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Professor Reuven Feuerstein Photo: Alex Kolomoisky

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## Finland adopts Israeli education method

Nordic country with one of world's best education systems adopts Professor Reuven Feuerstein's revolutionary learning method in nursery, grade schools

Tamar Trabelsi-Hadad

Published: 04.17.12, 22:48 / [Israel News](#)




Finland has been leading the global education system [rankings](#) for years and is considered a role model and object of admiration with regards to educational achievements. Yet in spite of its successes in the field of education, the Nordic country has chosen to adopt an educational system conceived in [Israel](#).

The man behind the program is 90-year-old Professor Reuven Feuerstein, a world-renowned cognitive psychologist, a Professor of Psychology at the School of Education at the University of Bar Ilan and founder of the Feuerstein Institute (International Center for the Enhancement of Learning Potential) and an Israel Prize laureate in the field of Social Sciences.

Feuerstein's program focuses on imparting cognitive and learning abilities and has already been implemented in hundreds of schools and education and training institutions in Israel and in 40 countries including the US, Holland, France, Brazil and Indonesia.

At its basis, the program focuses on adaptation to individual groups – like students and soldiers from Ethiopian backgrounds, therapy and rehabilitation for people with head injuries as well as gifted and outstanding students or students with Down syndrome and even the elderly.

Feuerstein applied systems have already been in use in Finland's special education system for over 20 years in treating autism and learning disabilities. In recent years the system has been put to use in preparing the unemployed for the workforce.

### Identifying strong points

Now, in light of its success, Finland's education authorities have decided to implement the system at nursery and grade schools. The training process which saw Israeli experts travelling to Finland to share their know-how on the program with local teachers has recently been completed.

According to Professor Feuerstein, the system he developed focuses on the concept that people have the ability to change themselves, and the key to this is in identifying the factors that are hindering them as well as their strong points in order to develop their learning abilities.

"This is the language of learning and cognition," he explains. "We first implemented it in 1952 on children who survived the Holocaust in order to help them to integrate. Since then we have taken children and adults from many countries throughout the world, some in very complicated situations and helped them reach advanced levels of learning and success.

"The secret is that we do not teach content, rather we impart learning and cognitive thinking strategies."

On Tuesday night Professor Feuerstein will be honored at a gala event at the King David Hotel in Jerusalem in the presence of President Shimon Peres, retired Supreme Court Judge Yaakov Tirkel, and leading educators and judicial officials.

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