

<https://helda.helsinki.fi>

Religion, Faith and Spirituality in Youth (Finland)

Kallioniemi, Arto

Bloomsbury Publishing

2021-05-05

Kallioniemi , A & Kuusisto , A 2021 , Religion, Faith and Spirituality in Youth (Finland) . in J Kauko & K Tilleczek (eds) , Bloomsbury Education and Childhood Studies : Articles . Bloomsbury Publishing , London , pp. 1-5 . <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350996533.004>

<http://hdl.handle.net/10138/339410>

<https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350996533.004>

acceptedVersion

Downloaded from Helda, University of Helsinki institutional repository.

This is an electronic reprint of the original article.

This reprint may differ from the original in pagination and typographic detail.

Please cite the original version.

Please only cite the original, corrected and published version as:

Kallioniemi, Arto., Kuusisto, Arniika., "Religion, Faith and Spirituality in Youth (Finland)." *Bloomsbury Education and Childhood Studies*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021. *Bloomsbury Education and Childhood Studies*. Web. 5 May 2021. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781350996533.004>>.

RELIGION, FAITH AND SPIRITUALITY

1. Trends for youth engagement with religion

Historically, Finnish society has been predominantly Evangelical Lutheran, which is still the religious affiliation for the majority (71%) of Finns (Church Statistics 2018). The Greek Orthodox Church, which traditionally is the other Finnish other church, is primarily associated with the Eastern part of Finland, although the percentage of Orthodox worshippers is very low (1%). During the last decade the membership rate of the Evangelical Lutheran Church has decreased considerably, but in 2007 the membership rate was still 81.7 percent of all the people living in Finland. There are also big regional differences in the membership rate of church: more people belong to the church in the countryside than in capital, Helsinki, which is the most secularized region in Finland. It is somewhat surprising that more members of the younger age groups (aged 13-21) belong to the church than those in the working age groups (Ketola 2016, 28-29). Both Lutheran and Orthodox churches hold a special position in Finnish society as national churches, and have some features of being state churches. During the past few years, the number of the Muslim population in Finland has grown rapidly; currently estimated there are in total over 70,000 Muslims in Finland. A large majority of Muslims in Finland has not registered as religious community members. The biggest religious communities after the Evangelical Lutheran and Greek Orthodox Church are Jehovah's Witnesses, the Free Church, the Catholic Church, the Pentecost Movement, the Mormon Church and Adventists. There are also e.g. Jews, Buddhists, and Hindu and Sikh communities, all of which are few in number. The increasing diversity of religions is also seen in the number of religious communities. The number of religious communities has been increasing throughout the 21st century (Illman et al. 2017, 7). Parallel to the religious diversity of society, partially generated by increased migration, Finnish society has also become increasingly secularized. It has been argued that people's faith in many traditional authorities has weakened and this is reflected in their relationship to religion. As a parallel phenomenon for secularization in Finland, it has been argued that religion has become privatized. Furthermore, religion has become

internationalized and there is more and more interest in both spiritual and ethical issues and in new religious movements (Ketola et al. 2016, 7-8; Illman et al. 2007, 7-10).

2. Youth experience of religion, faith and spirituality

In Finland the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Greek Orthodox Church have organized a broad range of educational activities for children and young people, such as different kinds of clubs and voluntary work. In addition, the Lutheran Church has traditionally been in close contact with schools. The Lutheran Church has until recently organized weekly morning assemblies in schools and traditionally, school pupils have participated in specific ceremonies in church during Easter and Christmas time. In many places these kinds of activities have decreased in the last few years mainly due to secularization and changes in society (Ketola 2016, 129-132). In Finland, confirmation school is very popular. Nowadays, it is seen as part of youth culture. In 2017, about 85.8 percent of all those who turned 15 over the year attended confirmation school. In the last few decades confirmation school has mainly been organized as confirmation camps which have been very popular among young people. After confirmation school, churches offer young people evening shows, excursions, camps and so on. Many young people are also interested in working as voluntary workers in confirmation camps (Ketola 2016, 134).

3. Inclusion/exclusion of religion, faith and spirituality in education: A discussion of the ways in Which educational systems (secondary and post-secondary) govern and include/exclude religion, faith and spirituality and the views of young people about the situation.

In Finland, pupils mainly attend public schools. There are only a few private schools in the country. All schools get their basic funding from the state. There are only 16 Christian-based schools in Finland. The state requires that all schools which are funded by the state should follow a uniform national curriculum which is accepted by the Finnish Board of Education. In Finland, religious education (hence RE) is provided as part of comprehensive-level and secondary-level education. RE is a compulsory subject in Finnish schools. Religious education is organized in separate groups according to the pupil's religion. Currently, Finland has 13 different curricula for RE (Evangelical-Lutheran, Greek Orthodox, Catholic, Islam, Jewish, Buddhism, Krishna religion, Kristi Society (Steiner Society), the Lord's people(Protest Society), Mormonism, the Free Church and the Seven-day Adventist Church). For pupils who are not members of a religious community an alternative subject called secular ethics is provided (Kallioniemi & Ubani 2016). All these different forms of

RE are not organized in every school and some forms of RE (Mormons, Free Church and Seven Day Adventists) are not organized at all, although they do have the curriculum. The aim of RE is to produce all-round religious literacy. According to the general aims of RE the task of this education is to familiarize pupils with their own religions, with Finnish religious traditions, and with other religions to help pupils understand the cultural and human meaning of religion, to introduce pupils to notions of ethical responsibility and to help them understand the ethical dimension of religion (National Core Curriculum for Basic Education, 2014).

According to statistics in 2016, 88.6 per cent of pupils at the comprehensive level participated in Evangelical-Lutheran RE, 6.6 % in secular ethics lessons and 4.8 % in other forms of RE (Vipunen 2017). There are significant differences in different parts of the country, e.g. in the Helsinki Capital area there are several schools which offer five different forms of RE (Evangelical-Lutheran, Orthodox, Catholic, Buddhist and Islam) as well as secular ethics (Tainio & Kallioniemi 2019, 22).

Usually one RE lesson per week is given at the comprehensive school level. In upper secondary school there at present two compulsory courses (including 33 lesson). Pupils can also choose extra courses in RE, but it is not very common to participate in more RE courses. At the end of the upper secondary school, a matriculation exam is offered where pupils can also choose to sit an exam in RE, though only a few pupils choose this option. In vocational education, (ages 16-19) no RE classes are provided. In universities and polytechnics no religious education classes are given, though theology and religious studies can be studied as university subject (Kallioniemi & Ubani 2016).

In last youth barometer in 2018 showed that young person's religiosity has decreased since 2010. 9% of young people estimate that they are very religious and 33% that they are non-religious. The change is evident judging by the increase in recent years in the number of young persons who describe themselves as non-religious. Furthermore, according to the European Social Survey, young persons who consider themselves to be Christians is falling fast in Finland (Pekkarinen & Myllyniemi 2019; Pew Research Centre 2018, 37).

Further reading and online resources:

Korpela, S. 2010. Finnish schools: Religion lessons support kids' identity's. What's the solution to the recurring hot topic of how to approach religion in schools? <https://finland.fi/life-society/religion-lessons-support-kids-identities/>

Pew Templeton Global Religious Future Project. 2019. http://www.globalreligiousfutures.org/countries/finland/religious_demography#/?affiliations_religion_id=0&affiliations_year=2020

Religious Communities. 2019. <https://minedu.fi/en/religious-communities>

SUOL. 2016. Religious Education in Finland. <https://www.suol.fi/index.php/religious-education-in-finland>.

YLE 2018 - Nearly 1.5 million in Finland do not profess any religion. 2018. One in four people in Finland do not belong to any religious community. The figure has risen in recent years. https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/nearly_15_million_in_finland_do_not_profess_any_religion/10432562

References

Church Statistics 2017. <http://sakasti.evli.fi/sakasti.nsf/sp3?open&cid=Content240FFA> (read on 11th of April, 2019).

Kallioniemi, A. & Ubani, M. 2016. Religious Education in Finnish School System. In Niemi, H., Toom, A & Kallioniemi, A. (eds.). *Miracle of Education: The Principles and Practices of Teaching and Learning in Finnish Schools*. Second revised edition. Rotterdam: Sense Publisher, 179-191.

Ketola, K., Hytönen, M., Salminen, V-M, Sohlberg, J. & Sorsa, L. 2016. *Osallistuva luterilaisuus. Suomen evankelis-luterilainen kirkko vuosina 2012-2015. Tutkimus kirkosta ja suomalaisista. Kirkon tutkimuskeskuksen julkaisuja 125*. Kuopio: Grano Oy.

National Core Curriculum for Basic Education, 2014. Helsinki: Board of Education.

Pekkarinen, E. & Myllyniemi, S. 2019. *Vaikutusvaltaa Euroopan laidalla. Nuorisobarometri 2018*. Helsinki. <https://tietoanuorista.fi/nuorisobarometri/nuorisobarometri-2018/> (Read on 11th of April, 2019).

Pew Research Centre (2018) *Being Christian in Western Europe*. <http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2018/05/14165352/Being-Christian-in-Western-Europe-FOR-WEB1>.

Tainio, L. & Kallioniemi, A. 2019. *Koulun monet kielet ja uskonnot. Selvitys vähemmistökielten ja –uskontojen sekä suomi ja ruotsi toisena kielenä – opetuksen tilanteesta eri koulutusasteilla*.

Valtioneuvoston selvitys- ja tutkimustoiminnan julkaisusarja 11/2019.
(<https://tietokayttoon.fi/julkaisut/raportti?pubid=URN:ISBN:978-952-287-640-9>). (read on 10th of April, 2019).

Vipunen. Opetushallinnon tilastopalvelu (2017). Perusopetuksen 1–6 luokilla katsomusaineita opiskelleet. <https://vipunen.fi/fi-fi/layouts/15/xlviewer.aspx?id=/fi-fi/Raportit/Perusopetus%20-%20ainevalinnat%20-%20katsomusaine%20-%201-6%20-%20maakunta.xlsb> (read on 11th of April, 2019).