

**Subject:** Report  
**Title:** Observation – First Contact Day – Special Needs Education for Vocational Teachers  
**Teacher:** Leena Nuutila – HAAGA-Helia University Helsinki  
**Students:** 31  
**Topic:** before noon: welcoming & introduction / after lunch: creation of “own curriculum”  
**Date/Time:** 26.05.2011 / 10:00 – 15:00

### Some facts:

Sonja and I took part in this first contact day of “Special Needs Education for Vocational Teachers” as our bachelor thesis works on this topic (Vocational Special Needs Education - A Comparison between the Austrian and the Finnish System). The teaching language was Finnish but Seija Eskola (she works for FPD Järvenpää Training Centre but she does a month-long training at HAAGA-HELIA) translated for us and so we were able to follow the programme.

We could catch the following details.

- The teacher students come from different areas (e. g. technics, arts, culture, health care, social professions etc.)
- The studies are divided into 2 parts (basis studies with 25 ECTS and Special Vocational Education with 35 ECTS).
- It's possible to do the basis studies at Helsinki University previously (if not then the students have more meetings during the contact days => all contact days with 3 days meetings instead of only 2 days meetings etc.).
- The Special Vocational Education is split into 6 parts and each part has different ECTS to gain.
- 6 groups were built and each group should work out its “individual curriculum” of one point of the Special Vocational Education e. g. they should define their personal aim and understanding of the studies.
- Afterwards presentation of each group with discussion of all students.
- e. g. 4<sup>th</sup> topic: Vocational Special Needs Education and Society (What about the future? Politics plays a significant role in education and in general in our life. Personal integration of pupils/students is very important. Laws decide the way and are important as well. Financial support from the government is essential ...)
- e. g. 5<sup>th</sup> topic: Project work – every student (alone or in groups) has to do a project work – the project should have to do something with the students' working life, projects with working organisations are also possible ...).
- e. g. 6<sup>th</sup> topic: Teaching exercises (for that topic the highest amount of ECTS is available in fact 10 ECTS) – observations of colleagues, observations in different schools, giving lessons, team teaching etc.)

### Our statement:

Today Sonja and I were mostly impressed with the group work of creating an “own curriculum”. We have not seen this kind of education before and we would appreciate the implementation also in the Austrian Education System for both (teacher) students and our pupils in our vocational schools.

Furthermore we could find out during our stay in Finland that the Finnish education system is more flexible and for sure more individual than the Austrian system. Individual support to each pupil is the main aim of the Finnish Education System and we like this procedure.

Many thanks to all for our pleasant, informative and very instructive three months stay here both at HAAGA-HELIA University in Helsinki and in all schools we could visit.