowledge at work	4,4	4,4
Able to influence own workload	3,0	2,9

Likert 1-5

Work-related joy and flow is a significant resource that should be put to good use (but not abused)

Teachers have strong intrinsic motivation.



A lot of wellbeing and work satisfaction can be achieved by not interfering with the teachers professional ethos, allowing them to focus on the nucleus of their profession: teaching and learning.

Quality leadership is essential for job satisfaction and wellbeing

Good leadership correlates with a decrease in sick leaves

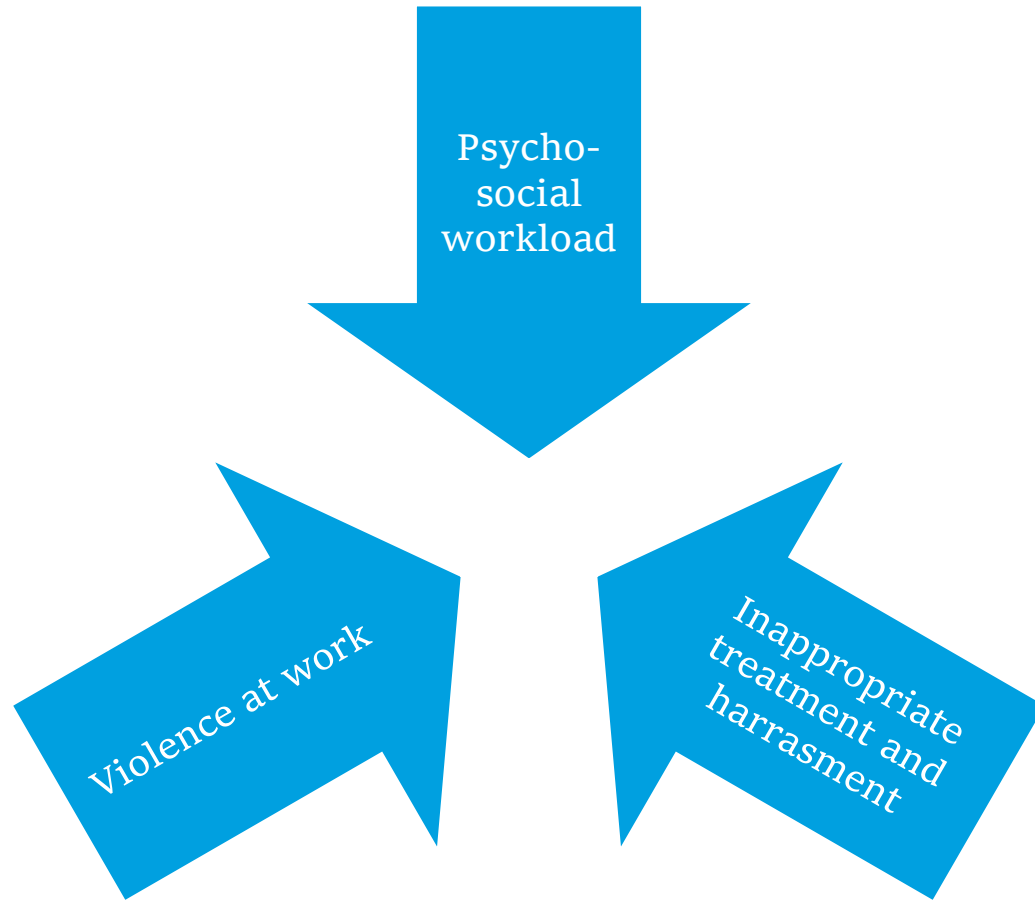


This results in better quality and teaching/learning outcomes as well as a decrease in costs



Education providers should invest in good leadership for cost effectiveness as well as job satisfaction

The most critical working conditions that need improvement to ensure teacher well-being and retention



- Improvement of working conditions and work environment
- Preventive measures
- Awareness, motivation and skills to reinforce the teachers' right to integrity

Teachers' psycho-social workload

a constant need
to be alert

high quality
requirements

information
overload

frequent
interruptions

high levels of
responsibility

challenging
interactions

too high
workload

unreasonably
tight deadlines

inappropriate
work equipment
or working
conditions

unreasonable
targets or
responsibilities

high demands
on interaction
skills

poor
communication

lack of support
from
management

Inappropriate
treatment or
harassment

threat of
violence

Violence against teachers

Statistically, staff in the education and teaching sectors are more likely to be threatened with violence than the average employee

(At least) one in ten has experienced violence at work

One in three teachers in early childhood education has experienced violence at work in

- Threats
- Intimidation
- Pushing
- Hitting
- Biting
- Clawing
- Kicking
- Being trapped
- Throwing things...

Prevention of violence in school is crucial

Zero tolerance towards violence

Awareness and reinforcement of teachers right to integrity

Written instructions, training and practice in how to act and de-escalate threatening situations -> builds confidence and trust

Enough staff with appropriate training

Safe learning and teaching environments – physically and psychologically

Support from leader

Co-operation with parents and the authorities (child protection services, police...)

Every learner gets the support that they need, in a suitable group, with enough resources and professionals with the right training

We need an attitude adjustment inside and outside of schools

There should be no conflict between **the teachers right to integrity** and **the childs/students right to a safe and sound learning environment**

These are actually interdependent!

The problems have to be fixed where they started

It is unreasonable to expect teachers to fix problems that are caused by society and political decisions

Teachers didn't cause the stress and violence at work and they can't be expected to just deal with it or fix it on their own

We need better legislation, more resources for prevention, better child protection services, and better support for mental health in primary health care

And of course enough teachers and other professionals with appropriate training in schools and outside of them

What strategies are effective in promoting teacher well-being and preventing burnout, especially with growing demands on the profession?



Investing in good leadership



Teacher training that matches the demands of our modern working life and changing conditions in the society and education systems

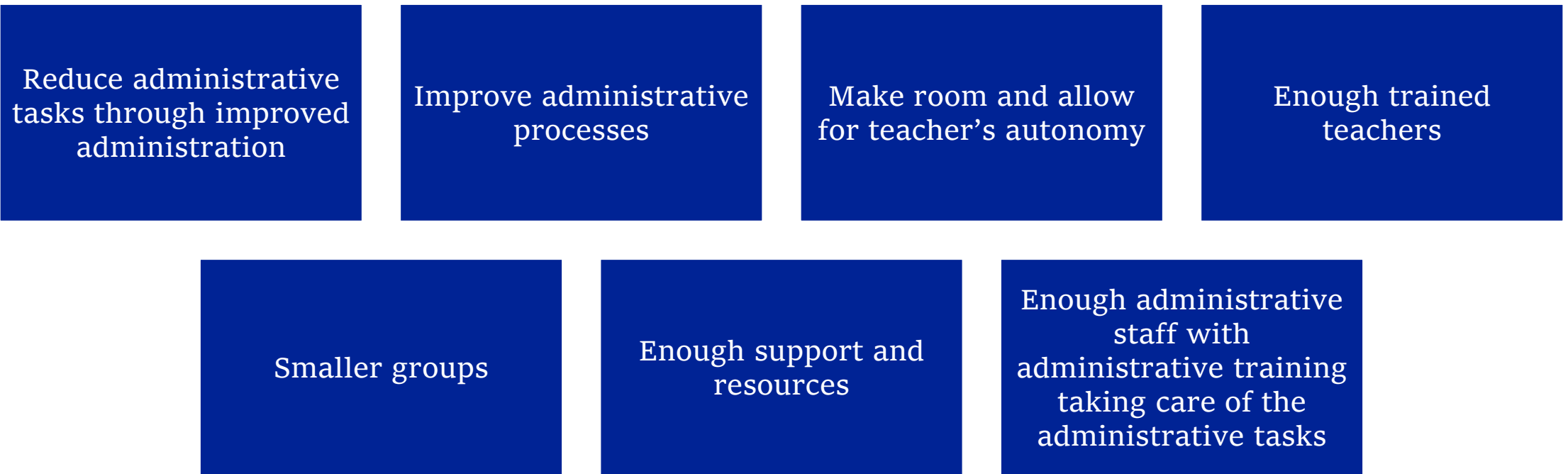


Balance between professional autonomy, teamwork and support at work (for example mentoring)



Allowing teachers to focus on teaching and using their skills in a meaningful way

How can education systems reduce teacher workload and ensure teachers focus on student learning and well-being, rather than administrative tasks?



Conclusions

Teachers have too many responsibilities of which many have nothing to do with teaching



Teachers stay happy and healthy when they are allowed to focus on the thing they do best



Which is actually teaching!

A photograph of children's hands reaching up in a circle, overlaid with a blue tint. The hands are in various positions, some open and some with fingers spread. The background shows colorful patterns, possibly from a rug or wall paper.

Thank you!



Challenges in Teacher Recruitment and Retention

Regional Peer-learning Workshop on Teaching Excellence –
Empowering Educators

Laura Nurminen

Development Manager, Labour Market Advocacy, OAJ

What are the primary factors contributing to teacher shortages, and how can these challenges be addressed both in the short and long term?

- In Finland there's (only) shortage of qualified
 - Special education (class) teachers
 - Early childhood teachers
 - Subject teachers in maths
 - Substitute teachers
- Salary is not high enough (especially in early childhood education) compared to other Master's degree careers
- Psycho-social workload
- Some rural areas/municipalities in Finland have very low birthrate and they lack services – those areas are not tempting to move to for young professionals
- (in the future, I fear, bad reputation of some schools)



What should be done? OAJ's proposals

- National teacher registry ● ●
- Universities should offer additional degree places in educational sciences ●
 - OAJ's lobbying has been successful in adding new places, but not enough ●
- Pay raise programme in collective agreements ●
- Conditions for teaching must be improved ●
 - Matter of money
 - Smaller groups – focus on teaching
 - Up-to-date teaching materials
 - Resources for special education and pupils who need special support



OAJ's proposal: National teacher registry

The teacher registry could be an important tool for the development of teacher education and the teaching profession in Finland.

- 1. Targeting the right number of teachers for the right fields:** The teacher registry helps determine the correct number of starting places for teacher education and ensures that every learner receives instruction from a qualified teacher at all educational levels¹².
- 2. Supporting decision-making:** Reliable and up-to-date information on the number and qualifications of teachers is essential for updating education legislation and conducting impact assessments.
- 3. Developing teacher education:** Universities can use the information from the registry to develop teacher degree and continuing education programs to better meet actual needs.
- 4. Facilitating recruitment:** Employers can check applicants' qualifications directly from the registry and find the qualified teachers they need, making the recruitment process easier.
- 5. Strengthening the attractiveness of the teaching profession:** Making teacher qualifications visible through the registry encourages teachers to obtain qualifications and develop their skills, helping to maintain the attractiveness of the teaching profession in the future



What key challenges exist in teacher recruitment, and what strategies have been successful in attracting new teachers, particularly in regions or subjects facing severe shortages?

What policies and incentives make the teaching profession more attractive to new entrants and experienced professionals considering leaving?



- We don't have severe shortage (yet) ●
- Good starting salary for newcomers ●
- Pay raises for the experienced ●
- Recruitment bonuses ●
 - E.g. competition for early childhood teachers in capital city area ●
- Possibilities for in-service training and further studies and continuing education during working hours ●
- Mentoring for newcomers and work time + salary for it ●
- Career programs that would take into consideration different phases of work path
 - E.g. lower teaching load at the beginning and at the end



How does public perception of the teaching profession impact recruitment and retention, and how can the societal status of teachers be improved?



Attractiveness of teacher profession

- Teachers are on top 5 professions
- Teaching profession is still highly valued in Finland, but...
 - negative coverage in media (sometimes)
 - low salary compared to other Master's degree careers
 - not enough resources from government or municipalities
“it's easy to talk the talk – but where's the money”
 - parents' attitudes and expectations have changed
 - teachers say that they can no longer concentrate on teaching



OAJ's campaign to promote teacher profession

“Shaping futures”

“Thank you, teachers”

“Teachers' workload seems to be increasing year by year and it is not reflected in the salary. We need peace for teaching and learning so that we can carry children and young people forward.”

- class teacher, basic education



OAJ

Opettajien työmäärä tuntuu lisääntyvän vuosi vuodelta, ja palkassa työmme arvostus ei näy. Tarvitaan rauhaa työlle ja oppimiselle, jotta voimme kantaa lapsia ja nuoria eteenpäin.

Jussi
luokanopettaja

Korvaamattomasta työstä on aika saada kunnon korvaus. Opettajien tehtävä on tulevaisuuden kokoinen.

TEHDÄÄNTULEVAISUUKSIA.FI

Did it work?

- All campaigns increased the appreciation of teachers' work
- Those who saw the advertising valued the teachers more in every measurement than those who had not seen the advertising, so all campaigns can be said to have worked well.
- The opinion of OAJ was also improved in many respects from the initial situation, and men in particular considered the work of OAJ more important than when the measurements began.

How to increase motivation to apply to teacher studies and stay in the business?



**Million
Dollar
Question!**

- Politicians: "Education must be valued and protected"
 - easy talk – harder to actually achieve
 - securing ample funding for education is highly important
- Positive media coverage, success stories from schools
 - the meaningfulness of teaching should be valued
- There are still many applicants to class teacher studies, but the content of the studies should be revised to better correlate with the realities of schools
- OAJ advocates the meaning and impact of education to society
 - education promotes economic growth and innovations
 - education is the best form of integration
 - education and language proficiency promote employment
- <https://www.oaj.fi/en/our-goals/>



Thank you!

- If you wish to have more info or further discuss the matter, please, do not hesitate to contact!

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**Tutustu ja seuraa: oaj.fi & opettaja.fi
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Professional Development and Career Progression

Päivi Lyhykäinen

Special Advisor

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How does the country support teachers' professional development and career progression?

- The teachers' **collective agreement includes** a provision for **three days** of planning and in-service training during working hours. Usually, two of these days are spent on semester planning and one on in-service training.
- The government has **annually supported the in-service training of teaching staff with approximately 15 million euros**, but now the government has decided to cut the funding, and it will not be available in the future.

In Finland, the legislation does not require teachers to undergo continuing education.

However, the OAJ aims to have the right and obligation to undergo in-service training written into law.

Teachers can request the opportunity to participate in in-service training from the principal. Access to training depends on the financial situation of the municipality and the school. The problem with in-service training is hiring substitutes and covering accommodation and travel expenses.

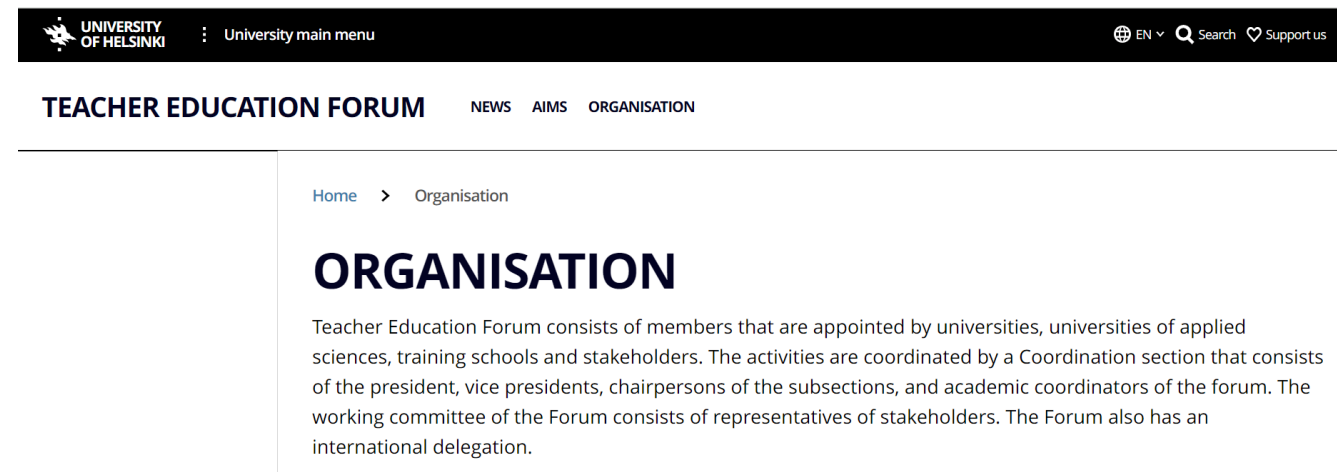


What models of continuous professional development are proving most effective in supporting teachers throughout their careers?

- OAJ's goal is that there will be a clear thread in the development of teachers' skills, from initial teacher education to early career support and continuous professional development throughout their careers.
- OAJ recommends long-term, research-based in-service training.
- It would be important to **organize in-service training according to regional needs for teachers at different educational levels**, so that the trainer would come to the region to provide training and teachers would not have to travel.
- OAJ considers that it is important that **teachers can also choose their training based on their own interests.**

How can mentorship and leadership opportunities be integrated into teachers' career development, ensuring professional growth and enhancing school culture?

- Any teacher who has completed teacher education can take the educational administration qualification offered by the Finnish National Agency for Education.
- **Teacher Education Forum** is working to ensure that significantly more leadership studies are offered in all basic teacher education programs.



The screenshot shows the website for the Teacher Education Forum at the University of Helsinki. The header includes the university logo and name, a main menu, and navigation options for language (EN), search, and support. The main navigation bar lists 'TEACHER EDUCATION FORUM', 'NEWS', 'AIMS', and 'ORGANISATION'. The current page is 'ORGANISATION', with a breadcrumb trail 'Home > Organisation'. The main heading is 'ORGANISATION', followed by a paragraph describing the forum's structure: 'Teacher Education Forum consists of members that are appointed by universities, universities of applied sciences, training schools and stakeholders. The activities are coordinated by a Coordination section that consists of the president, vice presidents, chairpersons of the subsections, and academic coordinators of the forum. The working committee of the Forum consists of representatives of stakeholders. The Forum also has an international delegation.'

About mentoring

- OAJ has demanded two-year mentoring for newly qualified teachers to be written into law.
- OAJ negotiated a provision in the municipal primary teachers' collective agreement that allows teaching hours to be exchanged for mentoring, both for **educated mentors** and newly graduated teachers.



About mentoring

Nordic Teacher Induction

Sustainable Ecosystems of Mentoring for Newly Qualified Teachers



- The OAJ is part of a Nordic mentoring network that includes a university researcher and a representative from the teachers' union. We share best practices in mentoring and simultaneously conduct research on the topic.

How can education systems create flexible and attractive career pathways that allow teachers to advance without leaving the classroom?

- Between 2016 and 2019, the government supported **the tutor teacher model** with €33.8 million.
- **The tutor teacher model** means that another educated teacher is present in the classroom as a co-teacher, allowing both the teacher and students to learn new things about a specific subject area.
- The government supported the tutor teacher model, but since then, the model has only existed in municipalities that have the financial means for it.
- We have a **co-teaching system** where there are two or three teachers in the classroom during lessons. They plan the lessons together and assess the students jointly. That needs financing.



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