

FACTS.

3C/2018

express



Tutor teacher activities in basic education in Finland

BACKGROUND

In June 2015, Prime Minister Juha Sipilä published five key projects aimed at developing knowledge and education. The first of these was new learning environments and digital materials to comprehensive schools, and one of its key development areas is the basic and in-service teacher training.

The key project was launched around the time of the implementation of the new national core curriculum for basic education, which began in autumn 2016. Minister of Education Sanni Grahn-Laasonen published the new comprehensive school action plan, which was created to support the implementation of the key project. The action plan determines three goals for comprehensive schools: learner-centred education, competent teachers and collaborative school culture. In 2016–2019, a total of 90 million euros is allocated towards reaching these goals.

Tutor teacher activities are one of the most significant practical measures in reaching Finland's goal of having the most competent teachers in the world. The activities are supported with 23 million euros in 2016–2018. The objective of the New comprehensive school programme is to have tutor teachers in all 2,500 comprehensive schools in Finland to embrace new pedagogical approaches and promote the digitalisation of teaching. The tutor teacher activities have been particularly supported with discretionary government transfers, which education providers have been able to apply for from the Finnish National Agency for Education. The first discretionary government transfers were made available for application in autumn 2016. They were aimed towards supporting the training and development of the professional skills of tutor teachers as well as implementing tutor

teaching and peer support in practice. The second application took place in autumn 2017. The application categories were tutor teacher training and putting tutor teaching into practice, and developing regional networks of tutor teachers.

In 2017, the Finnish National Agency for Education carried out a survey on the training and activities for tutor teachers to assess the impact of the discretionary government transfers. The key findings of the survey are presented in this publication.

Comprehensive school in Finland

- 9 years within the scope of general compulsory education
- Majority of compulsory schools are publicly funded
- All schools follow the national core curriculum



FINNISH NATIONAL
AGENCY FOR EDUCATION

GOVERNMENT
KEY PROJECT

TUTOR TEACHERS IN NUMBERS

In total, 289 education providers in Finland responded to the survey; 248 of them were municipalities, 34 private schools and 7 universities governing teacher training schools. As the education providers left outside the survey had a low number of students, the education providers that responded to the survey included over 99% of all pupils and teachers in basic education in Finland. In total, 2,210 comprehensive schools operate under the respondents.

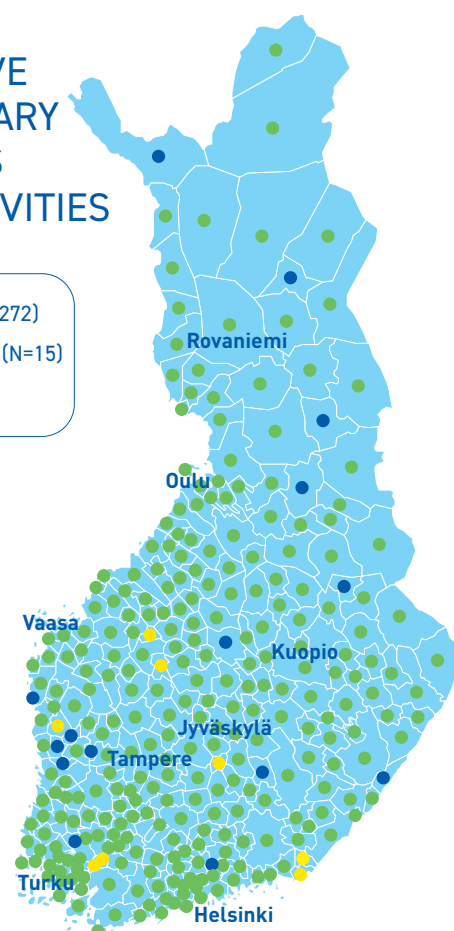
The total number of tutor teachers in these schools is 2,289, of whom 1,884, or 82%, have been trained with discretionary government transfers. On average, there are 21 teachers receiving tutoring per each tutor teacher.

At the time of the survey, 88% of the respondents provided both training for tutor teachers as well as practical tutor teacher activities, 7% only provided tutor

MUNICIPALITIES THAT HAVE APPLIED FOR DISCRETIONARY GOVERNMENT TRANSFERS FOR TUTOR TEACHER ACTIVITIES

- Has applied for a government transfer (N=272)
- Has not applied for a government transfer (N=15)
- Participates as a partner (N=8)

Source: The discretionary government transfer system of the Finnish National Agency for Education



teacher activities, and 1% only training for tutor teachers. 4% provided neither.

The education providers assessed that they had invested a total of some 2.5 million euros of their own funding in the tutor teachers in 2017. Around a third of this was spent on training tutor teachers and the remaining two thirds on the actual tutor teacher activities.

TUTOR TEACHERS IN COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOLS

2 289
tutor teachers

of whom

1 884

were trained with discretionary government transfers

One tutor teacher
tutors on average

21
teachers

339 education
providers have
been granted
discretionary government
transfers for tutor teacher
activities

to the amount of

17.3 million euros

Of all Finnish teachers and
pupils, **99 %**

are reached by the
education providers
receiving the discretionary
government transfer

TUTOR TEACHERS ARE TRAINED WITH PURCHASED SERVICES AND INDEPENDENTLY AT THE SCHOOLS

Over half of the education providers had implemented the training for tutor teachers by combining training carried out by the organisation with a purchased service. Out of the total respondents, 31% reported purchasing the entire training from outside and 13% organising it fully independently. The larger the education provider, the more likely it was to have provided the training by combining its own training with that purchased from another service provider. Of education providers with over 2,500 pupils, 80% had used this combined model, whereas of education providers with under 500 pupils, over a third had purchased the entire training service and nearly 20% had provided the training using their own personnel.

At the start of the application period for the discretionary government transfers, the following focus areas were set to the training:

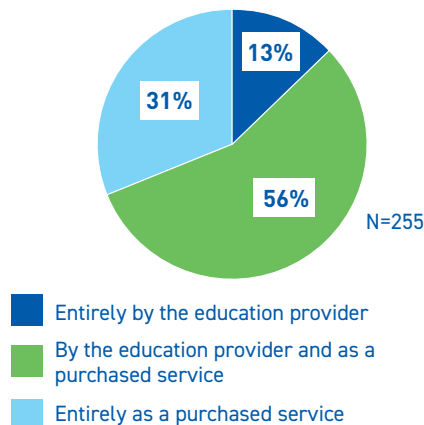
- the school's capacity for long-term development
- innovation and experimenting skills
- competence in peer training, and mentoring and coaching skills
- interaction and networking skills
- pedagogical digital skills

84–91 % of the respondents considered that they had achieved all of these focus areas very or fairly well.

The survey also listed six different support measures by the state and requested the respondents to assess their significance. 95% fully or somewhat agreed with a statement that it is important that the Finnish National Agency for Education and the Ministry of Education and Culture organise regional training events. Over 80% fully or somewhat agreed that the state should support the activities with

- guidance and training organised at the municipal level
- national training events
- open online courses

TRAINING OF TUTOR TEACHERS HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED



- online discussion forums
- national guides, instructions and recommendations.

The respondents wished that the Finnish National Agency for Education and the Ministry of Education and Culture would make decisions on the competence areas for tutor teachers that the training should particularly aim to develop. The training supporting tutor teacher activities organised by these authorities was also considered important. Many wished that the training would be specifically aimed at tutor teachers by contrast to the traditional in-service teacher training on information and communication technology provided to teachers. The respondents also wished for regional training as they considered this to play a key role in regional networking. Many of the respondents considered it important that the discretionary government transfers were allocated to networking that supports the tutor teacher activities in the first place.

The respondents found that the field of training available for tutor teachers was fragmented and it was difficult to find information about training by different providers as well as materials supporting high-quality activities. Around two thirds felt that it was fairly or very easy to find an outside training provider; however, there were major regional differences in finding a suitable training provider. One of the solutions suggested by the respondents was that the state could compile information related to in-service teacher training and learning materials in accordance with the platform approach and provide

information about these in a centralised manner. Another suggestion mentioned national tutor teacher training online provided by the state.

The majority of the respondents had cooperated with other education providers. This cooperation usually involved joined training, network-like work for developing activities and sharing competence as well as peer support. Many networks had their own steering groups coordinating the training of tutor teachers and, in some cases, also the actual tutor teacher activities beyond the borders of municipalities.

In their open-ended responses, the great majority of the respondents wished that the state would continue to strongly support the training and competence development of tutor teachers in the future. Some of the respondents addressed a need for more predictable and long-term funding to replace today's relatively short project entities of 1–3 years. The respondents also considered such a long-term approach as important as digitalisation results in a quick development of the job description and competence requirements of tutor teachers, making it crucial for them to continuously update their competence.

The majority of the respondents had cooperated with other education providers.

SCHOOLS HAVE THEIR OWN AND SHARED TUTOR TEACHERS – JOB CONTENTS VARY

Out of all tutor teachers in Finland, over three quarters circulated between two or more schools. This practice was particularly common with education providers with a large number of pupils. Of municipal education providers, 40% used both school-specific and circulating tutor teachers. The larger the education provider, the more likely it was to use a combination of the two models.

35% of municipal education providers used school-specific tutor teachers. As private education providers were typically only responsible for one school, they mostly used school-specific tutor teachers.

There was considerable variation in the tutor teachers’ job contents. This is likely a result of the fact that most have only recently started their activities and their tasks are yet to be established. The variation can also be explained by major differences in working hours: job descriptions can be presumed to be often more extensive for nearly full-time tutor teachers compared to those who only spend a few hours tutoring each week.

At the start of the discretionary government transfer period, 12 goals were set for the work of tutor teachers. Based on the responses, the versatile pedagogical use of technology and knowledge of the new core curriculum have been achieved the best. According to at least 75% of the respondents, versatile use of learning environments, peer learning, and creating a participatory school culture have also been achieved very or fairly well. The development of innovation skills and assessment competence were the weakest areas.

Open-ended answers providing further information on the job tasks

particularly highlighted tutoring with an emphasis on digital competence, which also included competence in using equipment and software. Different tasks related to peer support, one-on-one guidance, team teaching and encouragement were mentioned as the second, and tasks and support measures related to the implementation of the new core curricula as the third content. Many tutor teachers were also responsible for cooperating with IT personnel, surveying the ICT competence of the teachers, providing training, participating in procurement, and taking part in local, regional and national network cooperation. They also spent their working hours on developing their personal competence and work as well as producing support materials.

TOWARDS MORE COMPREHENSIVE, PEDAGOGICAL TUTORING

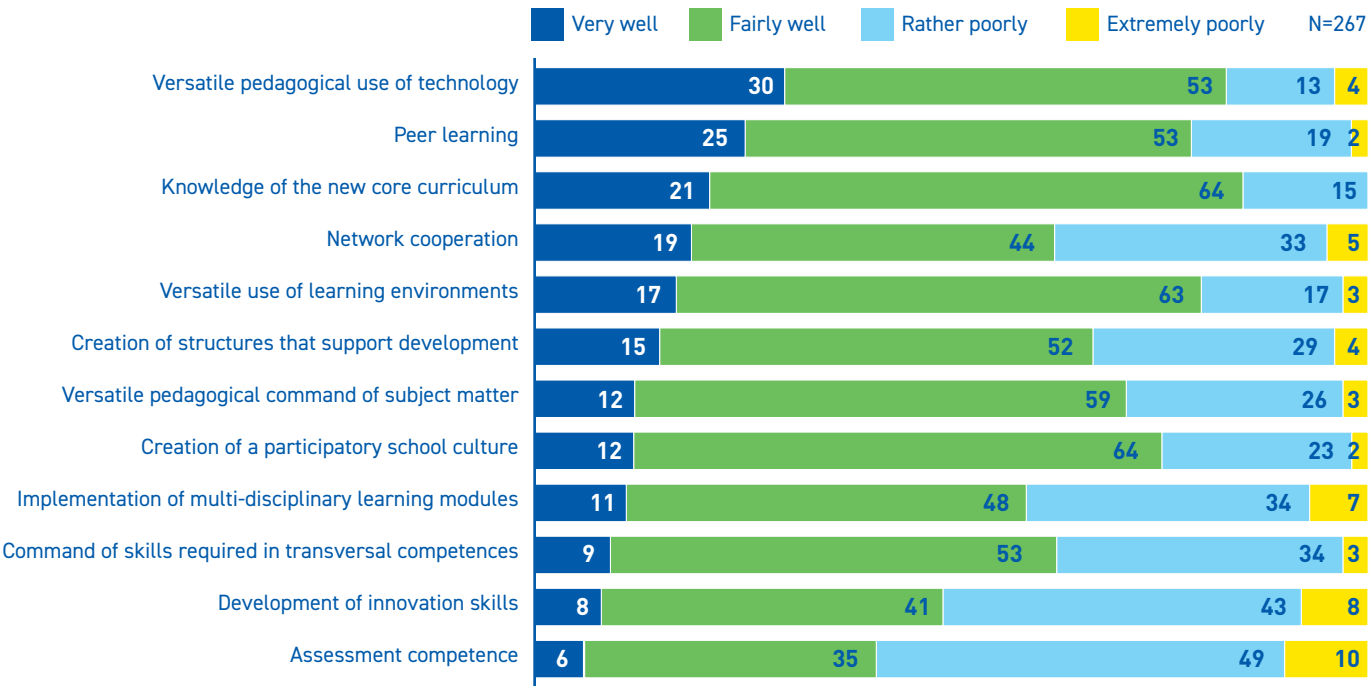
The responses illustrated quite clearly a shift in the focus of the tutor teachers’ work from mere information and communication technology contents

towards more comprehensive pedagogical tutoring, where digital technologies continue to play a significant role as a tool and facilitator. For some parts, tutor teachers had begun specialising in certain tasks or task entities as a result of the extensive job contents.

The tutor teachers typically spent 1–5 hours per week on their task. It was very common to evenly share the hours between tutor teachers or for the tutor teachers to agree on the division of hours together. If there were considerable differences in the tutor teachers’ competence, the working time resource was flexibly distributed more to those whose competence was most needed by the tutored teachers. If the activities concerned a number of schools, the resource was distributed between the schools either evenly, based on numbers of pupils and teachers, or according to need. A few reported that they had carried out campaigns focused on their schools which involved, for instance, all or most of the education provider’s tutor teachers giving their support for the teachers of one of the schools for one day.

Most commonly, the time resource of the tutor teachers was divided between the tutored teachers based on need. For example, a teacher could use an electronic calendar to book time with the tutor teacher when needed.

ACHIEVEMENT OF GOALS IN PRACTICAL TUTOR TEACHER ACTIVITIES



Needs were also mapped out with surveys and competence assessments. In addition to personal tutoring, the tutor teachers provided training to groups.

Participation was usually voluntary for teachers. However, many respondents noted that their school had aimed to particularly encourage the active involvement of teachers whose competence was at a risk of being left behind from current requirements. Some also mentioned encountering a degree of resistance to change and not being able to get all teachers involved.

TUTOR TEACHER ACTIVITIES HAVE SUCCEEDED IN TAKING ROOT

The tutor teacher activities have been strongly launched with discretionary government transfers. However, the transfers cannot be used to finance the activities in the long run. The fact that activities end once funding stops has been generally recognised as a risk for project activities. Nonetheless, more than 95% of the education providers participating in the survey evaluated that the tutor teacher activities would continue after the end of the discretionary government transfers. In fact, one in four considered that the activities would be more extensive, while one in

Over 95% of the education providers projected that their tutor teacher activities would also continue in the future.

four felt they would continue as today. Around 43% assessed that the activities would be realised in a smaller scale in the future.

The variation in the projections of the extent of future activities was rather notable in relation to the numbers of students of the respondents. The smaller the education provider, the more likely it was to believe that the tutor teacher activities would be expanded: Out of the education providers with at most 500 pupils, nearly 70% evaluated that the tutor teacher activities would continue at their current extent or even more extensively than presently. While the biggest education providers, which included all cities with over 100,000 inhabitants, assessed that the tutor teacher activities would continue, 90% of them believed that the future activities would be realised on a smaller scale than today.

The reason why small education providers viewed the extent of future activities more positively is likely to stem at least partly from the fact that many of them are only currently training their first tutor teachers and

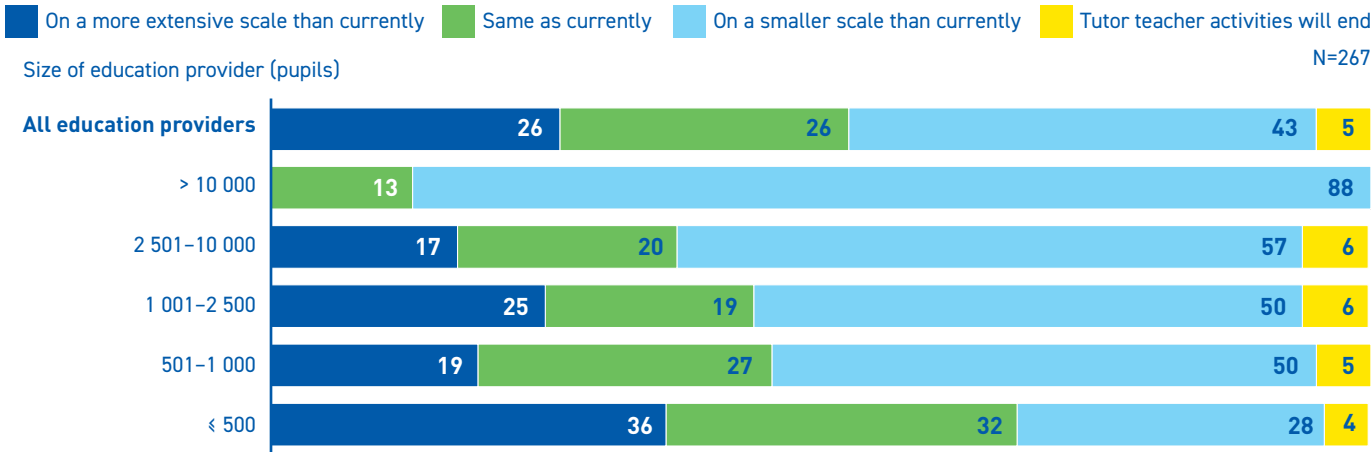
launching their tutor teacher activities. As a result, retaining the scope of the activities at the current level or even expanding them will not require particular effort. By contrast, the larger education providers have often already taken their tutor teacher activities far, and are therefore more likely to have to adjust the activities.

Overall, the assessments of the future of the tutor teacher activities are highly positive. Possible reasons for the strong prospects include the positive impacts and reasonable operating costs of the tutor teacher activities. Moreover, many of the respondents evaluated that, in the future, it will be possible to carry out effective tutor teacher activities with a smaller budget than at the launching stage as tutor teachers have already been trained, equipment and software has been procured, and the new operating culture has already been established. Nonetheless, many of the open-ended responses emphasised that, despite the positive future prospects, the education providers see their opportunities for increasing their self-financing share as uncertain and the discretionary government transfers have a huge impact on the extent of the implemented tutor teacher activities.

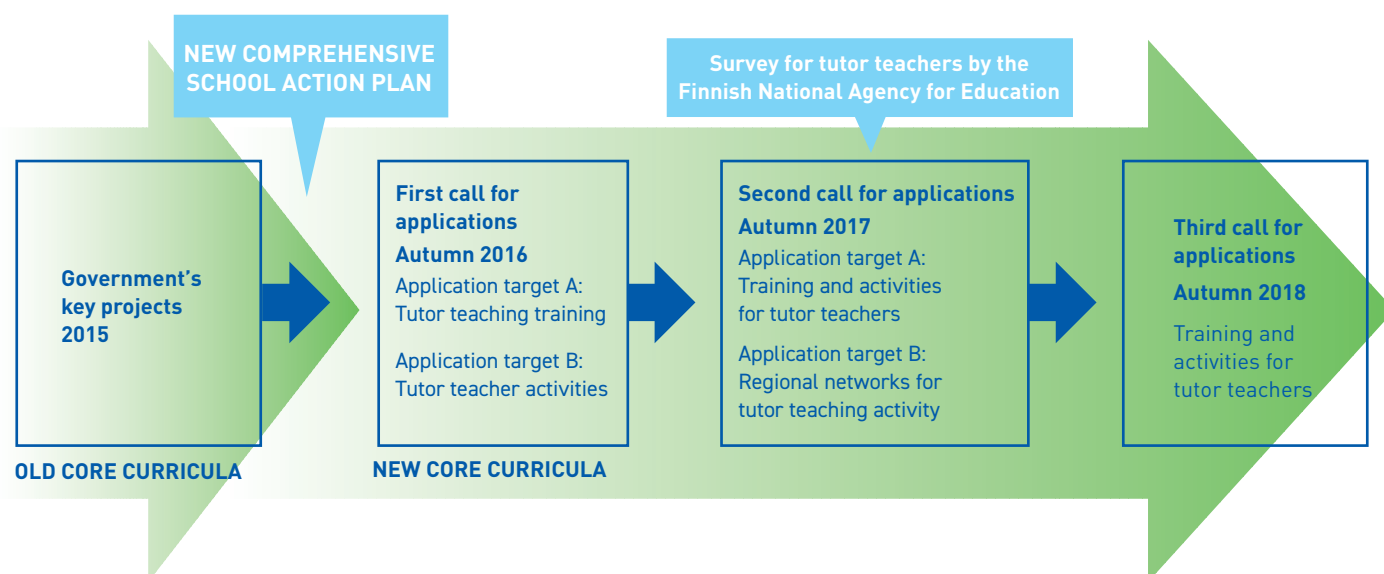
Sources: The tutor teacher survey of the Finnish National Agency for Education 2017 and the discretionary government transfer system of the Finnish National Agency for Education.

The new comprehensive school action plan: minedu.fi/en/new-comprehensive-education

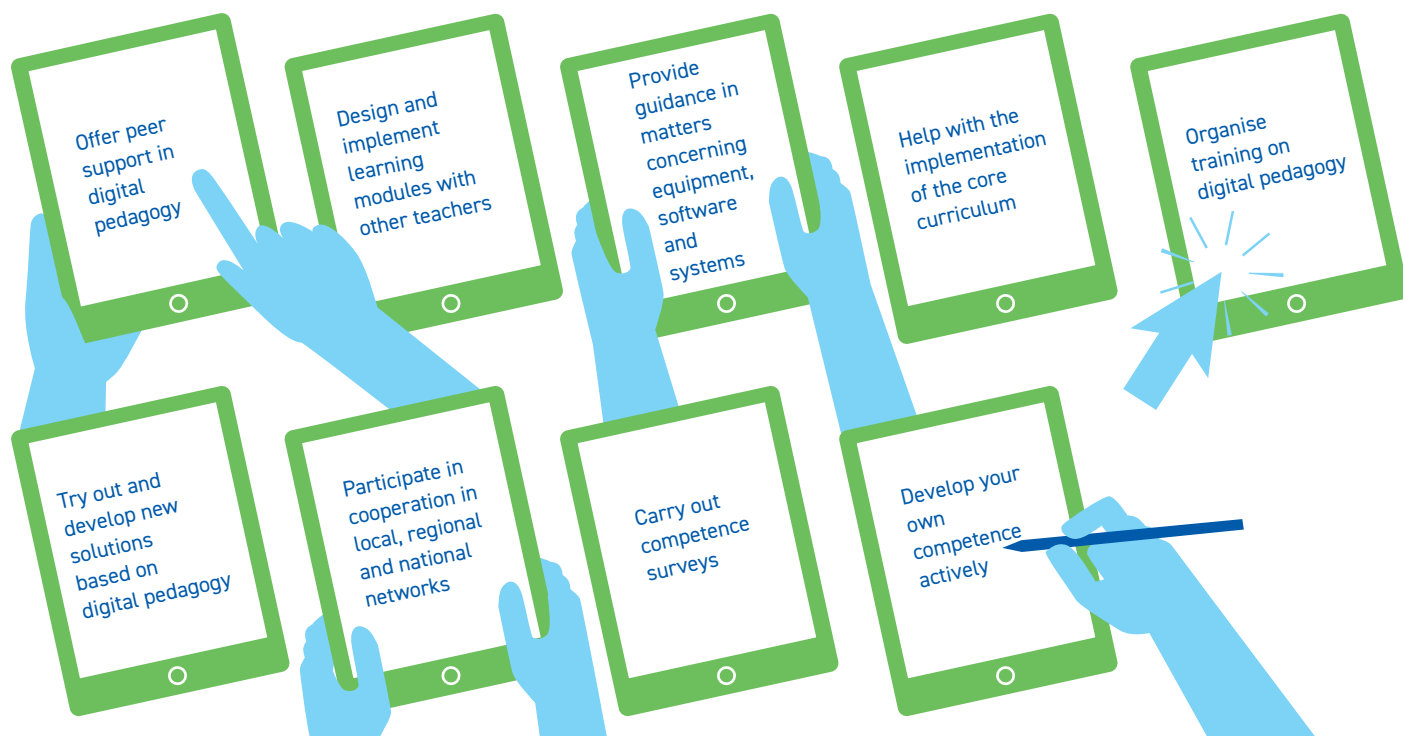
ESTIMATED CONTINUATION OF TUTOR TEACHER ACTIVITIES AFTER THE END OF THE DISCRETIONARY GOVERNMENT TRANSFER



TUTOR TEACHER ACTIVITIES SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION



TO-DO-LIST OF A TUTOR TEACHER



The Finnish National Agency for Education is an agency operating in the administrative branch of the Ministry of Education and Culture. It is responsible for the development of education, early childhood education and care, and lifelong learning as well as for the promotion of internationalisation