

Tampere University of Applied Sciences
Professional Teacher Training Institute

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Development project

**An autobiographical narrative about my teaching experiences
and priorities: Visualizing Bangladeshi and Finnish
experiences**

Supervisor of the work: Harri Kukkonen
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TIIVISTELMÄ

The current work is concerning the teacher-student interaction in learning environment or more specifically at school level in Finland and Bangladesh. By interaction I mean reciprocal action between student and teacher in learning environment. The work is based upon my own experience which I gained from Bangladesh as a student and in Finland first by being a student, father of two school going boys and finally a teacher. I have explained my experience through cultural window where Hofstede's dimensions of culture have been used i.e., power distance, individualism, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity. At the end of the study, I have tried to show my own viewpoints about the teaching profession by keeping school and upbringing process at its center.

In order to show the interaction process, a number of issues have been discussed i.e., how a teacher is perceived by the students; what are the roles of a teacher at school; competition vs. accommodation; and general environment where parents, teachers and students are incorporated. Prior to the discussion of teacher-student interaction a brief picture of education system in both the countries Bangladesh and Finland has been sketched. In studying school system in both the countries, there is a fundamental difference noticed between Bangladesh and Finland that is the Finnish education system is secular by nature but in Bangladesh it is not as religion based education system (Madrasha education) is still exists alongside secular general education system.

In studying teacher-student interaction, it is seen that in Bangladesh teacher is highly respected at school and outside the school as well. The students consider that the teachers knows everything, teacher is not only a source of information in Bangladesh but a model of life also. It is not practiced that a student calls his/her teacher by his/her name. In learning environment there is a one way communication which is from teacher to student but not the other way around. Authoritarian type of learning environment is prevailed in Bangladesh where teacher decides everything. Teacher-student relationship is very distant. In Bangladesh, school is considered as a field of competition, best students are praised and it is shame to fail. In many cases, students commit suicide for failing to examination. In case of Finland, teacher is considered more like a facilitator in the learning process, a friendly and close relationship is common between teacher and student. School is not a ground for competition but accommodation where brilliant academic achievement is rewarded and at the same time academically weak students are encouraged for better result.

Teacher-student interaction is very important in learning environment which creates a state of trust and confidence where learning objective is effectively achieved. In future, kids will grow in a completely different environment where media and school will have more roles to play than parents or friends in the growth process. Consequently, professionalism, specific skill, flexibility, adaptability, global attitude and ethic orientation will be in greater demand.

Key words: teacher, student, interaction, culture and learning environment.

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Kyseinen työni käsittelee opettajan ja opiskelijan välistä vuorovaikutusta oppimisympäristössä tai tarkemmin sanottuna koulutasolla Suomessa ja Bangladeshissa. Vuorovaikutuksella tarkoitan opiskelijan ja opettajan välistä vuorovaikutuksellista toimintaa oppimisympäristössä. Tämä työ perustuu omaan kokemukseeni, minkä sain Bangladeshissa opiskelijana ja Suomessa oltuani ensin opiskelijana kahden koulua käyvän pojan isänä ja sitten lopulta opettajana. Olen kuvaillut kokemuksiani kulttuurisen ikkunan välityksellä, missä on käytetty Hofsteden kulttuurisia ulottuvuuksia kuten; valtaetäisyys, yksilöllisyys, epävarmuuden sietäminen ja maskuliinisuus. Tutkimuksen loppuosassa olen pyrkinyt osoittamaan omat näkökohtani opetuksen ammatillisuudesta pitämällä koulua ja kasvatusta sen keskipisteinä.

Vuorovaikutusprosessin esilletuomiseksi on käytetty eräitä seikkoja kuten miten opiskelijat ovat käsittäneet opettajan; mitkä ovat opettajan roolit koulussa; kilpailu versus mukautuvuus; yleinen ympäristö missä vanhemmat, opettajat ja opiskelijat ovat mukana. Ennen kuin opettajan ja opiskelijan vuorovaikutusta on käsitelty, opetusjärjestelmästä on hahmoteltu lyhyt kuvaus molemmissa maissa, Bangladeshissa ja Suomessa. Koulujärjestelmää tutkittaessa molemmissa maissa on huomattu olennainen ero Bangladeshin ja Suomen välillä. Suomalainen opetusjärjestelmä on luonteeltaan maallistunut, mutta Bangladeshissa se ei ole kokonaan uskoon perustuva opetusjärjestelmä. Madrasha-opetus on yhä olemassa ei-uskonnollisen opetusjärjestelmän rinnalla.

Tutkittaessa opettajan ja opiskelijan välistä vuorovaikutusta nähdään, että Bangladeshissa opettajaa kunnioitetaan laajasti koulussa kuten myös koulun ulkopuolellakin. Opiskelijat katsovat, että opettaja tietää kaiken. Opettaja ei ole ainoastaan tiedon lähde Bangladeshissa, vaan myös elämisen malli. Ei ole yleistä, että opiskelija kutsuu opettajaa nimeltä. Oppimisympäristössä on yhdensuuntainen kommunikaatio, joka tulee opettajalta opiskelijalle, mutta ei toisin päin. Bangladeshissa on vallalla autoritääriäinen oppimisympäristö, missä opettaja päättää kaikesta. Opettajan ja opiskelijan välinen suhde on hyvin etäinen. Bangladeshissa koulua pidetään kilpailukenttänä. Parhaita opiskelijoita kehutaan ja opiskelijan on häpeällistä epäonnistua. Monesti opiskelijat tekevät itsemurhan, mikäli epäonnistuvat kokeessa. Suomessa opettajaa pidetään oppimisprosessia helpottajana tekijänä. Ystävällinen ja läheinen suhde opiskelijaan on yleistä. Koulu ei ole kilpailukentän perusta, vaan mukautumista ja oppineisuudessa heikkoja opiskelijoita rohkaistaan parempiin suorituksiin.

Opettajan ja opiskelijan välinen vuorovaikutus on erityisen tärkeä seikka oppimisympäristössä. Se luo uskon ja luottamuksen ilmapiirin, missä oppimistavoitteet saavutetaan tehokkaasti. Tulevaisuudessa lapset kasvavat täysin erilaisessa ympäristössä, jossa medialla ja koululla tulee olemaan suurempi rooli kuin mitä vanhemmilla tai ystävillä on kasvuprosessissa. Sen seurauksena kysyntää tulee olemaan entistä enemmän ammatillisuudessa, erityistaidoissa, joustavuudessa, mukautumiskyvyssä, globaalissa asennoitumisessa ja etnisessä orientoitumisessa.

Avainsanat: opettaja, opiskelija, vuorovaikutus, kulttuuri- ja oppimisympäristö.

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1. Prologue

1.1 Background

I do not remember the exact date but somewhere in the end of 1996 I met Mr. Juha Paukkla of the TAMK who had invited me to give some hours lecture to his Asian course. Afterwards, I got teaching offer from the University of Tampere, Tampere Lyseon Lukio, LAMK and lastly from the TAMK. Now I am a senior lecturer at the TAMK, Business Expertise Centre (LY OS/KE). After completion of my master's degree in June, 1996 I got myself involved to teaching profession. I have been working at the TAMK on regular basis since the January, 1999 first as a part-timer, then a full timer, a lecturer, and finally a senior lecturer. In these more than ten years of teaching career in Finland has helped me to accumulate much interesting experiences which I would like to present here. In addition, the experience which I have accumulated as a student in Bangladesh will also be stated. Furthermore, I will present my own thinking about teaching profession in Finland and more specifically my priorities for becoming a teacher in Finland.

1.2 Objective

The paper has twin precise objectives which are (1) exposing own teaching experiences from Bangladesh and Finland and (2) my priorities for becoming a teacher in Finland having a non-native cultural background. I will propose priorities for becoming a teacher in Finnish learning environment through experiences which I have gained in my past teaching years. The central concepts which will play important roles in exposing my experiences are (a) students' expectation, (b) teacher's role, (c) competition versus accommodation and (d) general environment; teacher, parent and student. The discussion will proceed through cultural perspective. The whole discussion will follow a theoretical path which is sketched below (see figure 1).

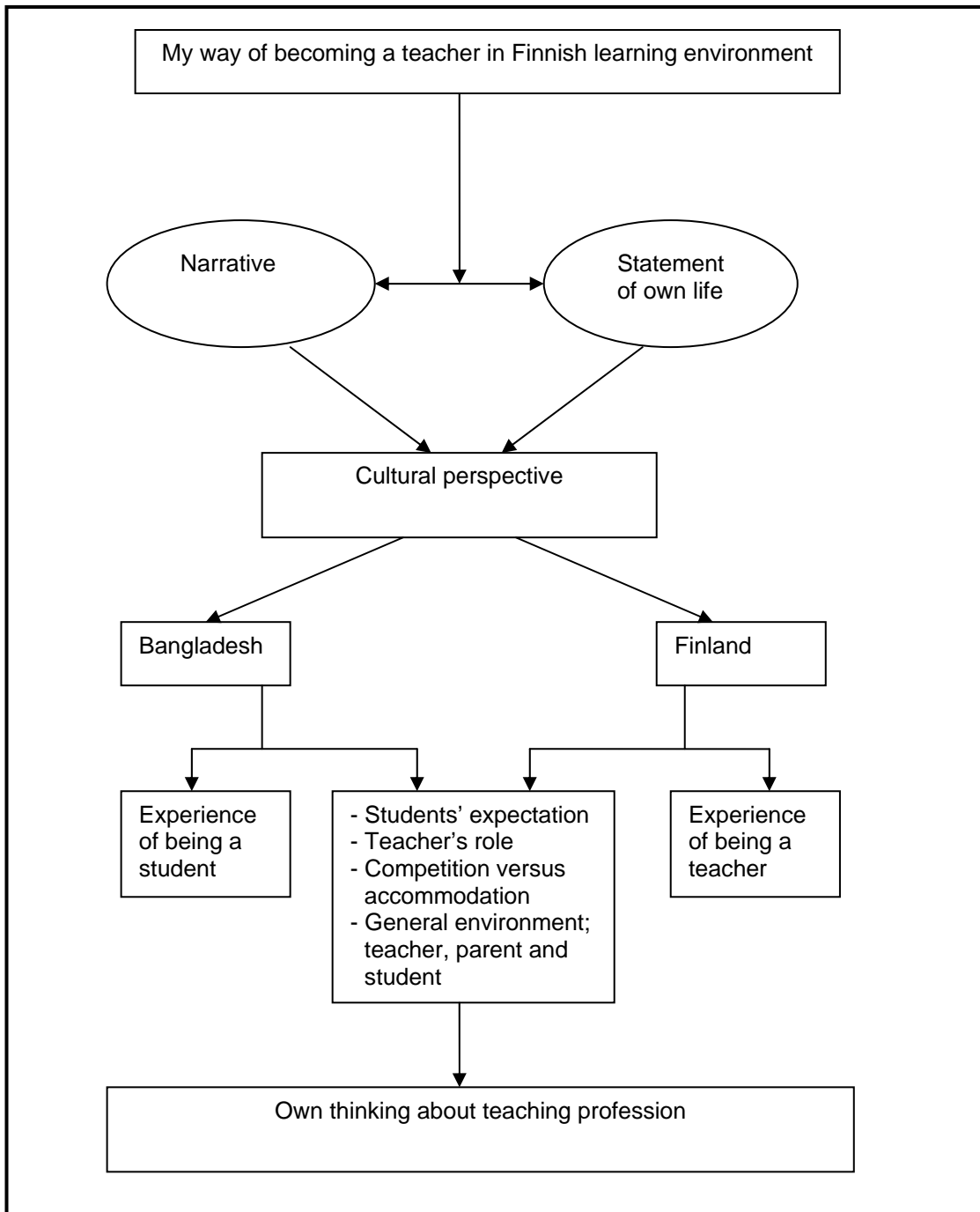


Figure 1: Path of the current study

2. Autobiographical narrative

An autobiography is a book about the life of a person, written by that person (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Autobiography>, Accessed: 21.07.2009). Narrative is the representation of events, consisting of story and narrative discourses, a story is an event or sequence of events (the action), and narrative discourse is those events as represented (Abbott, 2002:16). I would consider this study partly as an autobiographical narrative in this sense that I am going to represent my own life events/experiences which occurred in Bangladesh as a student and in Finland as a teacher. However, in exposing my own life events in the learning environment sequential order has not been maintained in this paper. The gained experiences have been represented through cultural dimensions based on practical experiences. The other part of the study is more based upon my priorities for becoming a teacher in Finnish learning environment.

A narrative contains within it a story but it is a more complex form of communication than a story because it involves some kind of evaluation (Stacey, 2003: 350). The current study exposes teaching experiences in two different cultures where evaluation has strong presence. The evaluation has been made with the help of culture through subjective judgment. Subjective judgment has played strong role as the study is an individual experience based work. An autobiographical narrative tells the story of an experience that took place in the author's life. It usually focuses on the details associated with the experience, but it also lets the author express his or her thoughts and feelings about what happened (<http://go.hrw.com/eolang/modbank/mguide/mg11-1.htm>, Accessed: 21.07.2009). My personal thought has helped to describe the events from a comparative basis by showing similarities and differences analytically. As my experiences will be represented through cultural window, consequently, the next chapter will discuss about culture in general and particularly Hofstede's cultural dimensions and the position of Finland and Bangladesh on Hofstede's dimensions.

3. Culture

Culture is fundamentally a group problem-solving tool for coping in a particular environment. It enables people to create a distinctive world around themselves, to control their own destinies, and to grow. Sharing the legacy of diverse cultures advances our social, economic, technological, and human development. Culture can be analyzed in a macro context, such as in terms of national group, or in a micro sense, such as within a system or organization (Harris, Moran, & Moran, 2004:31) The current study deals with the national group; Finnish and Bangladeshi culture.

Culture is a group property as personality to the individual. As no two individuals are alike so no two cultures are alike as well. Before we look at the national cultural discussion, a working definition of culture may be sought.

The term culture has been considered by many in different ways but the current study uses the following working definition: "**Culture is considered as something which is comprised of norms and values and governs human behavior to a particular direction, which is learned, does not change easily, which is characteristic of a particular group and which is transmitted over time from one generation to the other** (Kazi, 2009: 97)." Two most important invisible cultural properties such as norms and values influence individual role in organizations/learning environment (see figure 2)

Norms are the mutual sense a group has of what is "right" and "wrong". Norms can develop on a formal level as written laws, and on informal level as social control (Trompenaars 1996: 22). For instance, in Islamic countries Sharia law bars people from using alcohol, as the religion Islam does not permit its followers to drink alcohol. Moreover, on informal level, in Islamic countries, there is a strict control over pre-marital sex. Business norms according to Hatch involve concerns such as when you should inform your boss of potential problems, what sort of clothing you should wear, and whether or not it is appropriate to display emotion in the workplace (Hatch, 1997: 214). Social norms may guide teacher-student relationship at school or the total learning environment.

Values are principal building blocks of a culture (Kazi 2009: 104). Values are the social principles, goals, standards held within a culture to have intrinsic worth. They define what the members of an organization care about, such as freedom, democracy, tradition, wealth or loyalty. Values constitute the basis for making judgments about what is right and what is wrong, which is why they are also referred to as a moral or

ethical code (Trompenaars 1996: 214). Values directly or indirectly may influence teacher-student relationship in learning environment.

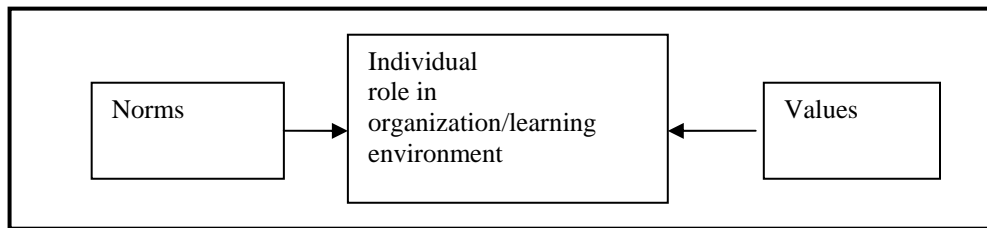


Figure 2: Norms and values influence individual roles in organization/learning environment.

Source: Kazi (2009: 75)

Cultural differences exist between people of different nationalities. From one country to another, people speak a different language, dress differently, enjoy different cuisines, and identify with different social customs. Moreover, cultural differences exist within any one country (Kakabadse, 1982: 11). Regardless the intra-country or intra-nation differences, each country or nation possesses some features which are somewhat unique from the others. Apart from Kakabadse, Hofstede also acknowledges national cultural differences. His famous study on the IBM subsidiaries in over forty different countries shows the cultural differences between nationalities. Although, the study conducted by Hofstede is now quite old but still it reflects much of the realities that can be seen in national cultural differences. Hofstede expressed those differences through his famous four dimensions (Hofstede, 1991, 2001, 2005) which the current study will use in discussing the core concepts of this study.

Power distance. The dimension measures the equality of power distribution between boss and subordinate. High power distance means that in that culture bosses have much more power than their subordinates. In low power distance countries, bosses treat their subordinates as peers. In power distance scale Finland scored 33 whereas Bangladesh 80 (http://www.geert-hofstede.com/hofstede_dimensions.php: Accessed 21.07.2009) which means Bangladesh is a high power distance country whereas Finland is a low power distance country.

Uncertainty avoidance. High uncertainty avoidance indicated that the culture likes to try to control the future. According to Handy, *uncertainty avoidance is associated with dogmatism and authoritarianism, with traditionalism and superstition* (Handy,

1988: 201). On uncertainty avoidance dimension Finland scored 59 and the estimated score of Bangladesh is 60 (http://www.geert-hofstede.com/hofstede_dimensions.php: Accessed 21.07.2009). Hofstede's study shows that Finland is slightly less uncertainty avoidance than Bangladesh.

Individualism. As described by Hofstede, individualism is the degree of preference of individuals for loosely knit frameworks in which individuals are supposed to take care of themselves and their immediate families. In simple terms this means the preference for living and working in collectivist or individual way. On the individual index Finland has scored 63 whereas the estimated score of Bangladesh on individualism scale is only 20 (http://www.geert-hofstede.com/hofstede_dimensions.php: Accessed 21.07.2009). It means that compare to Finland Bangladesh is less individualist and more collectivist.

Masculinity. Hofstede's last dimension masculinity expresses gender role in the society. Masculinity is connected with ambition, the desire to achieve and to earn more, whereas its opposite, femininity, is more concerned with inter-personal relationships, the environment and a sense of service. Masculine prefers quantity of things to quality of life, with men almost always preferring the quantity alternatives. In Hofstede's index masculine and feminine values can apply to both men and women. When we apply this dimension to Bangladesh and Finland it shows that Bangladesh is more masculine scored 55 compared to Finland scored 26 (http://www.geert-hofstede.com/hofstede_dimensions.php: Accessed 21.07.2009).

Hofstede's dimensions and especially masculinity, individualism, and power distance will be used extensively in this study. However, before I start to write my way to be a teacher in Finnish learning environment and visualizing Bangladeshi and Finnish experiences, a discussion is followed on the structural arrangement of education system in both the countries. The following discussion does not pin point in detail every aspects of the education system in both the countries but visualizes a general picture of education system for facilitating understanding of the readers.

4. School system

4.1 Bangladesh

The present education system of Bangladesh may be broadly divided into three major stages, viz. primary, secondary and tertiary education. The post-primary stream of education is further classified into four types in terms of curriculum: general education, madrasah education (religious education given by religious schools), technical-vocational education and professional education.

Primary education

The first level of education is comprised of 5 years of formal schooling (class / grades I - V). Education, at this stage, normally begins at 6+ years of age up to 11 years. Primary education is generally imparted in primary schools. Nevertheless, other types of institutions like kindergartens and junior sections attached to English medium schools are also imparting it.

Secondary education

The second level of education is comprised of 7 (3+2+2) years of formal schooling. The first 3 years (grades VI-VIII) is referred to as junior secondary; the next 2 years (grades IX -X) is secondary while the last 2 years (grades XI - XII) is called higher secondary or college education.

Tertiary Education

The third stage of education is comprised of 2-6 years of formal schooling. The minimum requirement for admission to higher education is the higher secondary certificate (HSC). The HSC holders are qualified to enroll in 3-year degree pass courses while for honors' they may enroll in 4-year bachelors' degree honors courses in degree level colleges or in the universities. After successful completion of a pass/honors bachelors' degree course, one can enroll in the master's degree course. Master degree courses are of one year for honors bachelor degree holders and 2 years for pass bachelor degree holders. For those aspiring to take up M.Phil and Ph.D courses in selected disciplines or areas of specialization, the duration is of 2 years for M.Phil and 3-4 years for Ph.Ds after completion of master's degree. Higher education is being offered in the universities and post HSC level colleges and institutes of

diversified studies in professional, technical, technological and other special types of education.

As of 2005, there are 73 universities in Bangladesh. Out of these, 21 universities are in the public sector, while the other 52 are in the private sector. Out of 21 public sector universities, 19 universities provide regular classroom instruction facilities and services. Bangladesh Open University (BOU) conducts non-campus distance education programs especially in the field of teacher education and offers Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) and Master of Education (M.Ed) degrees. BOU conducts 18 formal courses and 19 non-formal courses. Bangladesh National University mainly functions as an affiliating university for degree and post-graduate degree level education at different colleges and institutions in different field of studies

Madrasha education

In madrasah education, one can learn Islamic religious education along with the general education as complementary to each other in the system of education. Madrasha level education can be divided into the following level: primary level, secondary level, and tertiary level.

Technical – Vocational

For the students whose interests are not strictly academic may find technical-vocational programs more interesting and more valuable for their future. Vocational courses starts from secondary level.

Professional education

The College of Textile Technology and College of Leather Technology offer four - year degree courses in Textile Engineering and Leather Technology respectively after completing Higher Secondary Education. The minimum requirement to be admitted to teachers training colleges (TTCs) for Bachelor of Education, Bachelor of Physical Education in Physical Education College is graduation degree. Generally, in-service teachers undertake this professional training course along with some unemployed graduates. Professional education also imparted in Medical Colleges, Dental Colleges, Nursing College, Homeopathic Colleges, Law Colleges etc.

Apart from these main four types, there is arrangement for religious and morale education in the fields of (a) Islamic studies. (b) Hindu – Religious studies. (c)

Buddhist religious studies. (d) Christian religious education (http://www.banbeis.gov.bd/es_bd.htm, Accessed: 18.07.2009).

4.2 Finland

The Finnish education system is made up of the comprehensive school, general and vocational secondary education, and higher education. Children between ages 7 and 16 are required to attend the comprehensive school. Students may then go on to the upper secondary school education that lasts 3 years or to the vocational school that lasts approximately 3 years. Higher education in Finland consists of two parallel sectors: universities and polytechnics that are also called universities of applied sciences. Universities are characterized by scientific research and the highest education based thereon. Polytechnics are oriented towards working life and base their operations on the high vocational skill requirements set by it. Polytechnic-level post-graduate degree programs are being trialled during 2002-2005 (<http://www.kpkonsa.fi/index.php/information-for-visitors/finnish-education-system>, Accessed: 19.07.2009).

In Finland, educational system can be divided as follows: Pre-primary education, primary education or first stage of basic education, lower secondary or second stage of basic education, upper secondary education, Post secondary or tertiary education, first cycle of tertiary education, and second cycle of tertiary education (http://www.jobinfinland.net/english/article_education-in-finland, Accessed: 19.07.2009).

Pre-primary education

Pre-primary education is voluntary and intended for six-year-olds, who will start their compulsory education in the following year. It is provided in day care centers falling under the administrative field of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (majority) and comprehensive schools, either in separate pre-primary classes or in combined classes. Pre-primary education, meals, health care and travel, if the distance exceeds 5 kilometers, are provided free of charge. Pre-primary pupils are entitled to the same benefits as those in compulsory education. Children are entitled also to a day-care place. In day care, there is an income-based fee (http://www.oph.fi/english/education/pre-primary_education, Accessed: 20.07.2009).

Primary education or first stage of basic education and lower secondary or second stage of basic education

The educational system in Finland is based on a nine-year comprehensive school (Finnish peruskoulu), with mandatory attendance. It begins at the age of six or seven and ends at the age of 15-16. Although comprehensive school is undivided, de facto it is divided to lower (ages 7–12) and upper comprehensive school (ages 13–15). In lower the students have a class teacher who teaches most of the subjects in the same classroom. In upper the teaching is done by several teachers in different classrooms. The lower and upper usually are in different school buildings. Nowadays some are in the same building, although most are not. After graduation from comprehensive school, there is a choice between upper secondary school (lukio) and vocational school (ammattillinen oppilaitos). Secondary level education is not compulsory, but an overwhelming majority attends (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_in_Finland#Primary_and_secondary_education, Accessed: 20.07.2009). Students who do not continue with the upper secondary education go to the vocational institutes.

Upper secondary education

Upper secondary schools provide general education in preparation for further education. Students apply for upper secondary schools through the secondary-level joint application system. Students must have completed the required courses in basic education before they can be admitted to upper secondary education. Upper secondary education is non-graded and course-based so that students are responsible for their own progress and studies. Upper secondary education can be completed in 2-4 years. The matriculation examination is taken at the end of upper secondary school. Upper secondary school education is also provided at upper secondary schools for adults or in the form of distance learning (http://www.suomi.fi/suomifi/english/subjects/teaching_and_education/education_and_educational_institutions/index.html, Accessed: 20.07.2009).

Post secondary or tertiary education

There are two sectors in the tertiary education: universities (yliopisto) and polytechnics¹ (ammattikorkeakoulu). When recruiting new students, the national matriculation examination and entrance examinations are used as criteria for student selection. The focus for universities is research, and they give a more theoretical education. The polytechnics focus on practical skills and seldom pursue research, but they do engage in industry development projects. For example, physicians are university graduates, whereas basic nurses are polytechnic graduates. (However, universities do award advanced degrees in Nursing Science.) The vocational schools and polytechnics are governed by municipalities, or, in special cases, by private entities. (As an exception to the rule, Police College is governed by the Ministry of the Interior.) All Finnish universities, on the other hand, are owned by the state. A bachelor's degree takes about three–four years. Depending on the program, this may be the point of graduation, but it is usually only an intermediate step towards the master's degree. A polytechnic degree, on the other hand, takes about 3.5–4.5 years. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_in_Finland#Tertiary_education, Accessed: 21.07.2009). Apart from bachelor degrees, some polytechnics offer master's degrees in certain fields. On the other hand, at universities one may obtain licentiate and doctorate degrees.

¹ Or University of Applied Sciences

5. Teacher-student interaction

“We can not teach students well if we do not know them well.”

—Hoffman and Leak (http://www.michigan.gov/documents/3-3_107241_7.pdf, Accessed: 22.07.2009).

Smooth interaction facilitates parties to perform well and yield optimum outcome. In teacher-student interaction, a positive relationship between teacher and student is a must for preserving a congenial learning environment where the learning objectives are achieved. In a learning environment whether it is contact or distant learning process student and teacher both should work together or communicate well which is considered positive interaction between teacher and students. In case of teachers, they should have more ability and willingness to communicate or work together with the students. In Finnish educational institutions teacher-student interaction is highly valued. In TAMK course feedback system, teacher-student interaction is measured. How a teacher is perceived by the students is also important in teacher-student interaction dimension.

5.1 How a teacher is perceived by the students

In chapter three it was mentioned that Finland is a low power distance country whereas Bangladesh is a high power distance country. In high power distance country like Bangladesh (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005), students give respect to teachers even outside of class (p. 57). Consequently, in Bangladesh whenever a student faces his/her teacher outside the classroom exchanging greetings is most kind and obedient behavior. In this case students should take the first initiative to greet the teacher. In social gathering or in any other event a teacher always gets preferable behavior from his/her students. Moreover, in Bangladesh teachers are considered as guru, who know everything. As Hofstede and Hofstede further say, teachers are gurus who transfer personal wisdom (Ibid.). Consequently, it is not the information alone which the students get from a teacher but a way of life. In many cases parents ask teachers to build their kids according to the ideals of him/her. Moreover, students consider that teacher knows everything and he/she cannot make any mistake. Teachers are always respected by his or her students. The older is the teacher the more respect he/she gets from the students. Students show respect to teacher by standing up when teacher enter into the classroom. One may not hear in Bangladesh that a student is calling to a teacher by the teacher's name or smoking cigarettes in front of a teacher. In the family

level in Bangladesh one may see inequality between parents and children which is reflected teacher-student inequality at school as well as boss subordinate inequality at organizational level.

In masculine country like Bangladesh (ibid) brilliance in teachers is admired (p. 142). If a teacher is good for instance in mathematics then everyone praises for him/her but whether the teacher is friendly to the students or not that does not matter very much. As an ideal teacher, he/she should keep certain distance with the students like a teacher should not mix up with the students and preserve their own status by avoiding close touch with the students.

In small power distance country like Finland (ibid) students treat teachers as equals. Teachers are experts who transfer impersonal truths (p. 57). Consequently, it is usual that teacher and student treat each other very equally which is seen even more among the young teachers. Calling a teacher by his/her first name is a common practice in Finland which is not common even in many other European countries like in Germany for instance. It is not teacher or his/her personal wisdom which passes from teacher to the students but universal/impersonal facts or truths. So teacher is considered as an agent to pass information to the students. In this sense he/she is not a guru but more of a facilitator. In social gathering or outside of class, in Finland a teacher may not get special treatment from his/her student which is unlikely in Bangladesh. However, greeting to a teacher outside of class may be seen. I have been teaching at the TAMK since the January, 1999 and nowadays whenever I see my students outside the campus most of the time they greet me by telling “hello”, in some cases some students even come forward to talk to me. In practice, male students are more advanced in this case compared to their female counterparts.

As opposed to Bangladesh, Finland is a feminine country. In a feminine country (ibid) friendliness in teachers is appreciated (p.57). In Finland it is very important that there is a close friendly teacher-student relationship which may create trust and comfort among students to learn. This friendly relationship between teacher-students facilitates students to approach easily to their teachers on anything related to the study.

5.2 What are the roles of a teacher at school?

In large power distance countries, teachers should take all initiative in class (ibid: 57) which also expands across the school. Moreover, in the classroom there is supposed to

be strict order, with the teacher initiating all communication. Student in class speak up only when invited to; teachers are never publicly contradicted or criticized and are treated with deference even outside school (ibid: 53). I may tell from my personal experience that I did never have an option to suggest to my teacher in any case. We used to learn to oblige to the opinion or decision of our teachers. There is a common proverb in Bangladesh that *'if someone does not obey to his/her teacher he/she may not succeed in his/her educational or working life afterwards'*. It is teacher who decides at class room all these: what to teach, how to teach, when to take exams, and how to take exams etc. This practice is not only limited at the primary level but also goes up to the tertiary level.

In small power distance countries like Finland (ibid) teachers expect initiative from students in class (p. 57) where a teacher in many cases plays a role of a facilitator. My own experience as a teacher at the TAMK and as a student at the University of Tampere shows that students have huge freedom regarding their studies and how to plan it where teacher plays a role of guidelines provider or facilitator. The courses which I teach at the TAMK I consider students' opinion very much for their implementation. I always collect feedback from the existing implementation and apply some of the feedbacks for the next implementation. When it comes to the question of writing a project, students enjoy greater freedom in writing the project, its content selection, writing process etc.

In Bangladesh, the role of a teacher at classroom or at school may be compared with the role of an authoritarian manager at organization level who makes all the decisions and subordinates are the executors of those decisions. On the other hand, the role of a teacher in Finnish educational environment may be compare with that of a democratic manager who welcome subordinates' initiative and even encourage it.

5.3 Competition vs. accommodation

In large power distance countries (ibid) best student is the norm; praise for excellent students, competition in class; trying to excel. Failing in school is a disaster (p.142). In Bangladesh best students in the class are considered as model who everyone tries to follow. There is always competition in class for doing best results. Consequently, well off families keep house tutor so that their kids get additional lesson outside the class. If it is not possible to keep a house tutor for a family then kids of those families go to coaching centers where they get additional lessons outside the class at a cheaper price.

However, kids from the poor families can neither get a house tutor nor can go to coaching centers. I may tell that education in Bangladesh is gradually becoming a commodity for the well off families who can buy it. Moreover, failing in school is a disaster. In many cases, students commit suicide for failing at school.

On the other hand, in small power distance countries average student is the norm; praise for weak students, jealousy for those who try to excel and failing at school is a minor issue (ibid). Consequently, one may notice in Finnish schools that there is a strong trend for accommodation rather than competition. I heard many times from our exchange students to tell that there is no competition among the Finnish students for results. In most of the cases for a Finnish student it is satisfactory for them to get a grade 3 out of 5 while a German, Latvian, or a French student tries to get a grade 4 or even 5. Weak students are being encourages for their progress while failing at school is not considered disastrous. Finally, I may say that competition is at the root of education system in Bangladesh whereas in Finland it is accommodation, however, not by undermining the set standard.

5.4 General environment; parents, teachers, and students

In uncertainty avoidance scale Bangladesh's estimated score is 60 whereas Finland scored 59. Consequently, Bangladesh is considered a bit more strong uncertainty avoidance country compare to Finland. So Finland is a weak uncertainty avoidance country in this case and Bangladesh is a strong uncertainty avoidance country. However, the gap between the two countries is differed by only 1 point.

At school in a strong uncertainty avoidance country we may notice (ibid) students are comfortable in structured learning situations and concerned with the right answers. Teachers are supposed to have all answers. Results are attributed to circumstances or luck. Teachers inform parents (p. 181). Consequently, in Bangladesh students may be more comfortable to a learning system which offers precise objectives, detailed assignments, and strict timetables. Flexibility may be considered with uncertainty and lack of direction. In learning environment students may expect to have a right answer that they could find. Students in Bangladesh may expect that their teachers know all the answers of their questions which should also be right answers. Unable to give answer to students' questions may expose serious weakness and disqualification of the teacher. If a student does well at school he/she may attribute it to circumstances or luck. Consequently, in Bangladesh when result is published then it is very common at

good result that students tell by the grace of Allah I did very well at examination so my result is very good, or may also be heard to tell for a good result that my brother or father helped me much for preparing the examination so I did well. Indeed, very seldom students tell that it was their own effort and hard work which brought success. In Bangladesh, parents' involvement to their kids education process is almost non exist, if something happens then teacher may inform that to parents but hardly a parent is incorporated to the learning process by seeking ideas and co-operations for their kids' education.

On the other hand, in weak uncertainty avoidance countries one may notice that students are comfortable with open-ended learning situations and concerned with good discussions. Teachers may say, "I don't know (I don't know answer of this particular question)." Results are attributed to a person's own ability. Teachers involve parents (ibid). Consequently, in Finland it may be seen more popular to have an open-ended learning environment with issue based discussion, brain storming, students' own idea based assignment etc. At school teachers are considered as expert who teach universal truth to students. However, a teacher is not considered as "all rounder" who knows everything. Consequently, it does not hamper a teacher's position if he/she tells to the question of a student that "I do not have the answer of this particular question." Most of the Finnish students do not believe in destiny so whenever they do good result or make success they attribute it to their own hard work and active participation. At school, whenever it is needed teachers easily incorporate parents to their kids' learning process by seeking ideas and co-operations which is usually very common below the tertiary-level of education.

6. Teaching profession and own thinking

The role of school as learning institution has changed dramatically since 2000 because of revolution in the field of information and communication technology (ICT) which has changed the role of teacher as well. Earlier school was considered as a learning institution alone but more functions have been added lately. Nowadays, students consider school more than mere learning place. They consider school as learning place as well as a place for sharing experiences and networking. The role of school to the eyes of students can be shown as follows:

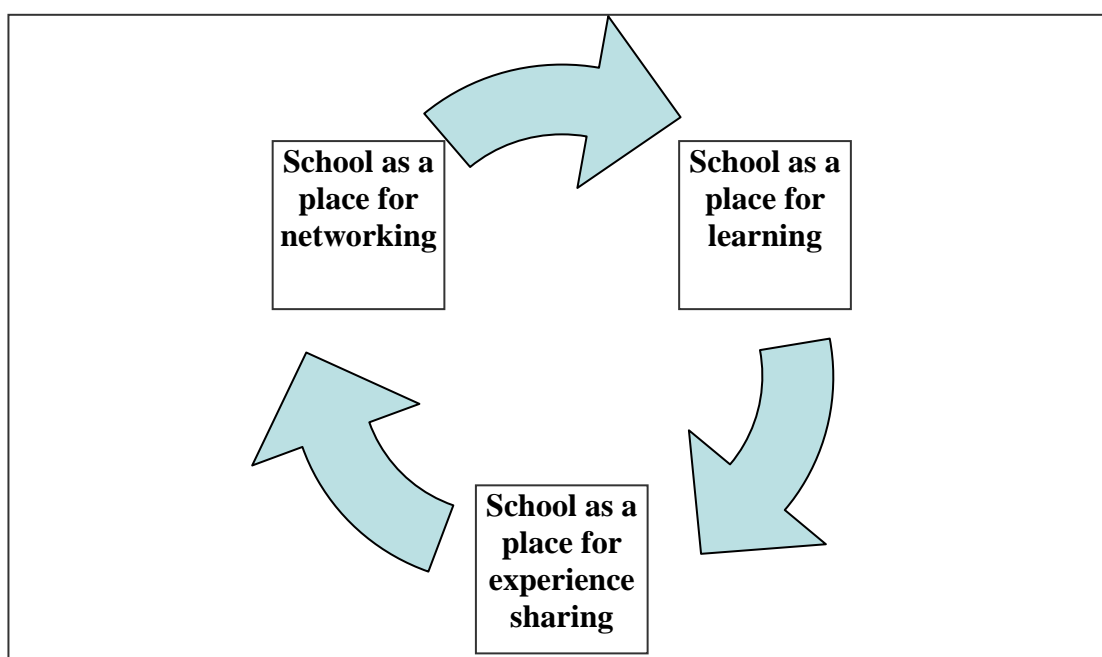


Figure 3: Changing role of school to students

Consequently, teacher fulfils parts of the total direct need which students seek at school. However, this does not anyway reduce teacher's importance at school but somehow diversifies the way he/she performs roles. In this changing perspective, traditional lecture based contact lessons may be done more effective and attractive to students by introducing more group discussion, case study, issue based discussion, group project, video conferencing, telephone conferencing etc. The need for school as one of the main places for child upbringing and teacher as the main actor in it was very important in past and it is still and will be in future as well. In the total upbringing process of child, family in the Western world has been somehow losing its role day by day where media and school gaining more and more upper hand. Child

upbringing process in the past and present can be visualizes as below (see figures 4 & 5):

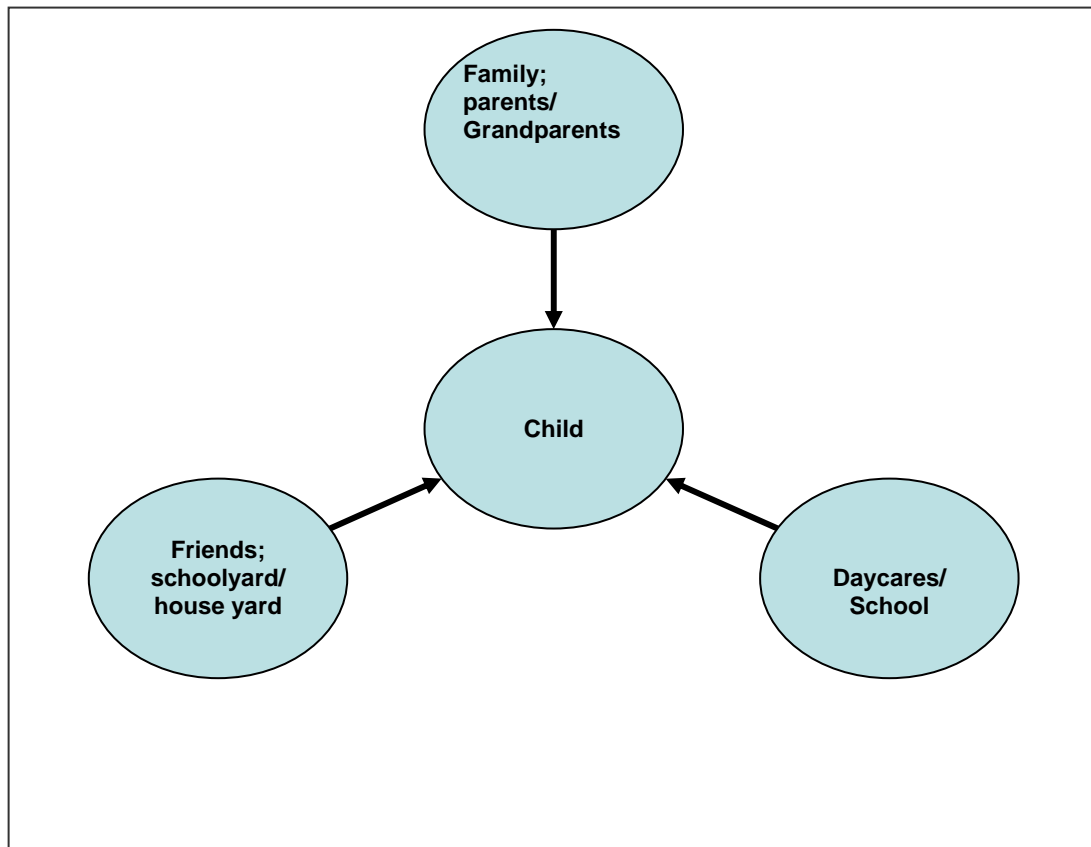


Figure 4: Child upbringing in past

In the past, parents and grandparents had strong role in child upbringing process after day-care and school. At the same time, kids used to spend substantial parts of their time with friends at schoolyard or house yard. However, lately there has been a dramatic shift in the role of child upbringing process. The role of child upbringing which was played by grandparents in past has declined remarkably and role of school and virtual media has increased dramatically (see figure 5).

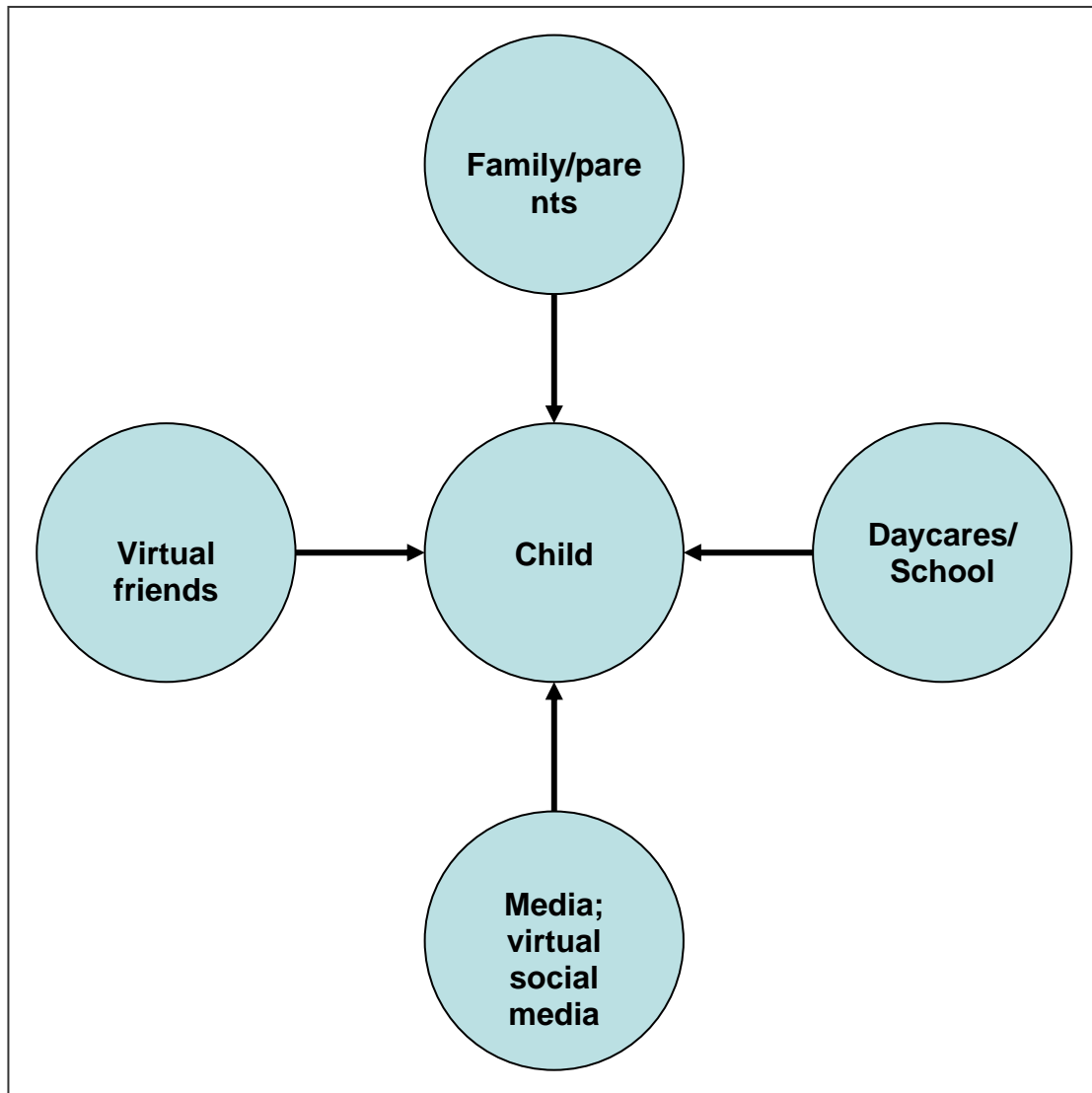


Figure 5: Child upbringing in contemporary Western world

In most of the families both the parents go to work so they have hardly much spare time to spend for their child so a large parts of child upbringing is being shifted from the parents to the school. Consequently, the role of school and teacher in it is becoming day by day more diversified and important in upbringing child. Many kids begun to loose their house yard friends and getting involved more and more with their virtual friends through different social networks. **This is a time for us all to think about “whether our kids’ real identity is becoming inferior to their virtual identity”**. Nowadays, kids first meet others on the net then they meet face to face.

The globalization process which has begun since the 1991 after the end of the cold war, fall of the Berlin Wall, and the collapse of the former USSR has touched all

sphere of Finland including its education system. Nowadays, it is not only the Finnish students who are studying in the Finnish educational institutions but also the students from different countries with various cultural backgrounds. Consequently, a teacher at the same time needs to deal with students from different cultures which require greater degree of cultural understanding, empathic attitude, tolerant personality and a flexible treatment.

7. Epilogue and thinking

The central concepts of this paper (a) students' expectation, (b) teacher's role, (c) competition versus accommodation and (d) general environment; teacher, parent and student which have been discussed in exposing my experiences differ from one country to another. This difference is linked to the cultural differences of the two countries; Bangladesh and Finland. However, other reasons may be behind the differences but culture is the one which has been considered in this paper. Moreover the school system in Bangladesh is also differs from Finland as Finnish education system is completely secular but this is not the case in Bangladesh as religious education (madrasa education) runs alongside the conventional secular education system. In Finland, educational institutions are public property (However, recent government law has made universities as public limited company and university of Applied Sciences as limited companies) where no tuition fees are charged from the students. In Bangladesh, private school, college and universities which charge tuition fees from students run alongside the public school, college and universities (which do not charge tuition fee like commercial ones but registration fee and small amount of monthly tuition fee is charged).

I was born in Bangladesh and raised there and came to Finland in the end of August 1991 when I was a 24 years old young man. Consequently, I have had a firm cultural identity when I came to Finland. Since my arrival, I completed my master's and PhD degrees in Finland, university of Tampere and have been employed here for more than 18 years (if I consider the part-time jobs which I did since the October 1991). Thereby, I have gone through a long socialization process and got acquainted into the Finnish culture (norms and values of the society and workplace) which of course does not mean that I have become a Finn but learned much of the Finnish way to do things. The way things are done in Bangladesh is not the same in Finland. Finland is one of the richest and sparsely populated countries in the world. It has a high technology base and it is a member of the EU (European Union) and EMU (European Monetary Union). Culturally, Finland is a high individualist, low power distance and feminist country. In order to succeed in teaching profession for a teacher with non-native cultural background the following issues may be kept into mind:

- Keep a low distance between you and the student
- Deal with students with your reward powers rather than the coercive power

- Be empathic, care oriented and participative
- Be an understanding facilitator rather than a command oriented superior
- Act locally (use Finnish whenever possible) but be cosmopolitan by mind and expression (don't forget to use your English as well) as Finnish education system is becoming day by day more and more international oriented.
- Try to display some of the Finnish habits like courage, persistent, stick to timetable, keep promise and straight forwardness.

Despite the tips and socialization process can a teacher having non-native cultural background perform as Finns expect? What can be done if there is an expectation gap between what Finnish students and colleagues wish and what a non-native teacher perform in reality. How to find a win-win situation? The future discussion could be centered onto these questions.

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