

**THE PERCEPTION OF THE FINNISH
INTEGRATION POLICY BY DIFFERENT ACTORS
IN VANTAA**

Case of Qutomo project

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ABSTRACT

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The aim of the thesis is to understand different actors perception of integration in Vantaa municipality. Third country nationals are the target group and especially women. The Qutomo project uses participatory action research (PAR) as their methodological approach, and this will inform my research approach. The focus group discussions were the primary data collection method. The search for a definition of integration was the Qutomo project topic which guided the data collection.

The research focuses on two questions, 1) How do different actors perceive integration? 2) What is the role of NGOs, government authorities and other actors in improving integration?. The data was gathered by the Qutomo project researchers in October 2012. All gathered data in the discussions was audio recorded and transcribed. The researcher analysed the project data using thematic analysis. The findings of the research highlighted five different themes which showed that integration is /includes: a two way process, social networking, learning the Finnish language, personal feelings and working life.

The research undertaken forms part of the Qutomo project and supports the project plans and aims which will determine where the results will be used.

Key words:

Participatory research method, integration, immigrant, women, third country nationals, focus group discussion and cultural diversity.

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION	5
2 BACKGROUND OF VANTAA NICEHEARTS RY	8
2.1 Qutomo project.....	10
2.2 Immigration policy of Vantaa	11
2.3 Aims of research	13
2.3 Developing my research idea	14
3 LITERATURE REVIEW	16
4 THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK.....	20
4.1 Immigrant	20
4.2 Integration	21
4.3 Cultural diversity	22
4.4 Women	23
4.5 Third country nationals	24
5 METHODOLOGY.....	25
5.1 Participatory action research method	25
5.2 Methods.....	27
5.2.1 Focused group interview.....	27
6 DATA COLLECTION	30
6.1 Data analysis.....	33
6.2 Thematic analysis.....	33
6.3 Description of data	34
6.4 Ethical issues	34
6.5 Validity and reliability	35
7 FINDINGS.....	36
7.1 Integration is a two way process	37
7.2 Integration in social networking	38
7.3 Integration through Finnish language	39
7.4 Integration is personal feeling.....	41

7.5 Economical integration / work life	42
8 DISCUSSION.....	43
8.1 Intervention.....	46
9 CONCLUSION	51
9.1 Personal development.....	52
REFERENCES	53

1 INTRODUCTION

Migration/Immigration is a process that has evolved over time and is a familiar phenomenon in today's society. Migration/Immigration focuses on a wide range of underlying dimensions of movement, locally, nationally and globally. (Valtonen 2008, 1.) Although Finland has experienced immigration, the phenomenon of immigration is still new among many in the society. There was a total of 207,511 immigrants living in Finland in the year 2013 and 9087 immigrants who had been granted Finnish citizens by the year 2012. This demographic excludes asylum seekers and refugees. (Statistic Finland 2013.) In the wider picture of migration, the focus on immigrant women has not often been the focus of discussion and this research will focus on this area. Valtonen (2008, 1) mentions, there is a need of long-term integration of immigrants. The author highlights the transition period with the new environment is demanding and the integration process might be stressful and often it requires the involvement of different actors for the transition period and adaption of the newcomer.

Often politicians have seen immigration as a threat and this affects the way immigrants are viewed in society. A significant number of immigrant women are the poorest and they face more hardship than the majority of the population. Due to barriers of language ability, skills level in the workforce, limited education, and the duration of their residence permit; most immigrant women often work in low skilled sectors and do 'odd-jobs' and are not valued or seen as productive. Often immigrants are presented as dependent on the system and overcrowding the host country. They are also sometimes associated with increased political pressure for the host country and 'alarming' crime rates, although this is seldom the women. There is a great need for supporting immigrants because after moving into a new country, they encounter different challenges, experience of culture shock and the feeling of being an outsider. Henderson argues that, economic activities have been developed with increasing strength, although the question of the invisibility of women's work is still high. (Henderson and Thomas 2002, 19.)

The main aim of this thesis is to understand the views of different cooperation actors; NGOs, City of Vantaa officials, known experts from other fields working with immigrants and the women of third country nationals perception of the integration policy in Vantaa. The research was carried out in Vantaa Nicehearts ry, in the city of Vantaa municipality over a one-month period in a new emerging project under Vantaa Nicehearts ry known as the Qutomo project. The name Qutomo came from the word "Kutoa" which means to "weave" in English. The word "weave" in Qutomo project signifies to network. Q is Qutomo logo symbolized with the feminine symbol. (Sjöholm 2012.) The letter Q is also imaginary female symbol, which the biologists have used since the prehistoric evolution time to represent the human sexual symbol. (Desfayes n.d.)

The Qutomo project focuses on exploring ways, which might be adapted to improve the integration of third country nationals through developing adequate skills to function in the society. (Qutomo 2012 - 2013.) Qutomo project held cooperation forums with different cooperative sectors in developing these innovative paths. The sectors that were involved included: NGOs, government officials, third country nationals, experts working in the immigration field, students both international and Finnish, and teachers. (Vantaa Nicehearts ry.)

Cooperation forum definition is an arena, where representatives from different sectors of the society (third countries nationals, government officials, NGO's and educational institutes) come together for open discussions with each other, open dialogue, listen to each other and bring about ideas that can be implemented. (Qutomo 2012 – 2013.)

I formatted my research question after transcribing the Qutomo project data. The idea to form questions was prompted by the background knowledge I gained from the main subject of the discussion topic and the themes coming from the data, as well as my personal experience. A study carried out by Bischoff and Rädler (2011) states, the importance of the research questions is to define the whole process. They highlight that the research questions aim to keep the researcher focused, delimit the project boundaries, point out the data that will be needed and provide a framework for writing up the final project. On

the other hand, Matthews & Ross (2010.) state, if there are no questions, it is impossible to find answers.

1) How do different actors perceive integration in Vantaa municipality?

2) What is the role of NGOs and government authorities, and other actors to improve integration?

2 BACKGROUND OF VANTAA NICEHEARTS RY

Vantaa Nicehearts ry is a Non- Government Organization, located in one of the Nordic countries, Finland and was formed in 2001. Vantaa Nicehearts ry objective is to support independent action of girls and women's welfare in the community. Vantaa Nicehearts ry is a small-scale grass root level organization that operates as a regional Women Resources Center known as Pihlaja. (Vantaa nicehearts ry.) The Women Resources Center, Pihlaja, has been assisting a number of women from different parts of the world over the past few years. The organization aims to create long-term women and girl's wellbeing between the different networks. The organization promotes cultures that, people of different ages, girls and women encounter in everyday life. The organization's purpose is also to improve women's entrepreneurship, employment, regional development and gender equality, general conditions and to monitor their development at regional, national and international level.

Vantaa Nicehearts ry is funded through different sources: Ray, ESR, ELY, City of Vantaa and by its own fundraising. Ray is a Non-profit organization (Finnish Slot Machine association). Most of the target groups in the organization come seeking help to manage the challenges they encounter in everyday life. Often, these women have inadequate knowledge needed to function fully in Finnish society and also barriers through a lack of Finnish language. For over 10 years, the Women Resources Centre Pihlaja has developed a cultural and gender sensitive approach when promoting their work. With consideration of the experiences the Women Resource Centre had gained in their work, questions such as "do immigrant women and girls need special support into the Finnish society?" evolved, which contributed to the development of other projects. (Qutomo annual review 2013.)

Through the different experiences and skills, the Women Resources Centre has managed to develop other projects. The projects that evolved share similar objectives of inclusion for all women and young girls to actively participate in

Finnish society and to generate a feeling of belonging. These projects are; Qutomo, Kultsi, Kasvukutsu-hanke and the girls project. All these projects work hand in hand with each other to achieve their goals. The organization rules are based on value of equality, tolerance, planning, implementing and working together through exchange of ideas to bring change through a collective action. (Vantaa Nicehearts ry.)

Qutomo was developed to focus on cooperation network that already existed and Qutomo included the third country nationals as the target group in their project. Kultsi project mainly focuses on marginalized and less educated immigrant women who many of them are third country nationals. The project supports the women in different ways: helping them to understand the Finnish system, arranging Finnish courses for them according to their abilities and taking into account their diverse. The main aim of Kultsi development was to work in close cooperation with Qutomo project to bring the Kultsi's aspect of main target group into cultural and gender sensitive integration path. (Qutomo annual review 2013.)

Kasvukutsu-hanke project was developed to tackle issues of unemployment and job seeking. The project main goal was to promote long-term employment for women either directly or indirectly into labour market. And the other project was the Vantaa Nicehearts club for girls, which has been kept a live since 2001, to provide safe and comfortable place for young girls. Through the club young girls get a chance to meet with each other and participate in different organized activities. (Vantaa Nicehearts ry.)

Figure 1 below describes the organization Vantaa Nicehearts ry, their goals and how they cooperate with each other but this research mainly focuses on the Qutomo project (Personal communication 2014).

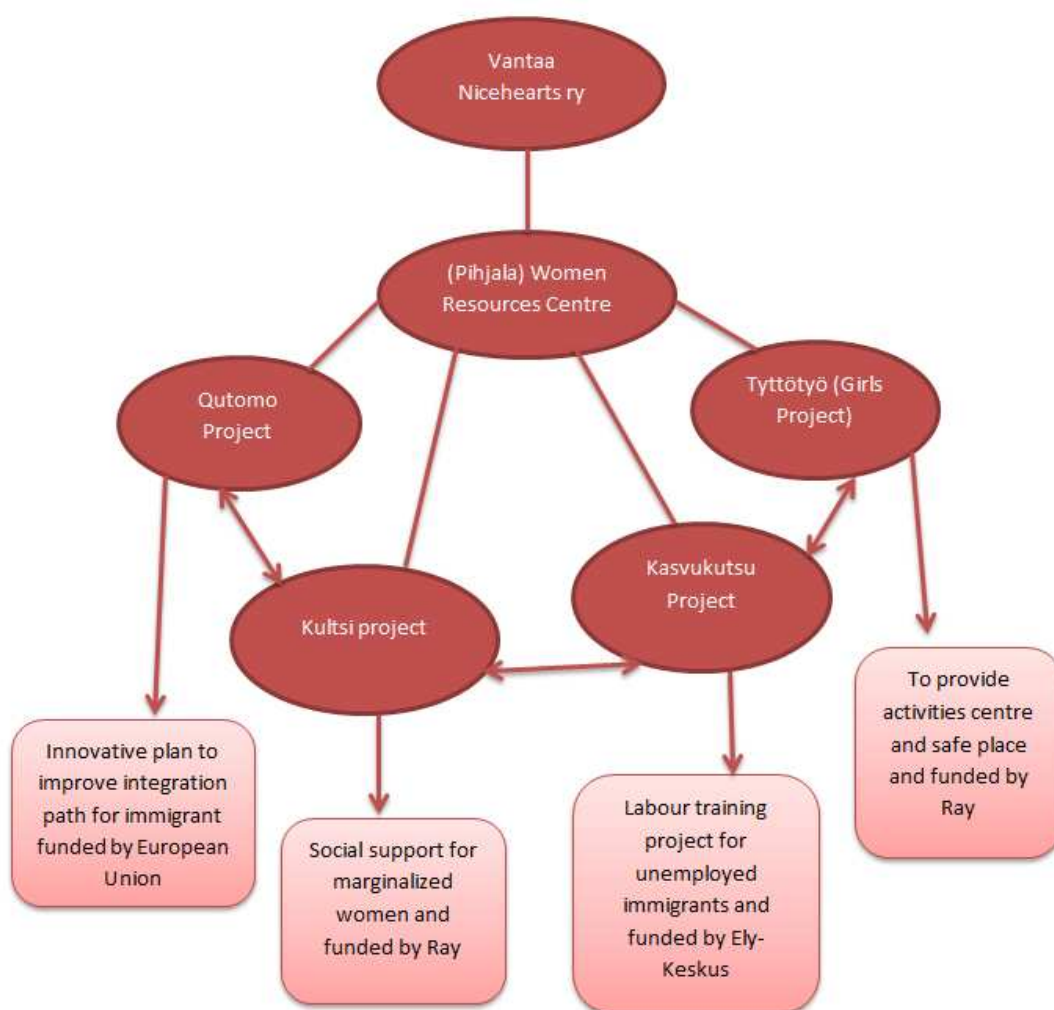


FIGURE 1: The structure of Vantaa Nicehearts ry

2.1 Qutomo project

Qutomo project (culture and gender project integration path) was started in June 2012 and is under the organization Vantaa Nicehearts ry with the intention to conduct action research by cooperating forum and including all levels and actors of the society within the period of 2012-2015. The project is geared to promote a third country nationals integration initiative to help government and other service providers to improve immigrant integration policy. The aim of the project is to increase intercultural knowledge, skills and competencies in carrying out integration services. (Qutomo annual review 2013.) The project

focuses on talking issues regarding integration in open dialogue with each other. Listening to experiences of third country nationals, different actors and stakeholders to bring about ideas that can be implemented together. Through the project the participants also had an opportunity to be in dialogue with each other and talk about issues that matter to them and provide an arena for people to get to know each other. (Qutomo-projekti, 2012)

Qutomo project arrange cooperation forum and invite people from different sectors of the society. In these forums people include: third country nationals, excluding refugees and asylum seekers. The city of Vantaa officials, NGO's and other experts in various fields of immigration, educational institute, students are also among the cooperative network. Qutomo project is funded by European Union integration funds (EU) and the project focuses more on social structure, social processes, and problems internationally faced by third country nationals.

2.2 Immigration policy of Vantaa

The City of Vantaa municipality where Vantaa Nicehearts ry is located is the fourth most populated city in Finland with approximately 205,653 inhabitants, among these figure 10% are foreigners. Although the main languages in Vantaa municipality is Finnish and Swedish, studies show that, the number of foreign languages in the region is growing fairly in a rapidly pace. (City of Vantaa 2012.) The city arranges initial assessment for all Vantaa immigrants. The assessment analyses language proficiency, working life, stay at home mothers, studying and other service needs. (Vantaa budget strategy 2013.)

Vantaa has been a recipient of immigrants from other municipalities and abroad and this has triggered the annual population growth with increase of number of foreign-language speakers. All foreigners living in Finland have nearly the same rights and obligation as Finnish citizen. People living and coming to Finland can find information about employment, rules of working in Finland, required working permits and Finnish working culture in either Finnish, English and

Swedish in Te-palvelut.fi website. In Vantaa municipality, immigrants are guided and advised by the immigrant work team (maahanmuuttajatyön tiimi). The team also offers immigrants guidance and counseling on initial survey, integration plan, residences permits and interpreter if needed. Immigrants are also informed about services provided by the city and centre that organizes different activities where immigrants can participate. (Infopankki n.d.)

The City of Vantaa aims at providing the immigrants with better services equally with aim of preventing immigrant's exclusion. All the inhabitants of Vantaa area are served equally and without discrimination. Vantaa municipality strives to promote multicultural positive atmosphere. The first multicultural program was done in 2002 and evaluated 2007. The core of the new multicultural focuses on employment participation and integration of immigrants. On issues of labour migration, the city is the biggest employer in Vantaa municipality and aims to creating of more jobs setting this good example to other employers. The Vantaa municipality works in cooperation and partnership with other organization and institutes in strengthening cooperation within sectors. Vantaa focuses on inclusive for all; recognize good ethnic relation in various NGOs groups and creating meeting places for women. Integration is a shared responsibility and promotes opportunity to all national languages and cultural learning

According to a recent article published in Helsinki times (2014) reflecting the unemployment in general in Finland, the data proved that most immigrants find work in cleaning services among other area. Despite the employment figures showed improvement of immigrant number in labour market over the last decade, still Vantaa ranks behind. Vantaa unemployment rate with foreign background is higher than other neighbouring municipality with 1,352 immigrants working in cleaning sectors according to the published report. In this article, the head of statistics and research in Vantaa also mentioned that, immigrants are twice likely to be unemployed as native Finns. Despite the unemployment rate that varies with country of origin, the highest figures are seen among people from Africa and the Middle East. The survey proves, the

importance of initiating programs and project that could foster the growth of employment in the City of Vantaa. (Vantaan on muuttajien kaupunki n.d.)

2.3 Aims of research

The motivation of this study to me as a student, intern, as well as a researcher in working-life based environment came when I started doing my placement in Qutomo. As an immigrant I had the intention to investigate more the phenomenon of integration and the perception different actors have about integration in Finland. I wanted also to find out what was the role of NGO's and government authorities in the integration process of third country nationals. From my personal experiences and as an immigrant, I lived in Finland for 5 years before I felt like I had a belonging to society and this prompted to the interest too. So I was interested to find out if other immigrants had the same experiences and also if integration policies and practices were implemented to the interests of immigrants or whether my experience was different.

As an observer of integration I have heard many critics of the process in Finland. People arguing integration is based on services and social integration but not economic integration and I also wanted to explore in depth if this was the case. Terrazas (2011) a study conducted by MPI suggests that, economic integration can be: job placement availability to resettle immigrant, opportunities for immigrants and participation to labour force. Programs that boost economic integration today should be anti-poverty programs, which are designed and targeted towards promoting socio-economic mobility for immigrant. According to the study, work place has been seen as one of the most powerful immigrant integration approach. Leary (2004) argues people have different angles of undertaking research, which makes the process easy to generate. The author gives some example of interest when doing research as; personal experiences of particular phenomena, theoretical inspiration and view of things that surround our every day or the topic might just suddenly become the main focus of work place or global issue.

Besides the above aims and objectives, other interests in the research were that: I wanted to gain knowledge on participatory action research method because it was the first time I had used it. Also, I was interested in doing community development work and wanted to gain professional expertise in guiding work processes, towards social inclusion, be competent to work with people and addressing issues related to immigrants and building sustainable communities. Last and not least I wanted to be involved in local as well as international project development, evaluating my working methods and to develop my professional identity.

2.3 Developing my research idea

Research in social sciences is a process. Research is carried out in a variety of contexts and by people with unique and different understanding of ways and reasons for conducting the research (Matthews & Ross, 2010). The idea of doing my research in Vantaa Nicehearts ry organization with Qutomo project came up because of having my community development module placement in the organization. The initial idea came up with my teacher when she informed that I was going to have my placement in Vantaa Nicehearts ry organization working with women and girls empowerment. She also mentioned that Vantaa Nicehearts ry had plans of starting a new project that covered well my study module. Without any idea of the project, she gave me the contact information, I contacted the team and they invited me for an interview. I reported to Vantaa Nicehearts ry early October 2012 for my interview and met with the responsible management members. After our conversation about my goals and study module we came to an agreement that I could start my placement.

During my placement time, I understood more the objective of Qutomo and I gained more knowledge about the project as a whole. I also got motivated to understand in depth the four different topics that had been formatted to facilitate the Forums. The topic concentrated on immigrant integration process well and this made me even more curious. Despite the topics were set even before I

started my placement, they covered well my study module in building sustainable communities. As a third country national I got more interested on the research topic after putting together all my experiences and what I had heard previously from other immigrants. The research I conducted in my thesis mainly focuses on Qutomo project, and all the data was collected by the project researchers in Vantaa Nicehearts ry and I got involved because of my participation as intern in the project.

The first session was the information forum that was arranged immediately when I enrolled for my practice. It involved participants from different sectors and target group who were the third country nationals. This forum was based on general overview of the project, introduction and getting to know each other. My lecturer Marianne Nylund who represented Diaconal University of Applied Sciences as partners of the project was also present. At the end of the forum, I discussed in detail about the topics and the relevance of them to my studies. She advised that, I should reconsider Qutomo project among my preference because it could be good place to collect data for my thesis. It did not take me long to think about it because I had developed more interest as days proceeded on the topics and after few days I made my decision on researching one of the topics.

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature review is a mechanism that shows the familiarity with the topic one is interested in researching. When focusing on literature reviews, Chris Hart (1998,12) mentions that the role of finding is vital; this is because the purpose of the research contributes in some ways to our understanding of the world and this cannot be achieved if the findings are not shared. So, as a researcher I am bound to show that I understand other previous research on this topic.

Literature review is important, because without it you will not acquire an understanding of your topic of what has already been done on it, how it has been researched and what the key issues are. (Hart Christ 1998, 12.)

Using the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) is a reference guide and interactive tool to assess, compare and improve integration. MIPEX creates a multidimensional picture of migrants' opportunities to participate in the society by assessing the government commitment to integration. By measuring policies and their implementation it reveals if all residents are guaranteed equal rights and opportunities. The end results identified integration policies and other factor that can impact policy effectiveness and the potential beneficiaries of the policies. (Mipex, 2011.)

According to the MIPEX study project led by the British Council, this study compared 31 countries focusing on legislation of working life, political participation, education, language, family reunification and discrimination. Finland's areas of strength according to the research indicator, included education and political participation. Evidence of the policy showed that some governments monitor statistics of integration but fewer evaluations on policies are carried out to find the impact. (MIPEX 2011.)

Some of the research results proved that in 10 countries immigrant receive better labour market support and find it easy to have equal access to jobs and training to get employment. Contrary the analysis showed that not all

immigrants with the right of work have equal access to full labour market, education system or employment services. Hence only nationals and EU Nationals in Europe enjoy more opportunities in public sector and better procedures to recognize their non-EU degrees.

In terms of active residents in politics, the findings proved that, the government does not create policies, which encourage immigrants to participate in democratic life. Language was another area of focus, and results showed language support was poor and teachers or other staff members were not diverse themselves and cannot handle diversity in schools. This made it difficult for students to respect and work together with other people from diverse background. (Mipex 2011.)

The researchers in the project were practitioners in migration law, education and anti-discrimination. They filled out scores for each indicator based on country's available documents in May 2010. Then, a second expert anonymously reviewed all the scores. The migration policy group made sure all information was correct and checked completed questionnaires for consistency, which was the methods used and finally national experts provided input on policy changes.

In addition to my literature review, The King Baudouin Foundation and the Migration Policy group on May 2011 carried out another literature review. The research survey tested whether integration policies fulfilled the expectation of immigrants across Europe. Their survey also aimed at capturing if the personal experiences of people as diverse and hard to reach as immigrant outside the EU. The research was done by collaboration of 19 partners working in organization based on immigrant citizens. Questioners that focused on immigrants' general opinions and participation was the main method used. Comparable sampling was the methodology the researchers used in analysis of their data. According to their report this method guidelines requires the use of a stratified random sample. (Huddleston, Dag, and Callier 2012.)

According to the researchers, the immigrant citizen's survey was carried out in 15 cities and in 7 European countries. The research focused on, citizenship, residence permit, family, language, employment and political participation. The findings were that, the public debate focuses on problems of immigrants and only little on success. In addition immigrants were positive about their experiences in integration policy and they also appreciated offered services such as language course and integration.

The research was a step to analysis results in details for specific professionals working with immigrant groups, cities and countries. They also aimed at an evaluation of this survey methodology that will help improve and encourage other surveys. Also provide Governmental and Non-Governmental Organization actor with an immigrant citizen survey result that could promote discussion on improvising more effective policies and services. Hence, have a chance to recognize immigrants as people who face same realities and choices as other people. (Huddleston, Dag, and Callier 2012.)

Another piece of research was carried out by Obeng (2012) Bachelor's thesis was to find out how social aspect of integration of the immigrant was carried out to build a strong peaceful and intensive interaction in Finland in the municipality of Vantaa organization known as Hakunila. This research was done in different organization but in the same city I am researching my project. It involved 14 individual interviews in the organization and participants were from different backgrounds. The methods used in collecting data were interviews, observations and prepared simplified questioners. The methodology used for the research was qualitative research methods. According to the researcher, the methodology was necessary to enable the target group to show their understanding.

Although the findings of the study showed a positive result for organization integrating immigrants in Finnish society, the results also revealed that, the organization did not have adequate resources. Also Finnish government policy

of integration is geared towards helping immigrant's requisite in getting information about employment and working life. (Obeng, 2012.)

All the three literature researches seem to be in one-dimension, thus they did not go into depth emphasizing on integration of immigrants. The researchers in the literature review mainly focused on finding out how good are the integration or what kinds of services are available for immigrants unlike the research in Qutomo project. The difference between the three literatures is that, the actual voice of immigrants, the struggles they face and the challenges of integration have not primarily been focused as in the Qutomo research. Qutomo project involves the participant's experiences to explore ways together with other actors, which might improve the integration policies.

The methodology in the project research is participation action research, while MIPLEX (2011) is quantitative account that examines in statistical way, how to improve integration. Huddleston, Dag, and Callier (2012) is based in either qualitative, and focuses on social perspective of immigrant integration and Obeng, (2102) is quite and focuses on things like information to assist immigrant in employment and working life. The main method in collecting data in the literature review was answering questions where else in Qutomo is focus group discussion and questions where only to facilitate the discussion.

4 THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter explains the key concepts in my thesis: integration, immigrant, women, cultural diversity, third country nationals, participatory action research method and focus group discussion. I will describe more in details participatory action research and focused group discussion in the methodology chapter.

4.1 Immigrant

The growing of international migration, to the arising issues of culture and socially diverse ethnic groups and people from different origin living together in the same society is related to the economic, social, and political transformation in the recent post-modern and post-cold wartime. (Castles and Miller 1998, 46.) Bhikhu, (2008, 80) sees immigrant as an important aspect of diversity. He underlines that, immigrant involves both skilled and unskilled labour recruited to meet the countries needs and in most cases they come with their own way of life. An immigrant is a person who owns citizen in one country and enters another country for permanent residence with specific intention to live there. Castle & Miller (2009, 20) argue that, an immigrant is a person, who decides to move in search of better life opportunities, leaves his roots in the place of origin and quickly becomes assimilated in the new country.

Millions of people immigrate because of different reasons, such as looking for new home, a safe place to live, employment among other aspect. Despite the initial reason might be temporarily or permanent, in the end high number of the immigrants become settlers. In many instances migration increases the development of network between areas of origin and destination. Moreover, migration also has effect on change of demographic, social structures, economy and brings about new identity and cultural diversity. (Castle & miller 1998, 3.) Immigrant status can be acquired in different ways political reasons, family reunification, working opportunities, education and seeking asylum.

4.2 Integration

The Finnish integration legislation is in the Aliens Act (301/2004, amendments up to 1152/2010). Chapter 1, provisions Section 1 act is to implement and promote good governance and legal protection in matters concerning aliens. In addition, the purpose of the Act is to promote managed immigration and provision of international protection with respect for human rights and basic rights and in consideration of international agreements. (Ministry of interior Finland n.d.)

The word integration has been used many times and there is no universal definition. The discussion of integration is often left open; the perspective of integration varies widely. Acceptance by different countries may differ from country to country. In other instances, the openness of integration is left open because of the fact that, integration is not only with particular group but also upon many actors. (MPI 2003.) The concept of integration can be understood in different angles. In some circumstances integration can be associated with the role of settling person to fully participating in social, economic, cultural and political life in the society. (Valtonen 2008, 62.)

Integration can be uniting people or for instance having equal opportunities. According to study MPI (2003), integration is the process of working with minorities groups, immigrants whether individuals or a group to find a place they fit in the society and a feeling of acceptance in the receiving country. According to Pentikäinen (2008, 8) integration is a terminology in social sciences used often to describe the process that immigrants and the host community grow. The author argues that, for a successful integration, the host country and the incoming person should grow closer to one another, recognizing and accommodating each other differences.

Since the beginning of 2012, issues dealing with integration of immigrants in Finland were transferred from the Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry of Employment. The phenomenon of integration has been on focus in Finland. The

Finnish society focuses to help immigrants adapt themselves to the society and participate in the life of their new home. (Ministry of interior.) Valtonen (2008, 71) suggest it is important to settle newcomers in a way that they manage everyday activities independently and they are productive and active in various spheres of the society. On the other hand, Pentikäinen (2008, 11) sees integration as a two way process where both parties have a responsibility to adapt new feature in the process of interaction.

4.3 Cultural diversity

Author Parekh (2008, 80) say, culture refers to historically inherited ways, the meaning and significance in terms of which a specific group of people understands the structures of individual as well as collective lives. The author also expresses the connection of culture with beliefs, practices hence recognizing identity. Valtonen (2008, 59) see culture as skills and information which people have and is always inherited within generations. Different models have been used in societies to implement methods that might help organize activities in different field of settlement. Assimilation model has been recognized as consolidating different things together.

Valtonen (2008, 60) suggests the retaining own culture is important for individuals in new environment and holds ones identity alive. Migration is associated with adopting; new behavior, practices, values, rules in the new country. This process of newcomers` adapting and integrating to the culture of the majority is defined as acculturation. Issues of migration discourse always carry with them aspect of cultural issue. Hugman (2013, 133) suggest, embracing cultural diversity is important and the society has a responsibility to sustain such freedom in recognizing such differences between different cultures and within. Despite the difference in cultural issues, our own unique characteristic, we are all human beings and every person deserves to be treated with dignity. In addition the concept of race and culture can be enriched

in the society if we seek equal access of opportunities of all people irrespective of their specific identities. (Reisch 2008.) In Hugman 2013, 134

4.4 Women

The word woman is constantly related with men. McDowell and Pringles (1992, 3-4) focus on social definition of women is associated with family terms as cares and nurturers. The author's highlights that in social and political thought, the recognition of women in everyday life has been ignored and they are valued negatively in comparison with men. The status of men and women are constructed in the society and it reflects women as dependent on men. The relationship of dependency is a complex issues and has raised concern because of the equality between men and women or the differences that it disadvantages women recognition in everyday life. Despite the differences in cultures, between individuals, our own unique characteristics, we are all human beings and each person deserves to be treated with dignity.

For years feminists thinking has challenged women marginalization and their changes in practice have developed a feminist theory to shift the actuals of condition of women in the society. (McDowell and Pringle 1992, 5.) Moreover, women can be referring to: an adult human, a feminine aspect, a word used mostly, which means having qualities or appearances traditionally associated with female sex or gender. (Dictionary thesaurus.) The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, enshrined women rights. The reality is in present world, many countries lack the political and cultural will to protect, recognize and promote the women well being. (Lundy 2004, 80.)

There is a need for greater attention to the condition that women experience. For example: the reinforcement of women in roles such as, involvement of women in household, childcare practices, personal support, involvement in local community and also overtime. The economic position of the women has meant they are traditionally the poorest group in the community. The author also

criticized that, although the participation of women in the paid labour force is increasing, they are still consistently lower paid than those of men. (Adams, Dominelli, & Payne 2009, 201.) Encouraging women process of learning, decision-making, as well as influencing in the society can affect change in immigrant women who might find it difficult to integrate in receiving countries.

4.5 Third country nationals

Third country is a term used in the treaties, which means country that is not members of the union, or meaning, country that is not a party to an agreement between two other countries. The third country nationals do not have right to entry or free movement in EU unless they have authority to reside or carry out activity. (Eurofound n.d.) According to Eurofound, member state vary in the ways they conceive the integration of third country nationals and to the extent in which they have developed and implemented integration policy. Mostly, third country nationals are disadvantaged in labor market participation. Article 31 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union has aimed in establishing equal treatment to nationals of European union member as well as the third country nationals. (Eurofound n.d.)

In Finland the Ministry of interior defines a third country nationals, as non-members of European Union. Tampere European council has initiated the request at granting rights as similar as those enjoyed by citizens to third country nationals, legally residence permit in the community for those who satisfy the conditions provided by the regulation. This request triggered to Commission`s Social Policy Agenda 2000-2005 declare that, it is important to approximate national legislation on the condition of the demographic changes, situation of the labour market as well as situation in country of origin. (Eurofound n.d.)

5 METHODOLOGY

Qutomo project used participatory action research method (PAR) as the methodological approach. According to the project, PAR approach makes it possible for different actors, teachers, students to participate in the Qutomo forum and have personal experience and integration from their work experience (Qutomo 2012-2013).

During my placement period in Qutomo, I was using the data collected during the first forum. Therefore, I did not have my own research methodology or data collection method. With the interest in the research, I discussed my motives with the project staff to use the project data to write my thesis. After acknowledging my request I took measures to abide by the research ethics. This meant, I was obliged to: guarantee confidentiality throughout the process, be considerate in protecting the welfare of the respondents. I had a duty to fully accomplish my tasks and comply with the rules and that meant my availability and presence to follow up the forums. In general, it is important especially when study calls for interaction with human participants to have ethical approval. This assures: responsibility, acknowledgement for the researched that, the mental, emotional and physical wellbeing of participants is protected. (Leary, 2004.)

I did not collect any new data because I received the focus group discussion data from the forum. I decided to use a thematic analysis. What I did was gathering more information from books and articles as to understand PAR better and so that it would be easier for me to understand how the methodology was applied in Qutomo project and in the forum.

5.1 Participatory action research method

The most important thing about PAR is that, it deals with issues that affect the classes of people in a wide range of setting: rural poverty, environment, immigration, community development, domestic violence and women's

oppression among others. (Reason & Bradbury, 2001.) I was interested to know this methodology in practice as I mentioned in the previous chapter because PAR is not only a convenient research instrument for solving problems through technically efficacious means, but also to solve a social problem which helps marginalize people attain a degree of emancipation as being responsible members of the society. (Reason & Bradbury, 2001.)

This kind of method targets the social group to help them express what they had in their experience. According to McIntyre (2008), although PAR has specific target group participating, the achievement from the project benefits all members of the community as a whole. The author continues to highlight that; the distinction between involvement and participation is the key to PAR. (McIntyre 2008, 31.)

McIntyre (2008, 1) also suggests what is important in PAR is the quality of the participation that people engage in, not the proportionality of that participation. Based on the information which will be received by means of the study method, the intended findings can range widely in helping to change public policy, making recommendations to government agencies, making informal changes in the community that benefit people living there and increasing the awareness about an issue native to a particular locale which is the main goal of the project. (McIntyre 2008, 5.) The other reason of using this research method is because it enables collaboration approach to research that equitably involves all participants' process and recognizes the unique strength each other brings.

In addition, PAR enables the researcher and stakeholders to collaborate with ultimate goal that the product from the research will solve the real problem. Also PAR methods purpose is to aim in combining knowledge and action to achieving common social change to improve people's lives in the community and eliminate disadvantages. Through this kind of method the clients are provided with supportive ways to tackle their crises, seek cooperation and mutual support in the society. Moreover, the most oppressed and

disadvantaged people can gain power over their own lives promoting equality and social justice (Payne 2005, 9.)

5.2 Methods

Qutomo project used different ways of collecting data; Dialogue, individual interviews and focused group discussion. In analysis the data and writing my thesis I will concentrate in focused group discussion only. All the data was collected by means of audio recording and some researchers also took notes and observation. Case study was also among the ways of collecting data. Different topics covering issues like, gender, integration, education, working life, language and cultural sensitivity guided the Qutomo data collection. I did not collect my own data so I did not have any specific method. In addition, because I had permission from the project to analyze the data I decided I would investigate more about focused group discussion because at least every participant was actively involved. I was interested in understanding focused group discussion because it's often used in research to find out how people experience and understand the issues raised by the research topic. Another reason for focusing more in this kind of method was because each participant had a chance to influence.

5.2.1 Focused group interview

Focus group research method originated in the work of Bureau of Applied Social Research at Columbia University in 1940's. Since the focused group interviews has continued to be a key in many different sectors of research. (Silverman, 2011, 209.)

Matthews and Ross (2010) defines focused group interview as a data collection method that usually brings together a group of between 2 - 13 people. This group obviously has something in common, which is connected to the research topic. On the other hand Barbour (2007) sees focused groups as often

contacted by facilitator and the participants main aim is to take part in the discussion on a particular topic and sessions. Another similar definition, Silverman (2011, 207) describes focus group as a research method whereby small groups of people 6-8 are usually sharing similar characteristics; engage in-group discussion focused on a particular topic or issue. Often the focus group also known as group interview or focused group discussion. The method bases the discussion on schedule question and these questions are not asked but rather made to facilitate the group discussion. This is to help the group members actively interact with each other.

When contacting this kind of community development project and participatory approach research, the team focused on engaging the participant in dialogue discussion. The reason behind this was that, all participants had an opportunity to share their experience with each other. Freire, a Brazilian educator suggests dialogue is the key to knowing people stories, their realities and assessment of their need. (Ledwith, 2005, 7.) In most cases taking part in focus groups discussions is advantageous for participants because, it helps participants who are part of the research reflect upon their experiences and gain better understanding of their role and the situation they found themselves in. This kind of data collecting method helps participant's debate issues within the context of their own cultural background. (Barbour, 2007.)

Kumar, (2005,124) highlights the importance of group interview is to explore perceptions and understandings of a social group who share some experiences in common regarding their situations or events in their lives. Working with focused group is a good mechanism of raising powerful public relation. A focused group interview is important method in research because participants discuss issues amongst themselves rather than directly communication with the researcher. Despite to some extent, this method can hinder openness in expressing feelings. This method is useful to target hard to reach group and the approach includes voices of those who are muted. Focused group is a good way of collecting data because there is more equal relationship between the

researcher and the researched and the final work is presented to the participants. (Barbour, 2007.)

The data was collected through cooperative forums that Qutomo project organizes and emphasizes face-to-face dialogue between the immigrants (Qutomo annual review, 2013.) All participants were divided into three different groups, and these groups formed the focused group discussion. Each group had five to six participants and participants were divided randomly through agreed teamwork. The participants came from different fields and were of varying age groups. The participants of the project included; students, professionals working with immigrants in different fields, Qutomo project member, services users of Nicehearts ry, NGOs and Vantaa Municipal officials. All the groups had three same ready-formatted questions by the project team, which were made to facilitate the group discussion. The questions were; what is integration, integration to where and integration to what / to whom.

6 DATA COLLECTION

As I mentioned earlier in the previous chapter, I did not collect any own data, it was the project data and I was just a student and participant during my placement. McNiff & Whitehead (2006,145) suggests that, when planning to gather data, one has to be on the lookout for best moment. They authors suggest that, the most obvious place to collect data is in one's direct research practice, when you interview participants, say, or conduct an observation.

6.1 Process of data collection

Planning information gathering was the first approach. Qutomo project staff sent emails to all participants inviting them for the information session. This session focused on getting to know each other and this was done through icebreaker games. Introduction of the topic and getting to know each other were the main focus. This was because, most of the participants were not familiar with each other and they were from different backgrounds and fields. Also the objectives, aims of the project and methods to be used were elaborated clearly. The reason was to give the participants enough information and awareness that, the project will be valuable to them as a social group. All the questions arising from the info session were discussed.

At the end of the info session, Qutomo research team informed the participant the date of the first forum. The planning took a period of approximately a month to the project data collection date. The data-gathering day was done in the premises of Vantaa Nicehearts ry late October 2012. The data collection project researchers under Qutomo project assured all the participant good ethical conduct throughout the process. In forum day of data collection, the researcher team arrived early and after handing out the leaflets of the day plan, participants signed the consent before they were directed to the respective room, where the forum was to be held. Breakfast was served and participant had it on arrival. After that, the forum was started by the project coordinator who shared a short

reflection of the introduction information session held previously and welcomed the participants. The forum started with a lecture on open dialogue, which is one of Qutomo's model of engaging the participant to, listen, share their experience with each other and look for ways of bringing change together. After that there was a short break and participants groups were divided randomly with the intention of creating arena for all of them to share their experiences, in a naturalistic way. This method of participant division was to help team researchers not to assume that particular features would generate certain data.

The focused group discussions were held within an hour although the forum lasted 8 hours the same day, appendix 1 attached. As intern I would say that, the project data collection process was well organized because the project researchers worked collectively in a team. The research team had good contacts with other professionals working in immigrant fields and this promoted a good number of turnouts. The project researchers informed the participants although the discussions were being recorded, they had a duty to write in bulleting point what issues were raised in their discussion. This was to be done either in English or in Finnish language.

Later in the day after lunch break all the groups were jointed together in the same room and a random chosen participant briefed the rest of the participants the information they came up with from the discussion. Then overall discussion took place among all the participants through a face-to-face open dialogue. Anyone who did not understand any raising issues was allowed to ask question or bring forth his argumentation, request or ask for any clarity.

Good co-operation of all participants and the project researcher influenced the success of the project data collection. All the data was audio recorder, pictures were taken and part of the happening was videotaped. I also took notes and made some observation. Everything went as planned because there was availability of needed resources; recording devices, arranged meeting rooms, cameras, human resources, provided lunch and breakfast. In general the entire budget was well covered by the project. The data was collected from people

who came from different continents worldwide. The target groups served as the cooperation network (third country national), the participation of the city of Vantaa officials, NGO`s, and other known experts working with immigrants. (Qutomo project, 2012.) The data collection was carried out in a relaxed atmosphere and friendly environment.

Some days later after the data collection, the research team helped in downloading the video recorders. Then, I started transcribing the data that was in English and I managed to transcribe 24 pages in total. This data was from first topic in all three focus group discussions. This project data I transcribed was based on how different actors perceived the concept of integration. Another researcher team member who knew Finnish language better transcribed recorded interviews in Finnish language and she translated the interview in Finnish to English. Silverman (2005, 160) states that, it is important to analyze written materials in a way that will produce reliable evidence about a larger sample.

Later after transcribing the data, I focused on highlighting the main themes that I needed when analyzing the data. I also aimed at understanding the participants: the expertise in different fields, Vantaa official, and the target group of third country nationals, if they shared any similarities in their opinions in addressing how they defined integration. I also aimed on identifying if all the three groups, in the findings had something common in the data. Silverman suggests that, the importance of starting to review the collected data in the light of the research questions not forgetting the key question is vital. The author underlines that, the review of data depends also upon the researcher`s topic and the main units in your data and how to relate to one another. (Silverman 2005, 152-153.)

6.1 Data analysis

Matthews & Ross (2010) refers to data analysis as the collection of methods that are applied to the data we have gathered in order to come up with a description, interpretation, explanation, evaluation and analysis which can be understood more clearly.

6.2 Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is a method of identifying patterned meaning across a data set and often this approach goes beyond this to interpreting various aspect of research topic. (Braun and Clarke 2006.) However, on the other hand Riessman (2008, 54) suggest that, group discussion, interviews, conversation, meeting and individual stories can have a powerful message behind them, which could help recognize individual identities, group belonging and collective action.

Silverman (2005, 160) states, it is important to analyze written materials in a way that will produce reliable evidence about a larger sample. I am planning to use the project data I transcribed during my internship in the first Qutomo forum. I will use the data to answer the research questions I come up with after considering what interested me and was common in the project data set. In the first phase of my analysis I read the data repeatedly. This was to familiarize myself with the data and capture what was similar in the three different focus group discussions. Then I had to identify and capture themes important in relation to overall the research questions. I also focused on terms, which kept occurring from different focus group discussion. The main reason was because I was interested in telling the reader the predominant themes in the data.

6.3 Description of data

The results of the data, entirely focuses on the perception of representatives of different actors integration in Vantaa. Some were Finnish professional working in the municipality of Vantaa, Finnish and immigrants working with NGOs or other fields to support immigrants, third country nationals were also among the participants who came to Finland for different reason such as, family reunification, studies and working life. With the obligation to protect the anonymity of the participants in the research, and keep the data confidential, I will identify the participants when I quote what they said as, participant 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and the three different groups as group A, B, C.

6.4 Ethical issues

Ethics is very important aspect in research work. Matthews & Ross (2010) defines ethics as set of rules by which individuals and societies maintain moral standard in their lives. Moreover, Walliman (2006) identifies two perspectives from which to view ethical issues when doing research as; value of honesty and frankness as well as personal integrity and ethical responsibility on the basis of consent, confidentiality and courtesy. He further argues that, the context of ethics is wide to the extent is not only being straightforward but to engender a level of trust and creditability that promotes debate and development of knowledge.

Due to the underlying ethical issues the Qutomo project researchers informed the participants in the information session before start of the research forum that, the data to be collected in the discussion was to be recorded and used to raise their mute voices. The participants were also informed that, participation was entirely voluntarily and they were also obliged to sign consent forms in context of the project. They were also notified that, withdrawal from their consent and participation was acceptable without any penalty and at any time. The project researchers team did this before the start of the research as

agreement to acknowledge that the participants had idea of the process. In addition the participants were also informed by the researchers that, data was to be stored safely, related data returned to all participants and none of the information that identifies them will be in public or revealed to others without written consent.

Informed consent is making sure that all people who are going to take part in the research understand what they are participating in. And according to the author, they must be provided with clear and adequate information and make sure they understand what they are consenting to. (Matthews & Ross 2010.)

6.5 Validity and reliability

Leary (2004) states, although researchers can differ in dimension, what they have in common is a need for credible data. He continues to explain that, sources of data may differ, as well as means of accessing and gathering data but all methodology are reliable to data and basic method.

Dealing with people is a complex issue and not the same as dealing with substances and it is important to be careful. As a student I am subjected to abide to ethics when analyzing the project data. Kumar (2011) states that, it is absolutely unethical to introduce bias in a research study. The meaning of bias according to Kumar definition is a deliberate attempt to breach the rule by either hiding what you have found in your study, or highlighting something disproportionately. Likewise, it is morally right for me to analyze the data and what I write to be regarded as my own work unless stated otherwise. It is an offence and against honesty to execute plagiarism. (Walliman, 2006.)

7 FINDINGS

The focus group discussions during the Qutomo project did not always follow exact structure, as conversations sometimes generated other areas of discussion. In addition, the discussion gave an opportunity for participants to explore their own experiences of integration, or something else. The data generated provided a significant level of consistency, which in turn validated many of my own experiences and confirmed the need for the project. However, each group also added further information and details, which could not have been anticipated at the start of the focus group discussion.

Figure 2 below describes the questions formatted to facilitate the group discussions and the themes generating from the data set. (Personal communication 2014).

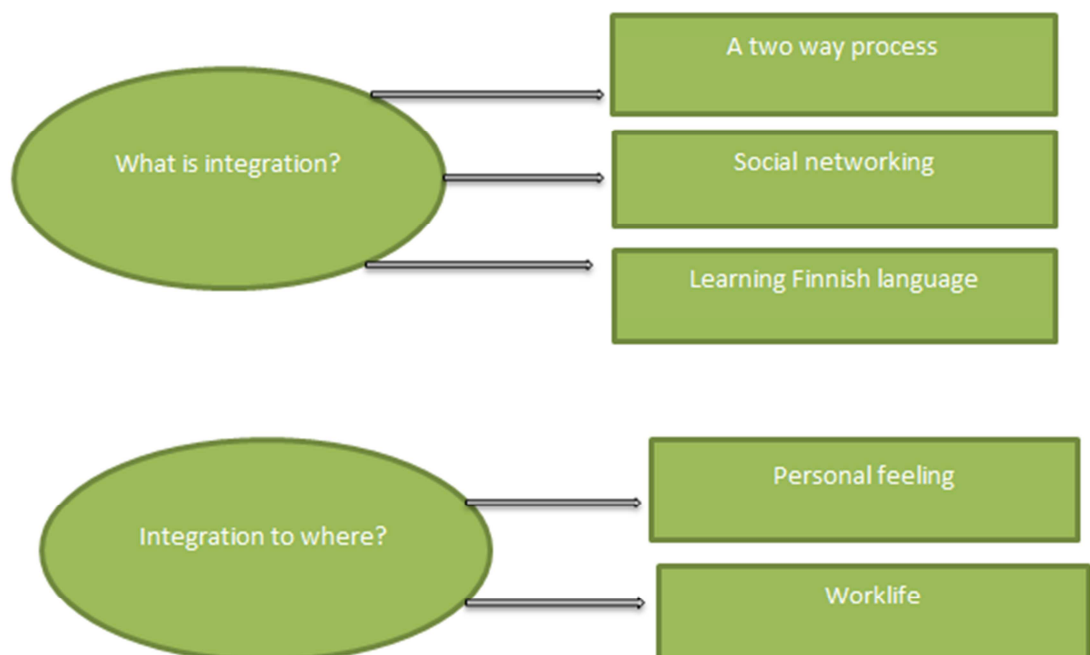


FIGURE 2: The structure of questions and themes

7.1 Integration is a two way process

Immigrant participants in the three groups had similar experiences of living in Finland and this informed many of the discussions. The discussion question asked was to gain an understanding of how the participants viewed the topic of the first forum, which was integration. The question was; what is integration. In all three groups they saw it as a two way process. In their comments the participants seemed to raise the idea that, Finland, as the receiving country should be willing to accommodate the immigrant.

Integration is a two way process, that has to come with a lot of empathy, empathy from the receiving community that notices and understands the challenges people are going through. People can find it difficult to integrate because there is a lot of learning difference in culture. (Participant 1, group A)

Integration is two way process, it does not mean you should integrate us, it should be two way process and so we have to find the other ways, how to make people open minded to see the different ways on how to live your life and mine. (Participant 4) in the same group argued, integration is the sense about assisting immigrants, about their concern. (Participant 2, group B)

Integration is a two street, goes both it is not the people coming to the country have to bend the receiving community should be open and able to be flexible a little. I do not say they change all the rules for us but a bit and takes us into consideration but be culturally sensitive. (Participant 3, group C)

The definition of integration as a two way process is not something new. Many previous researchers have come up with the same idea as a good method of immigrant adaption in a new environment. Study conducted in Ireland by the interdepartmental working group, recommend that, integration must be seen as a two way process, involved parties have certain duties and obligation to

accomplish on the host society in national and community level. This roles help to create environment in the society, which encourages and welcomes people in the society to contribute in the system. (Equality and Law, n.d.) A successful integration path needs both the incoming and receiving countries mutual understanding and both parties should work collectively. In the discussion many seemed to raise the point that, a two way process was not about getting employment, being in the Kela or receiving any services from the Finnish system but it is all about changing societal attitude about the whole integration process.

7.2 Integration in social networking

Another similar theme, which emerged among the three different discussion groups was, integration was how one felt a sense of belonging and being part of a social network, which they described as:

If you have to get with the Finnish you have to do sport, a lot of people get contact through doing sports. The people I played with help me get contacts through doing sports, social networking. It is one way of getting integration connection and through this you are treated as a person and not as immigrant. (Participant 1, Group A)

Through Finnish friends, I think it is a good start. If you can participate in the Finnish society, because we have strong association culture. That is one way, but when I lived abroad I was like what are my hobbies, I like singing a lot I could find a local choir and make friends that is something you are good at and interesting in doing. Finding like-minded people who are interested and finding people who do same things. (Participant 2, group B)

If you have a job, social network, your normal life is here, you are basically living, if your daily life is here. If you can manage the system with minimal difficulty, go through Kela, you can go through all things and you feel part of this place, who is to say you are not integrated. (Participant 4, group C)

The idea of social networking seemed to highlight how important social network would help immigrant adopt easier in the system and be able to pave through to find jobs. In their discussion it was clear that most of them had required

qualification, language skill but they lacked good contacts to help them find work.

Social network, if you have good social network here, that is more important; it can give you job, which makes it easier. I have learned the language and I know that I don't need it especially in Helsinki you can get fine with English if you have the network. (Participant 4, group C)

Consequently, social networking was seen as vital in getting contact although, it is not as easy as some mentioned. According to a research conducted by Sutherland (2005) the results proved that a strong tie within peer network, involvement of different parties to provide information and encourage social, intellectual stimulation within individuals, gravitates as a result of similar interest, characteristics or social attribute. Thus, provided information prior to and after immigration. Some argued that Finnish people are stereotype and it might not be that simple to make friends with them. Other participant's opinion was it was not that easy for everyone to find good network and many had network only within their communities. Prompting arguments that network within own community was not healthy in promoting inclusion and it was limiting to what extend people could get information in a new environment if you only socialized within.

What I want to point out is there is difference between personal integration and community integration. If you are in a closed community and your community cannot help you, and you cannot get integrated outside your community there is a problem not individual but in community integration. (Participant 5, group C)

7.3 Integration through Finnish language

The idea of language was seen as important aspect of integrating immigrant amongst the entire three groups. Discussion pointed out that, people had a duty to study the language, although others argued that, Finnish system did not have enough study institutes to accommodate the immigrant willing to learn the language. Language was also seen as path to socio-economic integration,

make interaction and connection with each other and understanding better other people cultures.

You are not integrated if you don't speak the native language (participant 4 group A). I still think that, since you are the one who is new it is your responsibility to learn Finnish language and it is part of their culture, they give value to their language. (Participant 1, group A.)

Integration is having language, if you learn Finnish language, then you can get opportunities to get to where you want to go. (Participant 2, group B.)

Integration path is learning the language. (Participant 3, group C)

Although language was seen as important, it also generated other area of discussion that should not be used as the lock to integration in the Finnish system. Some participants claimed they had not got a work post because the feedback from employers was their Finnish language was not enough. This seemed a frustration to many, some of the participants raising ideas that, recognizing the efforts individual have put to learn the language even if they don't speak well could motivate them to learn more. Also employers offering working opportunities even if applicants do not speak well can also be a positive thing on practicing it more in a working based environment.

Language is accepting people there, even if they don't speak good, (participant 2, group C)

I find it frustrating is learning language, because some of us will never lack the accent, it is also one thing which will always identify us as immigrants, some of us never learn the exact grammar, even though that is the integration path possibly, no matter how we learn the language, no matter how we write or speak, even our last name as immigrant and can hinder us from getting work it can affect. It is very frustrating as that been as the main way to integration path. (Participant 1, group C.)

7.4 Integration is personal feeling

With the frame of the questions which were facilitating the group discussion, participants when asked, “integration to where”. This question developed another theme which emerged in all the three groups discussion that, integrating was a personal thing and feeling within individuals whether they are integrated or not. In their justification of integration in everyday life, everywhere, some saw it as having a belonging in a society, a place you can call home, a place you are not being pointed out, a place one does not look different in everyday experiences.

Integration is a personal thing; we can see the measures but it is on an individual how they feel. In the society there are things being neglected. Immigrants looking young who don't feel they are integrated e.g. dark skinned, they are black, Finnish and are still not integrated and are categorized. While there are others who have been here 5-6 years and feel integrated. For most bureaucratic people it is hard to conceptualize that because they categorize immigrants. (Participant 1, group A)

Integration is a feeling, it is facilitated by certain things something, could be having social networking, able to interact with people, not seen invisible in places and for others it could be a career or life. (Participant 2, group B)

Integration is an everyday thing; it's part of your life. Everyday I feel, I feel more integrated in Finland (Participant 3, group C)

The subject of integration as a feeling was symbolic to many participants. It seemed that, the message they were trying to convey was that people have different experiences in the integration process and it is difficult to define their response due to different aspects, what they might be going through or experiencing in host countries was personal. In other cases some argued that, the feeling of integration comes when you feel someone accepts you and then you accept them too. It was also seen as part of being recognized as one of the country members and not as an immigrant or outsider-within the country.

7.5 Economical integration / work life

Although the findings could not directly reflect integration in Finland is only based on social integration not economical, the argument raised by most of the participant could clearly identify and pin point that, there were emerging difficulties for immigrant to be part of the Finnish labour market. This could be seen in quotation where immigrants argued, “ how many black people could not be seen working in designated government offices”. In another circumstances some participants arguing “what kinds of jobs were approved for immigrant and how was the qualification done or graded”. Similarly below are some other direct quotations from some of the participants regarding work life.

For others who need have or can open enterprises but for the others they are forces to go training to secure something, because we don't recognize other countries qualification. Some people need to get education. (Participant 1, group A)

It is integration in the sense about assisting immigrants, about their concern to that thing about employment to immigrant. (Participant 2, group B)

You can speak the Finnish fluently well and still have very limited chances to get employment. (Participant 3, group C)

8 DISCUSSION

When participants responded to the general question about what is integration, many made reference to features of integration as economic, language, social, personal feeling and the length of time in Finland. Some also talked about whether the immigrant was living in a city or rural communities, recognising that diversity was more obvious and accepted in Helsinki, for instance. Some participants raised different issues in the group interviews and this could have been due to the period of time some have stayed in Finland. Other reasons could be experiences they have gone through previously, age of participants, education level and their level of integration. Participants saw the benefits for both the host community and the immigrant, particularly where there was a willingness to learn from each other and where acceptance takes place.

Thus (participant 4 group A), seemed to think it was her / our responsibility to “adapt ourselves to a new environment” although she does go on to say, this is so we can “learn from each other”. Another common theme was that integration was a process, ever changing, and as (Participant 1, group A) said it goes together with participation in social activities although (Participant 3, group C) said it differs, because Finnish people don’t just interact in no special circumstances, they need a situation to socialise which might have negative effect for some of the participants to network with them. Although for many of the participants this carried with it a problem, that of language, and an acceptance that integration is “personal” (Participant 2 group A) it happens when “the party who want to be integrated and [the] other party wants pull.”

(Participant 3, group A) also pointed out that it wasn’t just about the process of integration, but the experience of it. She referred to “immigrant looking young people who don’t feel they are integrated e.g. dark skinned, they are black, Finnish and still feel neglected and categorized. In addition, participant 5 (group C) mentioned of another similar issue where a friend from an African country

says clearly, his friends keep complaining that, they are not wanted in Finland and people are racist.

Some participants in the group's discussion saw Finland as a monoculture and too closed which makes it difficult to bring new factors to the environment. The sparkle of monoculture was seen not too healthy and limiting because, it is difficult to share ideas and views of other people from different culture. (Participant 5, group C) argued, Finland has been changing with time and adapting to new mentality about cultural issues has improved. She continued to mention that, at least 20 Or 30 years ago Finnish people viewed immigrant different than now. Concluding that, despite most people adapting to diversity, for some it is still difficult to notice new world and new people. (Participant 4, group C) supported this comment by saying that, it was true Finnish people mentality was changing, quoting his young boys as having friends from different cultures and see things different now. "They see people not like other stereotype people who see immigrant and people".

After moving to a new country, immigrants are overwhelmed with challenges of being part and understanding new culture. In most cases these difficulties of adapting to new environment with a different set of values and cultural expectation can be stressful. It is important that, immigrants get a supported integration process from the receiving country when settling in. For a successful integration of immigrants there should be participation in decision-making that increases the acceptability of immigration programs. This kind of approach if facilitated might help prevent discrimination and exploitation of immigrants as well as provision of social services to support and ease their settlement. (Castles and Miller 2003, 280.)

It is important for Finnish concerned authorities to develop a long-term, welcoming society that will provide the necessary support for third country nationals. Moreover, Valtonen (2008, 9-11) suggests engaging immigrants in the social, economic and cultural life in the society as soon as they arrive is a good path to settling them in a new country. This kind of approach benefits the

community at large through sharing their ideas and expertise. Paulo Freire mentions the importance of empowering the powerless and not categorizing them as malfunction individuals. The authors says this labelling promote unworthy feeling and may worsen the situation. (Lundy 2004, 80.) For instance, immigrants come with new ideas, start small businesses, create jobs and bring additional revenue to the state. This does not only enrich the immigrants, it is all about new comers gaining from the host country system but also the receiving country benefiting from the exchange of cultural diversity, recognizing their expertise and other aspects. (Valtonen 2008,15.)

Analysing all the project data where different actors participated, it seemed like there were generating issues that are experienced by these communities. What is needed is the reconsideration of how the services are provided by the responsible authorities. (Participant 1, group B), seemed interested to know what integration was because she knew integration from the perspective of authority that, good integration was finding a job but to her own point of view she thought that was not integration. Definition of integration varies among individuals and many of the participants wished to know if there were indicators that measured how employers were tested when granting employment opportunities. Robb (2007, 243) suggests there is need of effective programs based on responding to each individual immigrant own needs and not treating their issues in the same social group.

I based my thinking when analysing the data set on some content of the literature review such as: social aspect, language and employment. Comparing the research findings with the literature research, there were similar issues that still need to be addressed which have risen in both sides. The results of Mipex (2011) proved that, language was an area to focus as well as the study I carried out. The expectation of the fluency of the language needed was how well you could speak it. On issue of labour market the Mipex finding showed in some countries immigrant did not have equal access in labour market while in this research immigrant were concerned to know the government measured

discrimination based on job opportunities and if they were posted openly for everyone to have equal access.

Although Obeng's (2012) study finding highlighted a positive results in terms of organization integrating immigrants on working life, employment and were active in giving information. It slightly contradicted with Qutomo data that, participants had no enough information from responsible officials and some of the information was not well surfacing and established. Information was not clear especially the openness and equal opportunities in job posting and organization offering activities where immigrant could have social network. Focusing on Huddleston, Dag and Callier (2012), literature review, study which focused on promoting discussion on improvising more effective policies and services. Also recognizing immigrant as people who have same realities and findings proving that authorities focuses more on the problems of immigrant and not success. The Qutomo data surfaced well with similar view, whereby participant perceived integration as a personal feeling of being recognized in the society, being seen visible, having a belonging, accepted and seen as a person who has different ideas and knowledge to share within the new society.

8.1 Intervention

I have been living in Finland for approximately more than 8 years I must recognise that I am in a relatively privileged position. I have employment although not in the specific field of my qualification and a friendship group that is Finnish, I speak English good and Finnish language average. I can still recognize my background and am here to study and work, amongst a community of other immigrants. In my own point of view as an immigrant, we still need more help to foster our integration in Finnish society. Some would agree that, immigrants have great significant to be take into consideration. When it comes to immigrants, matters of identity, community recognition in the new country, cultures aspects, are vital and not only benefit the immigrants but the receiving community as a whole. (Castles and Miller 1998, 5.)

Heinonen and Spearman (2001, 117) see the goals of intervention when working with clients as the ability to help the social group make decision by themselves. The authorities and other actors working with the third country nationals and especially women, as was the target in this study, should strive to have open network, for everyone. This can be motivating so that immigrant are not socially isolated and know where to get contacts and be able to find their identity again immediately after settling. There is also a need of definition of integration where values, inclusion and diversity are different and it sees the benefits of the incoming community. Castles and Miller (2003, 32), argues that, the openness to settlement of immigrant, by the receiving state, granting of citizenship and acceptances of cultural diversity may form ethnic communities, which make a healthy multicultural society. Integration is not about conformity, individuality or maintaining the dominant culture.

Castles and Miller (2003, 280) suggest that, immigrant`s host countries should provide measures to ensure that, the newcomers from ethnic minorities are not disadvantaged by socio-economic disadvantages. The authors continue to highlight that legal measures to combat inequalities, discrimination, and social policies to alleviate disadvantages should be improved so as to ensure equal opportunities and provide upward mobility for the society as a whole. On the other hand in order to achieve this effective integration, the NGOs, private sectors, governmental authorities and community projects need to ensure everyone is encouraged to participate in decision-making. Materials could be produced and available in different languages to make it easier for newcomers.

Social services and welfare agencies need to recognize the different needs of various diverse communities. Organizing community development projects and training immigrant`s are one-way of transforming people`s lives to have a belonging and self-identity. Somerville (2005, 5) also highlights that, within communities diversity can be enriching and full of new ideas. But there is need to be cautious especially within communities where there is an inequality. On the other hand, Ledwith (2005, 7) argues that, community development starts in everyday lives and it is a positive response to powerless group.

The Finnish law in the act of non-discrimination, the policy in section 6 of Ministry of employment prohibits discrimination, there were concerns that most of the participants wanted to know how the government measured discrimination based on employment. The reason bringing up this question was because most of the participants argued sometimes they felt they were not given work opportunity because of their ethnic background, hence they were told they didn't qualify despite having the needed qualification and language skills. They were eager to know what are the indicators that determine the employers were not using positive discrimination when they said the language was not enough or you didn't qualify for the position.

A lot of things are going on though, there might be people who have prejudices or discrimination, I also think employers are not giving the tools for qualification. (Participant 4, group C.)

In such cases, in my opinion the authorities have a role to play. If the policies are there based on having opportunities, employment, education, support, equality and non-discrimination how is that experienced in day-to-day life. Valtonen (2008, 72-73) acknowledges the need of policy makers scrutinize their policy implementation in a structured way to accommodate the inclusion of immigrant and this could be progress effectively if there is evidence of specific indicators.

Castle and Miller (2003, 225) mentions, it is the state task to eliminate discrimination and racism as a factor leading to poor integration that contributes to formation of ethnic minorities in all countries immigration.

Regarding the ethnic relation and integration, how well have we succeeded in integrating immigrants in Finland, at the moment we do not see many black people working for the state. I only know people who are working with integration or at the Ministry of Interior but they are working with project dealing with integration of immigrant. (Participant 1, group C)

Valtonen (2008, 79-80) states, government needs intervention on granting equal opportunities, anti-discrimination and affirmative action as a way of

inclusion. These will help guarantee equal chances to everyone and monitoring the process of employment, equity, work place diversity, will contribute to fully inclusion. The author defines affirmative action as, method of promoting and including social groups who might have encountered discrimination in the past.

To improve the integration of immigrants in Finland, participation and community development should be encouraged. The solidarity, the mutual support, how people work together, cooperate as part in their routine to develop the community has a great influence. (Gilchrist 2004, 3) I would argue that, there is also a need for a multicultural model, put into practice by the responsible authorities.

Multicultural model is a political community based on a constitution, laws and citizenship with the possibility of admitting newcomers to the community, providing they adhere to the political rules, while at the same time accepting cultural difference and the formation of ethnic communities. (Castles and Miller 1998, 44.)

There is a need of the government supporting other organization working with third immigrant women like NGOs and government offices to join together in developing measures. Castle and Miller (2003, 225) states that, when immigrant come to a new country, they often lack language proficiency and unfamiliar with local ways of working, they have no enough networking knowledge and this issue have effects on their entry to labour market. This could be improving skills training, availability of enough institute to access Finnish language and also learn Finnish culture and vocational training. Also another vital needs are: creating of employment opportunities, support and guidance to ensure immigrant women are empowered to work together and understand their collective personal situations. Community development brings about sustainable change and increases the effectiveness of the disadvantaged group. This kind of approach often establishes a process of empowerment and participation. (Ledwith 2005; 2.)

Responding locally to the needs of the social group can affect change. There is also a responsibility to address the principle of tolerance and full social

acceptance of immigrant in the society. This should be negotiated on the people in the community to live together as one and help combat the stigmatization faced by the immigrant people so that they feel they belong in the society. Porkka & Pentikäinen (2013) suggest that, a professional should continuously empower individuals to take responsibility of their own life and to motivate them towards achieving a change.

The integration of immigrants might take time to be successful because Finland is still new in multicultural issues and the immigrants have brought the different cultures, but there are still high chances of improvement in the future.

9 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study uses women's voices to highlight their experiences, struggles and challenges of integrating into a new society. The research also provides awareness that different actors have different experiences when defining integration process in Finland according to their experiences and opinions. The study also proves that there is no single definition of integration and it depends on a person. The research also showed that, integration by different actors voices was: a two way process, working life, social life, learning language and most important aspect was a personal feeling of being recognized as part of a family member in the host society. Finland needs a successful integration plan, whereby a cooperation of all Finnish service providers and other private actors join cohesively in the development of a structured integration policy across all sectors.

In addition as a third country national woman in my perspective, the question of integration and belonging are significant for me, and together with my experience of the organisation form the basis of the project data analysis. For me, to feel integrated in the Finnish system I would like to have a sense of belonging, feel accepted in the society in everyday experiences and not feel different. As also I am a black woman this carries with it an obvious difference. So no matter how integrated I become, I will always remain immigrant and look different. The important thing is to be accepted the way I am and I accept other too despite they are different.

In the project data gathering, discussion generated other issues not relevant with the focused topic. This challenge brought up some doubts if all the needed information was gathered from the participants. Some of the participants focused on addressing the future plans of integration and not answering the question facilitating the group's discussion, bringing up uncertainty about their own personal view about integration.

9.1 Personal development

The research has benefited me in different ways and so far I feel confident to confront the future in working life environment. I was able through the research to gain professional identity in guiding work processes, towards social inclusion, competence to work with different people. Again expertise in researching with the target through open dialogue, addressing issues related to immigrants as well as building sustainable communities. I have also gained skills in planning and implementing local, international project and evaluating my own work. I have learned different kinds of research methods in real working life environment and how they are applicable in reality. I gained knowledge on how to conduct participatory action research, involve focus groups discussions when collecting data and different ways of analyzing data.

In terms of professional growth, I have increased my expertise in various ways of working with immigrants, doing community development work and the process of writing final thesis concerning the research. I have also gained interpersonal skills and became a better team worker through this project research. The research has helped me establish new and stronger networks. I have also developed team-working skills. Through the research and the data analysing I have gained more knowledge on critical analysis on my own work and others. Through the research topic I have gained more knowledge about the topic integration of immigrants and conducting research about immigrants. I have also learnt the importance of project cooperating with other organization to bring change and inclusion.

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APPENDIX

WELCOME to the first Cooperation Forum!**Date and Time: 26.10.2012, 8:30 – 16:00****Place: Koulutustila Unikko, Unikkotie 2, 2krs. 01300 Vantaa**

In the first Cooperation forum, we aim to have an open dialogue on the topic of Integration. Different actors define integration differently. For some, it may mean learning the language, employment, political participation or gaining citizenship. Is there a need to develop a more effective means of integrating immigrants? What is integration anyway? Who integrates where? To whom? In what way?

Program:

8:30 – 9:00	-	Coffee
9:00 – 9:15	-	Introducing: Qutomo Project
9:15 – 10:00	-	Icebreaker, Getting to know you!
10:00 – 11:30	-	Dialogue expert: Johanna Janhukainen
11:30 – 12:00	-	Open discussion
12:00 – 12:30	-	Lunch break
12:30 – 13:00	-	Recap of the morning session and comments
13:00 – 14:00	-	Group work – Integration and its different meanings
14:00 – 14:30	-	Coffee break
14:30 – 15:30	-	Group work presentation - synthesis, comments
15:30 – 16:00	-	Open discussion
16:00 --	-	Closing of the session

For more details and registration: Johanna Sjöholm, johanna.sjoholm@nicehearts.com puh. 044 367 9245 or Margarita Sakilayan-Latvala, meg.sakilayan-latvala@nicehearts.com, puh. 050 431 4724.

Coffee and Lunch will be served. Please inform us of your special dietary needs before 24.10.2012.

Welcome!!!



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