

PRE-INTERMEDIATE UNIT 4

1 Work in pairs and discuss.

- 1 What was your favourite lesson at school? Why did you like it so much?
- 2 Do you prefer academic subjects like maths and science or vocational subjects like IT and cooking? Why?

2 Read the article about the education system in Finland. What changes is the Finnish government making? Compare your answers in pairs.

Finnish schools to teach topics rather than subjects



For many years, the education system in Finland has been **admired** as one of the best in the world. Finland is usually at the top of international league tables for literacy and numeracy. Despite this success, the Finnish government is planning major **reforms** to the way children and young people are taught.

The planned changes are **radical**: for certain periods of the year, traditional learning by subject will be **scrapped** and replaced with learning by topic instead. Students will no longer have subject-specific lessons, for example an hour of maths followed by an hour of biology. Instead they will be taught **broad** topics which include lots of different subjects. For example, pupils might have lessons on the European Union which would include history, geography, foreign languages and economics. They might also study **vocational** topics, for example based around working in a shop, which would include the subjects necessary for that job, such as English for talking to customers.

The format of lessons will also change, with pupils sitting in small groups and working in **collaboration** to solve problems instead of just sitting listening to their teacher.

The reason for the planned changes is to better prepare young people for work. In recent years, jobs have changed due to **technological advances**, and the Finnish government believes that the education system needs to change to reflect that.

Despite some **opposition** from teachers, the changes have already taken place in several schools. It will be interesting to see if other countries, including the UK, decide to **follow in Finland's footsteps**.

3 Read the text again and answer the questions.

- 1 Is the current Finnish education system successful?
- 2 What are Finnish schools best at in the world?
- 3 What subjects will pupils learn in a European Union class?
- 4 What will change about the way pupils sit in the classroom?
- 5 Why is the Finnish government changing the education system?
- 6 When will the changes happen?

4 Match the words/phrases in bold in the article with their meanings 1–10.

- 1 changes to a system or organisation in order to improve it _____
- 2 copy what Finland is doing _____
- 3 changes or discoveries in science or technology that bring progress _____
- 4 cancelled or stopped _____
- 5 dramatic or important _____
- 6 including many different kinds of things _____
- 7 liked and respected _____
- 8 working together with another person or group to achieve something _____
- 9 relating to the skills you need to do a particular job _____
- 10 strong disagreement _____

5 Work in pairs and discuss. Do you think the reforms to the Finnish education system are a good idea? Why/Why not?

6 4.1 Listen to Tom and Rachel talking about the article. Do they think the reforms are a good idea or a bad idea?

7 Listen again. Who says the following: Tom (T) or Rachel (R)?

- 1 It's important to study subjects in detail.
- 2 It's easier to learn facts in a traditional class.
- 3 The reforms will take time to be successful.
- 4 The reforms will help students learn things at school that will be useful in their everyday lives.
- 5 University is for learning about real life.
- 6 The reforms will make the teacher less important.

8 The words/phrases in the box are from the recording. Match the words/phrases with their synonyms 1–8.

What a load of rubbish! in depth here and there
eventually overnight in context
everyday situations what's the point

- 1 in a disorganised way
- 2 immediately
- 3 normal things that happen all the time
- 4 after a long period of time
- 5 I completely disagree!
- 6 what is the reason for
- 7 in a practical way
- 8 in a lot of detail

9 Work in pairs and discuss. Do you think the education system in your country is good? How could it be improved? Use language from Exercise 8 to help you.