

Travelling is learning (Kusafiri ni kujifunza)

In September 2024 University of Oulu (UOULU) and University of Eastern Finland (UEF) had the pleasure to host 9 physical education professionals from Tanzania. The visit was a part of The Global Innovation Network for Teaching and Learning (GINTL) collaboration between Finnish and Tanzanian (UDSM & SUZA) universities. During the visit our partners from Tanzania had the opportunity to visit several schools and experience events and sports in Oulu and in Joensuu. Building trust and rapport was also important for the ongoing cooperation that the EPEP project will bring. Below are the most memorable and important findings from the travelling group from their visit to Finland and deep dive to Finnish education system.

Sauna

One of the most memorable experiences for many was Finnish sauna tradition. As our group described - the Finns have truly mastered the art of relaxation. At first, your body feels energized, then your mind unwinds, and ultimately, you emerge completely refreshed. The mix of relaxation and socializing was also experienced as a reminder of the importance of unwinding and connecting with others.

Finnish Nature

Nature in Finland also made a lasting impression to your group. We had the chance to experience nature in Joensuu and in Koli. Finland's deep connection to nature was seen as strong and incredible. Outdoor learning is a common practice in Finland which was seen as force fostering resilience and personal growth. The Finnish belief that nature itself is a powerful teacher is something which was seen as deeply inspiring.

Sports

Finland impressed the group with its excellent sports infrastructure. The way sports are taught to children in Finland was seen as remarkable - children are enjoying every moment. It's not just about competition, but also very strongly about the joy of movement. The schools have all the necessary equipment for teaching and learning things, including physical education. This, for sure, is not the case everywhere in the world. Physical education is not just about athletic skills. It also fosters overall well-being and promotes a love of physical activity that lasts a lifetime.

Finnish Schools

The group from Tanzania was surprised of the fact that the Finnish government provides school lunch to all students regardless of their home backgrounds. The chance to enjoy school meals for free is excellent! All other services at schools are provided without any discrimination. The group explored and learned about the local education system, which left some at awe of how much the community values fostering a love of learning. Finland places such high respect on educators, and their training emphasizes creativity, collaboration and critical thinking. All the innovative use of technology in education was seen as impressive.

The Chance for International Mobility

Of course, Finland did not appear to be a wonderland. Despite the excellent conditions, the level of physical activity among children and young people is low, and Finland does not do well in international sport either. Another surprise was the increase in mental health problems among children and young people. How is this possible in such wonderful circumstances, where basic needs are within the reach of so many?

The possibility of international mobility opens up new perspectives. Travelling helps you understand differences and see what is valuable. Many of the authors of this text found that they learned much more than they expected. To gain new experiences, memories and lessons for oneself, it is necessary to leave familiar behind and set off on a journey. At their best, experiences from around the world can shape both personal and professional lives and increase the desire to work towards a sustainable future.

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