

**INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON CONTINUING EDUCATION
IN THE DEPENDENCE FIELD**

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Country Report: **Finland**

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Public education in Finland

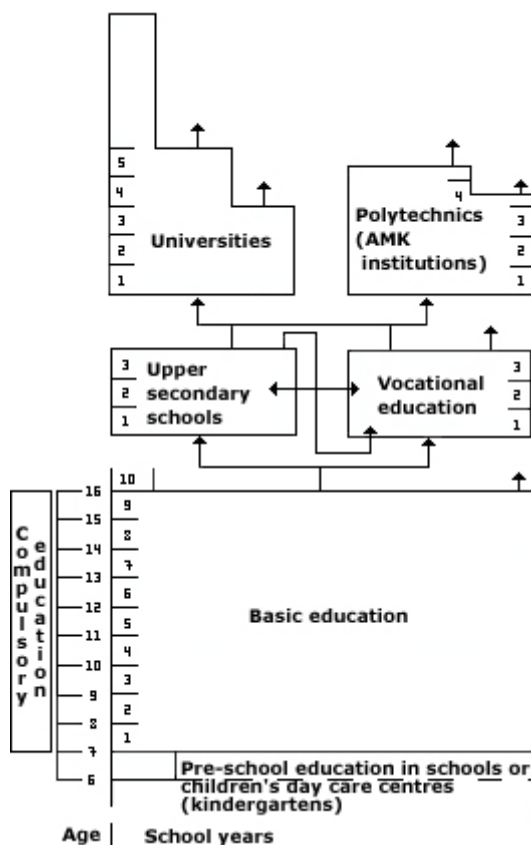
The Ministry of Education is responsible for public education in Finland. The National Board of Education supports the Ministry of Education in its work, in part through the development of educational objectives, contents and methods, as well preparation and adoption of the core curricula and evaluation of learning results.

Education is compulsory for everyone in Finland. This means that all children above the age of 7 must take nine years of basic education or acquire an equivalent education. It is possible to continue by going either to an upper secondary school or to a school-level vocational institute, and then on to a polytechnic, or university.

The attached chart outlines the stages and ages of the education system.

The Education System of Finland

Education System Chart



Different professions and continuing education in the dependence field

Substance abuse services are provided by municipal, governmental and private institutions. In order to ensure the quality of these services and make the work interesting to the professionals the employers give high priority to continuous education. Unfortunately, only medical doctors have a well structured education program in drug abuse and addiction field (**Certification in addiction medicine**). Other professionals (i.e. nurses and social workers) do not have a profession specific continuing educational programme. Some of the educational activities provided by the Society of Addiction Medicine have interdisciplinary character and are attended by various professionals. In addition to that training activities outside the field of medicine are sporadic, mainly organized by professional organizations in nursing, education, social work or psychology.

In polytechnics institutions nurses and social workers can obtain a **Further Qualification in Substance Abuse Welfare Work** or as a part of **Specialist Qualification in Psychiatric Care** take modules in alcohol and substance abuse care.

Specialist Qualification in Psychiatric Care consists of three obligatory models (Basic processes in psychiatric care; Acute and crisis intervention; and Alcohol and drug treatment). In addition two additional modules must be chosen (Psychiatric rehabilitation; Psychogeriatric care; Child and adolescent psychiatric care; or Family and network care)

CERTIFICATION IN ADDICTION MEDICINE

The Finnish Medical Association introduced in 1994 a credentialing programme that assures the public that the holder has the pre-requisite knowledge competence to practice in that particular field within the confines of his/her medical license. Addiction medicine was one of the first specialities to be acknowledged as an entity overlapping various medical specialities. So far 69 medical doctors have received the national certification in addiction medicine.

The Finnish Society of Addiction Medicine was established in 1979 to provide high quality educational opportunities for physicians working in the dependence field. The number of active practicing physicians in addiction field has grown dramatically in the following decades. The Finnish Medical Association has delegated the responsibility for organising the practical educational activities to the Finnish Society of Addiction Medicine.

Certification board

The Society of Addiction Medicine nominates a board of specialists for three years at a time to develop, administer and evaluate the credentialing process in addiction medicine. The board consists of eleven members, mainly professors of various medical specialists from several university cities in Finland. The board is responsible

for developing the standards for curriculum, accrediting the training centres and qualifications of the supervising doctors. The board is responsible for the criteria of eligibility for the certification: it reviews the applications for the trainees in the educational program, organises annual examinations in addiction medicine and finally reviews the applications for the certification. Based on the attest from the board the Finnish Medical Association will certify the qualified applicants.

The objectives of the education:

The field of addiction medicine requires knowledge of various medical disciplines and the understanding of the interactions if these disciplines. In order to ensure that the trainee is well-versed in these areas, training programs must include both versatile clinical experience as well as seminar sessions in the recognition of:

- the theoretical knowledge of preventive measures and therapeutic approaches in substance abuse and addiction
- the practical skills of independently working in organizations providing services for diagnosing and treating various addiction syndromes and other drug related problems in health and social services
- the basic prerequisites for developing, educational and research projects in substance abuse and addiction field

Criteria of eligibility for the credentialing process

The trainee must apply for registration in the educational process as soon as possible in the professional career. The certification board will review the individual training plan and nominate the senior doctor in charge for supervising the trainee. A logbook is mandatory to document the versatility of the educational process.

Clinical training

A minimum of two years of supervised clinical training is required in a training centre providing alcohol and/or drug treatment services. It is recommended that experience in working in both ambulatory and in-patients services is included in the curriculum.

Theoretical education

A minimum of 200 hours of supervision, clinical case presentation and education in the treatment institute is required. In addition 60 hours of participation in scientific seminars is mandatory.

Examination

The examination is composed of six questions of case presentations testing the theoretical knowledge and clinical judgement. The examination will be proctored by the certification board. The questions and answers will be published immediately after the exam for participants in the exam and other trainers.

Recommended textbooks and other basic references

Basic textbooks:

- Päihdelääketiede (the Finnish textbook of addictive disorders). Salaspuro M, Kiiianmaa K & Seppä K (eds.), Duodecim 2004
- Substance abuse. A Comprehensive Textbook. Lowinson JH, Ruiz P, Millman RB, Langrod JG (eds.). Williams & Wilkins
- Principles of Addiction Medicine. Graham AW, Schultz TK (eds.). ASAM, Chevy Chase, Maryland.

Recommended scientific journals:

- Addiction, National Addiction Centre, London, UK
- Alcoholism. Clinical and Experimental Research.
- Suomen Lääkärilehti (Journal of Finnish Medical Association)
- Duodecim (Scientific Journal of Duodecim Association, Finland)