



Multiculturalism as a resource

Educating teachers with immigrant backgrounds to serve as specialists and valuable resources in increasingly multicultural Finnish schools

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Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the implementation and impact of the *Kuulumisia* project carried out at the School of Education¹ at the University of Tampere in Finland. This is an ongoing project under which the School of Education provides education and training towards teacher qualification for students with an immigrant background. In particular, we will explain the background and possibilities of such education as well as throw light on the challenges

¹ Name of the Faculty of Education was School of Education from 2013 to 2019.

and opportunities faced by teachers with an immigrant background. Furthermore, selected findings of the background research conducted by Jaakko Vuorio (2015) for his master's thesis are interwoven in this chapter.

A brief account of the terminology employed in this chapter is in place here. First, regarding the title of the project, the Finnish word *Kuulumisia* is a plural form that may be understood in two ways, depending on the context. In everyday conversation, it often means 'news' or 'greetings' whereas in the present context this word may be understood as the generic plural of the singular word *kuuluminen* 'a sense of belonging' or 'integration'. Thus, the title of the project may literally be understood in English as 'senses of belonging' or 'integrations'. In the present discussion, we will of course be referring to the project in its original Finnish form, but may, when feasible in English, use it as a modifier to a noun, e.g., the *Kuulumisia* students. Second, the terms 'immigrant' and 'individual with an immigrant background' are multi-faceted and their use is not unproblematic. Even so, the present purpose is not to contemplate on the scope of these terms nor argue to whom they may rightfully be employed to refer. Instead, we use these terms to describe the students in the *Kuulumisia* project; in its selection criteria, the term 'individual with an immigrant background' is defined as an individual who has completed (or received the minimum of two years of) his or her school education outside Finland in a language other than Finnish, Swedish, or Saami.

Kuulumisia: Underlying rationale

Kuuluminen, a sense of belonging [...] is a basic factor in the build-up of communities and in the status of their people. A sense of belonging develops through two ways. First, it grows through discourse, that is, how we and others are presented. Second, it grows in societal interaction, in other

words in situations involving actions and operations that portray belonging. (Lehtonen & Löytty 2003, 14. Translated from Finnish by the authors.)

Besides the foregoing definition, one may presume that the title of the *Kuulumisia* project refers to David Morley's article (2003) entitled *Kuulumisia – aika, tila ja identiteetti medioituneessa maailmassa* [*Belongings – time, space, and identity in the mediacentred world*]. In the article, the writer seeks an answer to the question of how we should interpret the variations of thinking regarding the concept of 'home' that have resulted from the extensive changes in the patterns of communication and from the physical mobility in our current "unstable" (or even deterritorialized) world. When talking about home, Morley has in mind the symbolic aspects of home both in the narrow sense, as a physical place (household) and in a wider spatial sense (Heimat). These form, on different geographical scales, diverse 'statuses of belonging' or 'statuses of identity', such as local, national or transnational communities in which people feel 'at home' (Morley 2003, 155). Morley's text is thought-provoking, because the idea of the locality of continuing education targeted at teachers with an immigrant background or teacher candidates with an immigrant background aptly describes the philosophy behind the *Kuulumisia* teacher qualification training and education programme.

The *Kuulumisia* project was launched in 2009 at the Faculty of Education at the University of Tampere, Finland, thanks to the special funding under the Specima programme granted by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture. The project has from the start been built around teacher qualification training and education programme for teacher candidates with an immigrant background and for individuals with an immigrant background who are already employed in teaching and education. Besides pursuing to strengthen the participants' comprehensive teacher and educator identities, the *Kuulumisia* project provides them with a means to qualify as a

teacher in the changing operational environments of the Finnish school system.

The *Kuulumisia* project is a significant forerunner in terms of internal reform and the societal impact of the university. Indeed, the project addresses a number of demands placed on universities today, such as societal influence and responsibility, research-based teacher education, integration of immigrants, and methods of encountering the great challenges for reform in Finnish civil society. Thanks to its nature as an international education programme *per se*, *Kuulumisia* brings about novel impressions of what being a teacher in a multicultural society entails. After all, the social dimension is in the foreground in being a teacher.

When designing the contents and forms of the training and education programme, we have taken seriously the fact that societal change is a reality and academic teacher education needs to meet new types of requirements. We have tried to find flexible and case-specific solutions to help students obtain teacher qualification, without compromising the academic level and high quality of the programme. As Luukkainen (2004, 79) points out, in trying to meet the challenges brought about by changes in society, teacher education needs to provide a processing basis for teachers and teacher communities. Such challenges apply to basic and continuation education alike (Luukkainen 2004, 79). Thus, the purpose of the *Kuulumisia* project is to provide professional qualification for immigrants who have academic education but who in Finland find it difficult to find jobs to match their education and competence. The project addresses the increasing need to reinforce multicultural education and specialist knowledge of immigrant-oriented matters in basic and general education as well as in education at large, all the way to the multiple forms of adult education, including liberal adult education.

The background ideas of the *Kuulumisia* project draw on the views presented by Luukkainen (2006, 206–207) and Mirja-Tytti Talib (2005, 23–24). They claim that being a teacher incorporates the values

of the surrounding society and that a teacher repeats these through the operations of the school. Because teachership is also culture-specific, it varies in different societies and therefore it is not easy to make comparisons. Nevertheless, it seems that societal expectations towards what teachership entails have increased. Similarly, society's expectations towards a teacher carry a heavier content load compared to an individual teacher's own notion of the expectations that society places on him or her.

The *Kuulumisia* project pursues to renew the notions of teachership, of teacher identity and of the status of immigrants in society. At the same time – and not least because of the prominent public and cultural roles of teachers – it makes a significant contribution towards updating the notions of what being Finnish entails. This is how one of the students felt about the programme:

One method to achieve many good results is to be able to employ immigrants in the type of work that matches their previous education. An outstanding example of this is employing teachers with an immigrant background to teach in the student's or students' native language and to teach the student's or students' native language. It has had a very positive effect when teachers with an immigrant background have been given the chance to work as links between cultures, as teachers, educators, and developers of cooperation between school and home.

I dare say that among the important measures introduced for the benefit of immigrants, this type of training project stands out as the most important. The significance of the matter can be approached from several directions: The project has helped the immigrant teachers to be more confident with their own skills and knowledge, and with the possibility of continued employment, their immigrant pupils will view their own future prospects more positively because they see that education and achieving a degree make a difference no matter where in the world

you live. At the same time, there is a positive turn in the attitude of the school personnel towards teachers with an immigrant background. (Kuulumisia student 2012–15; student's/students' native language teacher; basic education. Translated from Finnish by the authors).

The field of education offers employment for the most educated immigrants, because a master's degree is a requirement for a permanent teacher's position in Finland. When teachers with an immigrant background do not have formal qualification for teaching in Finland, their sense of detachment and temporariness may easily be reinforced. However, even if they have duly completed the required studies and achieved formal qualification in their own respective countries, additional studies are compulsory before obtaining formal qualification in Finland. (Forsander 2002, 156–157.) Indeed, in Finland the profession of a teacher is strictly regulated and monitored through legislative measures, including overt educational requirements. For example, the posts of primary school and subject teachers are in Finland classified as regulated professions, which means that a certain academic degree or certain academic studies are a prerequisite for formal qualifications for such posts. Regulated professions include public sector posts, duties, and professions subjected to obtaining and holding professional practice rights. The Finnish National Agency for Education is the competent authority responsible for granting professional practice rights for prospective primary school and subject teachers.

Our main cooperation partners and interest groups include, in addition to the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Universities of Jyväskylä and Turku, specialists in other Schools at the University of Tampere, especially the School of Communication, Media and Theatre, the School of Social Sciences and Humanities, and the School of Language, Translation and Literary Studies. The large-scale objective of the programme is to have the participants achieve,

through a long-term and goal-oriented process, professional equality and competence both in the labour market and in the school staffrooms. Our immediate point of departure is the effort to expand and facilitate the students' chances to obtain qualification through an education process in which their prior knowledge is identified and recognized. In a word, the goal of this training programme is to provide the students with wide-stretched pedagogical competence to work as teachers in a multicultural society with changing and diversifying need for workforce.

By August 2015, a total of 138 individuals with an immigrant background attended the *Kuulumisia* teacher qualification training and education programme. On the whole, the countries of origin of our *Kuulumisia* students vary considerably, as the following list shows: Albania/Kosovo, Algeria, Argentina, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belorussia, Belgium, Canada, China, Columbia, Estonia, France, Germany, Ghana, Hungary, India, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Libya, Mexico, Moldavia, Poland, Russia, Somalia, Spain, Switzerland, Syria, Thailand, Tunisia, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. Most of the participants come from countries outside the EU or ETA.

When entering the programme the students minimally hold a lower university degree (bachelor).² Frequently, the main subject of the degree is the same as the subject that the individual pursues to teach (henceforth subject of instruction). In basic education, the minimum requirement for subject teacher qualification is 60 ECTS credits. As a rule, the student must already have completed these before starting the *Kuulumisia* studies. The subjects of instruction range between language studies and science, and between ethics and artistic or practical subjects. A large number of students have

² However, since 2015, the minimum requirement for this teacher qualification training and education programme is an upper university degree, i.e. master's degree, as outlined by the Ministry of Education and Culture, which provides the funding for the programme. This requirement screens out a large number of applicants from countries in Africa and the Middle East, because their academic degree is frequently taken to be a synonym for a lower university degree.

a degree in a language; the most common of these are English, French, Russian, and Spanish. The ensuing list gives an example of the diverse qualifications previously obtained by our students. Language teacher (English), Bachelor of Music, Teacher of Finnish, Teacher of Mathematics and Physics, Bachelor of Arts (Art), Biologist and Teacher of Biology, Nurse, Master of English Translation and Interpreting, Master of Arts (French Language and Literature), Psychology, Study of Finno-Ugric Languages and People, Chinese Language and Literature, Teacher of Russian.

A large number of our students will eventually be employed as language teachers, primarily teaching students' native language, i.e. first language. Henceforth, we will be using the term MAI teacher for such language teachers.³ It is occasionally the case that individuals with an immigrant background end up as MAI teachers whereas their university degree might originally be completed in a different field altogether. This is because it is practically impossible to obtain qualification in Finland for certain languages of instruction, such as Somali, Kurdish, Vietnamese, and Albanian, let alone smaller MAI languages, because Finnish universities do not offer studies in them. Thus, some *Kuulumisia* students work as both MAI teachers and foreign language native teachers, while some teach an additional foreign language, such as English as first foreign language, Russian as second foreign language, or Russian as a native language (MAI). We also have a relatively large number of students with an immigrant background who currently work as teachers of Finnish but they tend to be employed in integration training for immigrants rather than in basic education; a post in the latter requires a degree in Finnish obtained in a Finnish university. In practice this means native level skills in Finnish.

³ The term derives from the Finnish *maahanmuuttajan äidinkieli* 'immigrant's native language', which is used when referring to the subject of instruction. In English, the terms *heritage language* and *community language* exist, but they are somewhat problematic and will not be used here.

A further employment opportunity for *Kuulumisia* students, but not widely known, lies in native language (remedial) teaching. Receiving native language support in their studies tends to be particularly beneficial among the pupils who have recently arrived in the country and are being transferred from preparatory instruction to basic education. Mathematics, natural sciences, and humanities, especially, already contain demanding substance matter on the upper levels of primary school and lower secondary school, and therefore it is worthwhile to improve immigrant pupils' learning process of these subjects by giving remedial and complementary native language instruction. Besides helping the pupils to learn the subject matter, such instruction enhances the development of both Finnish and the pupil's native language. There are no formal qualifications for native language teachers. Yet, on top of their pedagogical studies contained in the programme, several *Kuulumisia* students who work as native language teachers also complete the multi-disciplinary studies required for primary school teacher qualification.

Moreover, *Kuulumisia* students may be employed in giving religious education to denominational minorities, such as Islam. Also, several individuals complement their Muslim education at the University of Helsinki either simultaneously with or after their *Kuulumisia* studies. On the whole, *Kuulumisia* students have a highly positive attitude to their education and are continuously striving to complement their studies.

Flexible solutions and operating models

The *Kuulumisia* project is aimed at individuals who have already completed a university degree. Since many of the *Kuulumisia* students have either studies in education or considerable experience in teaching – some of them have both – we have concluded that the skills and competence already accumulated need to be recognized.

Indeed, the *Kuulumisia* teacher qualification training and education programme has from the start made use of the AHOT (Recognition of Prior Learning) method, which allows for earlier knowledge to be recognized. In practice, the student brings along his or her existing academic certificates and certificates of his or her work experience from Finland and from abroad. All this is projected against the contents of the programme, heeding to each student's individual skills and needs. Thus, an individual study plan (HOPS) is made for the student to follow. Thanks to the flexibility embedded in the HOPS procedure, the *Kuulumisia* programme offers the option of carrying out complementary studies of 15 ECTS credits for students who have obtained teacher qualification in their countries of origin and who, in accordance with the recognition and assessment of prior learning by the Finnish National Agency for Education, must complement their studies accordingly in order to obtain qualification for employment as a teacher in Finland.

Flexibility and heeding to students' individual situations are also visible in the practical realisation of the programme. Much of the studies are carried out on a distance and multi-modal basis through the electronic learning platform of the University of Tampere, accessible at Learning.uta.fi, whereas contact teaching takes place during weekends. This means that it is possible to conduct studies under this programme whilst being employed in other locations than Pirkanmaa, the region around the city of Tampere. Actually, a large number of students come from places other than Tampere and its vicinity, and we could indeed claim that our students come not only from around the world but from around Finland as well.

Both pedagogical and multidisciplinary studies at the University of Tampere include supervised student teaching. Yet, the *Kuulumisia* students deviate from degree students in the sense that in general their student teaching takes place in the field and not in the university's teacher training school. There are two major reasons for this. Firstly, a considerable number of *Kuulumisia* students live outside Tampere and

thus complete their teacher training in schools located in their home area. Secondly, many *Kuulumisia* students actually teach a subject, often a (native) language that is not included in the curriculum of the teacher training school. This solution has proven to have certain benefits; it enables the students who already have a teaching post to complete their student teaching programme in their own place(s) of employment whereas the students who are not yet employed in teaching have the opportunity to become acquainted with local schools, make contacts and perhaps eventually find employment in this way. The university lecturers who are responsible for the *Kuulumisia* programme visit the schools in question to observe and monitor the student teaching. This procedure enables the *Kuulumisia* teacher training programme to gain wider visibility and initiate networking that may also benefit future students. Such networking has an important role in improving the students' employment situation because apart from officially published information, it is frequently the first network, and the only network to many, that serves as a source of information concerning vacant jobs and qualified teachers.

Moreover, networking provides the responsible university lecturers a comprehensive view of the current state of Finnish schools – and the Finnish school. During the school year, the lecturers of the *Kuulumisia* programme visit dozens of schools all over the country and observe classes of varied subjects and levels all the way from primary schools to adult education. They meet heads of schools, teachers, and large numbers of pupils. Therefore, they also have an up-to-date view of what is going on in the field of education, which is unique since traditionally teacher training is conducted at teacher training schools that tend to be situated in large cities. Correspondingly, the schools involved in this programme receive the latest information of the academic and research-driven innovations concerning teacher training.

It has turned out that the training and education provided under the *Kuulumisia* programme has been quite significant for the

participants. In fact, the impact study of 2014 (Kuulumisia 2014), which covered students who had entered the programme in 2010, showed that most of the participants reported an improvement in their status in working life, i.e., either the individual had received a job that matched the level of his or her education, or the individual's job had been made permanent, or an auxiliary task had been upgraded into a teacher's position, or the individual had entered the working life (Kuulumisia 2014, 10–11). This is what the students themselves report:

The schooling had a significant role in my getting a job. After completing the programme, I was employed as a teacher.

Nowadays, I work as head of training. In addition to operational management, I am responsible for curriculum planning and designing the training tray to meet the existing needs. My job also involves cooperation between various authorities, [...].

The studies helped me rediscover my teacher identity in a new country and enhanced my teachership. (Kuulumisia 2014, 10–11. Translated from Finnish by the authors).

Notwithstanding the foregoing positive impact, a considerable issue still remains. It is namely difficult in Finland for individuals with an immigrant background to acquire competence in teaching their own native language, such as Somali. In fact, it was pointed out in the recommendations and suggestions given by the national project on Finnish Language Education Policies (KIEPO) (KIEPO 2007), which was carried out at the University of Jyväskylä, that a majority of the individuals with an immigrant background who teach immigrants their native language do so without any formal qualification for teaching his or her native language. True enough, there are no regulations outlining an immigrant's eligibility to teach his or her native language nor is there an adequate education strand available. (Luukka & Pöyhönen 2007, 42.) Nevertheless, research has shown that when immigrant pupils receive instruction in their native language,

they are better equipped to learn a second language and obtain better school results on the whole (Pantzar, Merta & Stüber 2013, 294). The recommendations and suggestions produced by Vuorio's (2015) survey discussed above indicated that there would be a great demand for education aimed at providing native language teacher's qualification. Thus, the idea of cooperation with the University of Uppsala in Sweden has occasionally arisen at the University of Tampere, because it would be possible to find a teacher of Somali there. New structures should, however, be established on a long-term principle instead of a temporary or makeshift arrangement, and they should be set up on a national level. Besides, it is not possible to provide university-level language teaching for all minority languages merely to facilitate access to formal teaching qualifications. Even so, we should not be satisfied just to record this statement; instead, we should prepare to screen a list of languages that have the most urgent need for qualified native language teachers.

Collaboration and collective learning

Collaboration is emphasized in the School of Education both within the School and between the different Schools at the University of Tampere. The *Kuulumisia* programme is strongly involved in this collaboration. For example, since 2015, the Finnish students who are studying the subject of Finnish as a second language in the School of Language, Translation and Literary Studies (LTL) (henceforth S2 students) have collaborated with *Kuulumisia* students. The key supervisory positions in this have been held by LTL lecturer Niina Lilja and *Kuulumisia* university teacher Maija Yli-Jokipii. The aim of this collaboration is to create a situation that benefits both of these student groups, and the experiences up till now indicate that we have succeeded in this. Below is an account of the practical realization of this collaboration.

In the spring of 2015 there was a joint teaching weekend for *Kuulumisia* students and S2 students. The students worked in groups on assigned topics, such as the language of textbooks, and the S2 students gave feedback on the texts written by the *Kuulumisia* students. Eventually the Finnish-speaking S2 students were placed in the position of a (language) learner with no previous knowledge of the language of instruction, while *Kuulumisia* students, i.e. students with an immigrant background, taught a lesson of their own choice in their own language – as if they did not know nor understand a word of Finnish at that point. This teaching situation represented a pedagogical challenge to the *Kuulumisia* students: how to cross a language barrier. Correspondingly, the S2 students experienced a learning situation as they stepped in the boots of their own (future) students and felt what it is like to try to learn when there is no shared language between the teacher and the student. First, each teacher had one student and then a group of two to three students. The experiment exceeded all expectations. Both parties found ways to cross the language barrier. They drew, made gestures and facial expressions, pointed with their fingers, showed pictures, etc. There was intensive contact between students and teachers and many participants actually seemed to enjoy themselves. There was an electric and yet warm atmosphere in the classroom. Additionally, all of the students noticed that learning in a group is frequently more efficient than being the single student and that it is easier and more meaningful to teach a group than just one student.

The feedback received on the said experiment was positive indeed. The students felt that the task was adequate and useful for their (future) work. A passage from one student's learning journal deserves to be quoted here.

On the 6th and 7th of March, 2015, we got to teach something in our native language to the students of S2 teacher education at the university. I found the task quite

meaningful and urge you to organise it again next year, if possible.

For this task, I decided to tell the future S2 teacher about the Belgian Sinterklaas celebration. To me, language and culture are strongly intertwined and it is a good idea to integrate them in teaching from the start. Even though students still have meagre knowledge of language, culture comprises all kinds of useful words that can be conveyed with pictures. In addition, the theme of celebration is meaningful because most of us like to receive (or give) presents and sweets. In my teaching, I utilized pictures, because they visualize the learning material and lighten the atmosphere. During the brief teaching period, I tried to create frequent opportunities to repeatedly hear, use, and read the words connected with the theme in question. Repetition and use of different channels intensify the memorizing process.

Dutch is a relatively easy language to learn, because it is rich in elements familiar from German, English, and Swedish. I think that the learners of Arabic or Chinese have to experience language quite differently than the learners of Dutch. Thus, the students had it relatively easy with me because the sounds, spelling, and vocabulary are simple or at least familiar on a certain level. This is the reason why I did not simplify my speech very much. It was relatively easy to choose the topic, materials and assignments. After all, this did not differ from my daily job very much except for the different language used.

Speaking Dutch was the hardest part in this experiment. Nowadays I never need to speak my native language, and actually I do not want to use it. For this task I had to, and I did rather well. Yet, I noticed that some reactions (such as “joo” ‘yes’ and “hyvä!” ‘good!’) came in Finnish. I do not think that it was because of the target audience. I could well imagine that I would also react in Finnish to my mother’s questions.

In my opinion, this task was well chosen. The students of S2 teaching were able to experience what it is like to learn a language in a language other than the student's native language. They were also able to feel the insecurity that S2 learners have to face every single day. The students in our group were able to show their pedagogical know-how and try teaching perhaps a subject other than their own. I am sure that this is one of those elements contained in this academic year that stays in mind long after the course is completed. (Learning journal 2015; Kuulumisia student 2014–2015; teacher of Finnish. Translated from Finnish by the authors).

On the other hand, I found it useful to assume the role of a pupil. The role was much more difficult. Studying in the Russian language made me notice how difficult it is when you have to sit still and learn in a foreign language and listen to a foreign language for several hours and how frustrating it is when you do not understand anything. I tried to remember a few words after the teaching session but did not manage to remember anything. This experience reinforced the notion that when you are learning a new language, constant repetition and practice is necessary. If you learn something new without any opportunity to practise, it is difficult to remember anything of what was taught. This applies to regular teaching as well. When the teacher teaches something new, it is important to remember that students need repetition and practice, otherwise they do not remember anything.

Teaching and student teaching similar to this experiment is good for all teachers from time to time. The experience opens up fresh views and reminds us of how difficult it is to concentrate when you are learning something new and how dull and boring it is if you have to sit still for a long time when learning. (Learning journal 2015; Kuulumisia student 2015–2016; primary school teacher. Translated from Finnish by the authors).

Our purpose is to continue this fruitful cooperation and, if possible, strengthen the collaboration and collective learning between mainstream Finnish students and students with an immigrant background. It is important to increase dialogue and thereby create teachers' encountering skills to meet the needs of diverse operating environments. Moreover, *Kuulumisia* students frequently possess useful information and various skills that would enrich the views of other students learning to be teachers. (See, e.g., Koskinen-Sinisalo 2015, 213.) There is, however, a minor practical problem to such collaboration, i.e. *Kuulumisia* classes are primarily held on Friday evenings and Saturdays, in other words at a point of time when other students tend to be in places other than the university.

A new quota has been introduced at the University of Tampere pertaining to the intake of students with an immigrant background who have carried out part or all of their studies abroad. This is a welcome initiative to bring multicultural competence to schools. Secondly, the quota is bound to have a great impact on teacher training itself. Finnish student teachers will be accompanied by students who have experience and visions of other cultures, languages, and modes of operation, which will undoubtedly enrich education and discussions around it. This does not, of course, abolish the need in future for continuing education such as *Kuulumisia*, since it is targeted towards teacher qualification training and education for university graduates with an immigrant background. Continuing education such as the *Kuulumisia* project is a cost-effective and fast method to employ teachers with an immigrant background and thereby fill in the void existing in education and teaching.

Societal responsibility

Throughout its history, the University of Tampere has assumed a strong societal ethos. The *Kuulumisia* teacher qualification training and education programme has, on its part, taken the university's societal function seriously by making an effort to extensively benefit both individual and society. Recent political discussion on immigration and integration, as well as news reports of the poorer school results achieved by pupils with an immigrant background than the rest of the pupils in their age groups (see, e.g., HS 2015) clearly indicate that immigrants need increased attention in our society.

The *Kuulumisia* programme makes it a point to meet twofold needs. First, it aims to meet the immigrants' need to find their place and obtain employment in Finnish society. Second, it aims to meet the societal and educational needs to provide all children and young people the skills and knowledge they need. Future generations are in special focus here from the societal point of view. Specifically speaking, a concern has emerged regarding the polarized academic performance in schools and the below-their-peers performance by pupils with an immigrant background. There are certainly several reasons for such poor performance, but a major reason lies in poor native language skills (see, e.g., Opettaja 2015; KARVI 2015, 10–13, 19–21). Our aims at the School of Education and in the *Kuulumisia* project include improving this regrettable situation by training and educating competent and qualified multi-lingual teachers who have extensive knowledge of schooling and education, who can work as native language teachers and also teach in the native language concerned, and who are able to serve as linguistic and cultural interpreters between school and immigrant families. At the same time, with their own personalities, they are bound to create a positive picture of different cultures and thereby increase understanding between people. Finally, a teacher with an immigrant background also serves as a role model to many pupils with an immigrant background,

with whom these young people, and occasionally indeed children, can easily identify and see how obtaining an education is possible and how studying purposefully is worthwhile no matter where in the world you live, as Koskinen-Sinisalo (2015, 180) also points out.

On an individual level, it may be challenging for a teacher with an immigrant background to find his or her own place in the work environment. According to Koskinen-Sinisalo (2015, 28), the difficulties faced by teachers with an immigrant background in integrating into working life include having existing competence recognized, finding employment, dealing with bureaucracy, integrating into the new culture, learning the language, mastering the working methods and teaching procedures of the school, and taking control of the classroom, all this on top of becoming an accepted member of the workplace. This, of course, does not only concern immigrants in Finland, but similar situations occur in several other countries as well. The *Kuulumisia* educators have made and are making an effort to address these challenges not only through the AHOT process and student teaching in the field but also by opening up the explicit and implicit norms and values of Finnish schools and Finnish society. Moreover, we have been successful in strengthening the position of teachers with an immigrant background in the labour market, as also clearly shown by the study of the impact of the *Kuulumisia* programme (Kuulumisia 2014).

Among the most important tasks of present-day teacher education in Finland is the development of operation practices that enhance the understanding of multiculturalism. Schooling at large is built on the principle of teacher education that acknowledges diversity and equality, in line with the ongoing educational reform. To an extent, multicultural teaching draws on critical pedagogy, which aims at questioning the “truths” that are taken for granted in different cultures, and changing them when possible. If teaching lacks criticism, it may remain on a romantic or an exotic level without our noticing it at all. If we cannot view our own cultural experiences with a critical approach,

we will not be able to understand the criticism our culture receives. (Talib 2005, 21–22.) An interesting contribution to the discussion on multicultural teachership is available in Hannula (2000), based on a systematic analysis of Paulo Freire’s classical treatise entitled *Pedagogia do Oprimido* [Pedagogy of the Oppressed, translated by Myra Ramas; Sorrettujen pedagogiikka, translated by Joel Kuortti]. It is pointed out that through education we convey knowledge about the world in the form of facts, fragmentary and limited. It is further argued that by conveying knowledge about the world as given, we also convey an idea of such reality that cannot be influenced and to which humans must adapt. In contrast, what is called “a liberating attitude” comprises an understanding of reality that undergoes changes plus a conviction that humans have an active role in the changing process such that every human being’s rights are highlighted in this process. (Hannula 2000, 77–78.) If teachership and education are limited to conveying only one historical and cultural story, other possibilities and ways to view the world remain ignored. Therefore, one solid future target for us is to integrate part of immigrant education in the basic education given at the School of Education. This is bound to result in further synergy between different educational groups (see, e.g., Virta 2015, 84–93).

A teacher’s multicultural professionalism calls for more extensive competence than previously. A teacher’s professional competence is tied to his or her identity and notion of self, and the encounters between different cultures presuppose a multicultural teacher (Talib, Löfström & Meri 2004, 150). With regard to ethnic identity, it is likely that educational institutions will have an increasing number of teachers with different ethnic origins. Each of them has his or her individual cultural framework and life experience; knowledge of these increases understanding and helps in communicative situations. Actually, teachers should view their own cultural identity from the outside as it were, and they should have the courage to assess the extent to which it is modified by, say, Western culture(s).

Furthermore, multicultural professionalism presupposes awareness of other and different human being as a modifier of an individual's societal reality. Critical professional reflection helps understand individual experiences more fully, as explanations for them are available in cultural and educational theories. Further, to enhance his or her professionalism, the teacher should be aware of the power and use of power embedded in teaching. Societal activity and social influence are related to the topic of the societal nature of teachership discussed earlier in this section, but as Talib (2005) envisions, the teacher is a change-oriented, rebellious intellectual, who is concerned with social activity outside the school as well. This is related to the idea of teachers as a public professional group capable of crossing various boundaries, such as cultural, ethnic, social, and gender-oriented, among others. (Talib 2005, 47–52.)

Teachers with an immigrant background are a relatively recent phenomenon in Finland owing to the short history of immigration in this country. Therefore, we do not have extensive knowledge of such teachers, there is little research on them, and their number in Finnish schools on the whole is relatively small. The situation is paradoxical, however, since Finland has in a short period of time received an increasing number of immigrants and, today, the schools in the metropolitan area around Helsinki, the capital city of Finland, already provide education to a considerable number of pupils with an immigrant background. Similar development is taking place in other large cities in Finland. Yet, schools have not been able to fully respond to this societal change, *de facto* to the increase in immigration.

Social and societal changes in society have increased the responsibility of schools in preventing marginalization and social exclusion. This underlines the role of teachers as executors of social and societal democracy. A further challenge to the individual and society, alike, resides in second-generation immigrant pupils: If their academic performance is not up to expectations, more and more people may think that different their language and culture, together

with the socio-economic status of their parents and the attitude by the school have reduced the equal chances of immigrant pupils to perform successfully at school. From this, it easily follows that being an immigrant together with a degree of alienation partly deriving from merely being an immigrant may work as a model which passes from one generation to the other and may hatch suspicion whereby immigrants on the whole may have a reduced chance for success in this world. (Talib et al. 2004, 13.)

The rapid growth in immigration has also made demands for the reformation and improvement of teacher education. The movement of employees and large numbers of refugees have an impact on the student body of schools. At the same time, Finnish families move abroad and back to Finland for employment reasons. This means that in future there will be an increased need for teachers who can operate in the pupils' native language. Moreover, teachers face a qualitative challenge in how to receive new pupils and help them adjust in a new country. Likewise, it would perhaps be in place to give support to departing pupils in their new life situation. Such challenges require new programmes for teacher education that enable students with an immigrant background to study to become teachers. (Ministry of Education and Culture 2007, 18.)

Finally, it is important to know the teacher candidate's country of origin and heed to this in education and introduction to working life. After all, the multicultural experiences and backgrounds of teachers with an immigrant background provide a rich resource regardless of the state of multiculturalism of the school, because teachers can make use of their multicultural background in the schools and communities in which they work. Teachers with an immigrant background may also serve as all-around specialists in culture and language. They are able to inspire rich intercultural discussion and debate in schools and increase understanding between different cultures.

Research perspectives

As indicated in the foregoing passages, the *Kuulumisia* project provides education to multicultural teachers who have a marked role in enriching Finnish society. This point of view has drawn attention and interest among scholars in education. An example of research on this topic is Kirsi-Liisa Koskinen-Sinisalo's Doctoral Thesis (2015) entitled *Pitkä tie – Maahanmuuttajasta opettajaksi Suomeen [A Long Road: From immigrant to teacher in Finland]*. In the thesis, the author examines the varied educational paths of individuals with an immigrant background who work as teachers in Finland. She has the individuals describe their own walks of life and intertwines this with their educational paths.

A survey of students' views of the impact of the *Kuulumisia* training and education on their position in working life is available in Jaakko Vuorio's master's thesis (2015). In what follows, we will highlight selected findings of this survey. According to the students' replies, this education had improved their employment opportunities, as 63 of the total of 65 respondents fully or partly agreed with this claim. As reported by the respondents, improved employment opportunities primarily meant being able to enter the labour market and becoming employed, but also the improvement of one's position, thanks to the completed education. In contrast, a small fraction of the respondents disagreed with this claim. This seems to indicate that a small share of the respondents found no improvement in their employment opportunities during the period of time that the collection of data covered.

The majority of the respondents to this survey felt that the education they had received had succeeded in providing them capabilities to work in teaching positions in Finnish schools. More than half of the respondents fully agreed and nearly one third partly agreed with the claim. According to these results and the responses to open questions, several respondents had received from the education

relevant and useful tools to apply in their teaching as well as in finding their respective places as members in the school community. Yet, a small minority of the respondents reported that they would have wanted to be given certain types of readiness that the present education had not managed to provide.

As far as professional networking is concerned, the education given under the *Kuulumisia* programme, practically all the respondents (65) felt that education had remarkably or to some extent enhanced their professional networking activities. They had found new colleagues from among their fellow students or among the university staff who worked with the project. New colleagues were consulted for help, for comparison of practices and opinions concerning schools, and for discussions on various problems and issues potentially emerging in working life. It seems that education brings students into a common space in which new contacts are made and new relations are born.

The claim about professional equality received primarily positive responses in the survey, but also negative reactions were recorded both quantitatively and in the open responses. Regretfully, the open responses did not provide descriptions of non-equal situations, and therefore it is not possible to put a finger on how precisely the lack of equality manifested in the workplaces. On the whole though, most respondents however felt that the situation regarding equality was good.

Furthermore, it was reported that the training had created new networks and enhanced individual growth towards the teaching profession. In this respect, the *Kuulumisia* project had succeeded in its goal to strengthen the students' personal growth towards being a professional teacher and educator (Pantzar, Merta & Stüber 2013, 292). The respondents found it valuable that the programme was not limited to enabling the students to obtain material qualifications and tangible skills but managed to contribute to the respondents' individual growth towards teachership. Moreover, the respondents highlighted networking as a significant contributor to their personal

growth. In addition, the programme had provided the respondents with the knowledge of a teacher's job in Finnish schools as well as with the skills and various abilities they had felt they needed. This came about both in the quantitative responses and through themed questions.

The respondents felt that the contents of the *Kuulumisia* teacher training and education programme, together with the competences connected to the job of a teacher they had acquired during the training, were of high quality and targeted correctly. They were confident that these competences would help them succeed in future tasks as well. Even if the respondents may have had a teacher's certificate or diploma in their respective countries of origin, the education they had received in Finland had managed to give them new information about teaching and especially about the nature of the Finnish school. This, in turn, had helped the teachers with an immigrant background to better understand the work profile of the Finnish teacher and the structural basis of the Finnish school system together with the teaching philosophy incorporated in it. As far as their Finnish language skills are concerned, the respondents were pleased with the improvement of their field-specific skills as part of their education and felt an increase in their courage to use the Finnish language.

Nevertheless, we still have only little research on teachers with an immigrant background, on their roles and possibilities, and on the operation of schools, as Koskinen-Sinisalo (2015, 26) points out. Indeed, those of us who are involved in the *Kuulumisia* project hope that it will be possible in future to expand its teaching focus towards a more research-oriented approach than thus far. In particular, it would be societally meaningful to expand our understanding of the role and impact of teachers with an immigrant background in Finnish schools.

So, we have here a fresh and up-to-date field of research waiting to be urgently explored. This field is apt for scholars of education, for scholars of multiculturalism, and for representatives of other

research communities. To our knowledge, Finnish research literature to date does not comprise studies that would be based on extensive interviews or other methods to investigate how teachers with an immigrant background have found their ways to schools and other educational institutions. Besides inspiring doctoral theses, this subject area could well produce contributions to collections of papers on multiculturalism and serve as basic research literature at multicultural schools.

Conclusions

In terms of the educational and experiential background of Finnish teachers, Finnish teacher training and education has, from time to time, been criticized for producing a personnel structure for educational institutions which is too homogeneous. Namely, a high level of homogeneity may limit the chances of the institutions to interpret and understand changes in society. (Hämäläinen & Kangasniemi 2013, 11.) In an increasingly multicultural world, the question arises as to why we train teachers to work in classrooms that date back forty years (Cummins 2009, 262). Yet, there seems to be an agreement that schools, especially in the Helsinki metropolitan area and in other large cities, become more and more multicultural and that teachers must be able to respond to this change.

Teachers who have received their education abroad may bring along knowledge and professional knowhow to the school community in which they are employed. Their qualities include awareness of racial and ethnic diversity, extensive background knowledge of different cultures and languages, and first-hand individual experience and understanding of what having an immigrant background entails. With such qualities and skills, these professionals enrich both the lives of the children who they teach and the educational community to which they are attached. (Myles, Cheng & Wang 2006, 243.)

Regardless of whether a given school is multicultural or not, the multicultural experiences and history of the teachers with an immigrant background appear to provide a major asset for teaching. Expressly, they are able to utilize their multicultural background and experience in their professional environment at large. Furthermore, teachers with an immigrant background may serve as all-around cultural and linguistic experts and consultants. They are able to encourage rich intercultural discussions at schools and increase inter-cultural understanding on the whole. Each of these individuals possesses such skills, knowledge, and cultural competence that is certainly worth utilizing in our efforts to make Finnish schools even more knowledgeable than before to ensure we maintain our status as “the world’s most knowledgeable nation” (Finnish National Agency for Education 2013) in future as well.

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