

## THE PROFICIENCY OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION INSTRUCTORS IN FINLAND

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### ABSTRACT

This scientific article explores the competence of Physical Education (PE) teachers in Finland, examining the educational system, professional development, and the impact of these factors on the quality of PE instruction. Finland's education system is renowned for its excellence, and understanding the competence of PE teachers within this context provides valuable insights into the factors contributing to the success of physical education in the country. The study draws upon existing literature, educational policies, and interviews with PE educators to analyze the multifaceted dimensions of teacher competence.

**Keywords:** physical education, teacher competence, Finland, professional development, pedagogical approaches and teacher training.

Physical education plays a vital role in the holistic development of students, fostering not only physical fitness but also promoting mental well-being and social skills. Finland, known for its exemplary education system, places a significant emphasis on the competence of its physical education teachers. This article delves into the various aspects of the competence of physical education teachers in Finland, exploring the qualifications, training, and ongoing professional development that contribute to their effectiveness in promoting a healthy and active lifestyle among students.

The professional competence of physical education teachers encompasses a range of skills, knowledge, and attributes that are essential for effective teaching in the field. Here are some key components:

➤ **Subject Matter Knowledge:** Physical education teachers must have a deep understanding of the principles and theories related to physical education, sports, exercise physiology, biomechanics, and health. This knowledge forms the basis for designing and implementing effective lessons.

➤ **Teaching Skills:** Effective teaching requires the ability to communicate clearly, demonstrate proper techniques, and engage students in learning. Physical

education teachers should be skilled in instructional strategies that cater to diverse learning styles, creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment.

➤ **Pedagogical Competence:** Pedagogical skills involve the ability to plan, organize, and deliver lessons effectively. This includes creating age-appropriate lesson plans, using appropriate teaching methodologies, and integrating technology and innovative teaching techniques.

➤ **Assessment and Evaluation:** Physical education teachers need to design fair and comprehensive assessments to measure students' progress in physical activities. This could include skill assessments, fitness testing, and other evaluation methods to provide constructive feedback to students and parents.

➤ **Classroom Management:** Maintaining discipline and managing a class effectively is crucial in any teaching environment. Physical education teachers should have strategies for handling behavior issues, ensuring safety during activities, and creating a positive and inclusive atmosphere.

➤ **Adaptability:** The ability to adapt to different learning environments, student abilities, and changing circumstances is important. Physical education teachers should be flexible and able to modify lessons to meet the needs of diverse student populations.

➤ **Interpersonal Skills:** Building positive relationships with students, colleagues, and parents is key to creating a supportive learning community. Effective communication and interpersonal skills are vital for collaboration and fostering a positive and motivating atmosphere.

➤ **Professional Development:** Staying updated on the latest research, trends, and developments in physical education is essential. Engaging in continuous professional development helps teachers enhance their skills and stay informed about best practices in the field.

➤ **Ethical and Professional Conduct:** Physical education teachers should uphold high standards of ethical and professional conduct. This includes demonstrating integrity, respecting diversity, and maintaining confidentiality in their interactions with students, colleagues, and parents.

➤ **Health and Safety Awareness:** Ensuring the safety of students during physical activities is paramount. Teachers should be well-versed in safety protocols, first aid, and emergency procedures to respond appropriately to any unforeseen situations.

In Finland, the competence of physical education teachers begins with a solid foundation in education and subject-specific knowledge. Physical education teachers typically hold a Master's degree in Education, specializing in physical education or a related field. The stringent educational requirements ensure that teachers possess a comprehensive understanding of pedagogy, child development, and the specific requirements of teaching physical education.

Teacher training in Finland is renowned for its rigorous and practical approach. Prospective physical education teachers undergo intensive training programs that incorporate both theoretical knowledge and hands-on experience. These programs focus not only on teaching methods but also on understanding the importance of physical activity in the overall well-being of students. The emphasis is on creating an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages all students to participate in physical activities regardless of their skill level or background.

One distinctive feature of physical education in Finland is its integration into the broader framework of holistic education. Physical education teachers are trained to view their role not only as instructors in sports and fitness but also as promoters of overall well-being. This includes fostering positive attitudes towards physical activity, nutrition, mental health, and the development of social skills. The curriculum is designed to address the physical, emotional, and social dimensions of students' lives, promoting a balanced and healthy lifestyle.

The commitment to competence does not end with initial training; Finland places a strong emphasis on continuous professional development for physical education teachers. Teachers are encouraged to participate in workshops, seminars, and conferences to stay updated on the latest research, teaching methodologies, and advancements in the field of physical education. This commitment to ongoing learning ensures that teachers remain at the forefront of their profession, incorporating innovative and evidence-based practices into their teaching.

Physical education teachers in Finland benefit from a collaborative and supportive professional community. Networking opportunities, both locally and nationally, provide a platform for teachers to share experiences, exchange ideas, and collaborate on enhancing the quality of physical education across the country. This collaborative approach fosters a sense of community and shared responsibility for the well-being of students.

In summary, the professional competence of physical education teachers encompasses a combination of content knowledge, teaching skills, interpersonal abilities, and a commitment to ongoing professional development and ethical conduct. The competence of physical education teachers in Finland is a result of a comprehensive and holistic approach to teacher training and professional development. By prioritizing a combination of rigorous education, practical training, and ongoing learning, Finland ensures that its physical education teachers are well-equipped to nurture a culture of physical activity and well-being among students. The success of this approach is reflected in Finland's consistently high educational outcomes and the overall health and fitness levels of its student population.

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