



”Not problems but things I couldn't understand...”
Developing integration of immigrant children in kindergartens in Kemi

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<p>Opinnäytetyön tavoitteet: Opinnäytetyömme tarkoituksena on selvittää maahanmuuttajalasten vanhempien näkemyksiä lastensa kotoutumisesta Kemien päiväkoteista. Tavoitteenamme on myös selvittää mahdollisia kehittämiskohteita ja kotoutumisprosessissa esiintyviä puutteita päivähoiton palvelujen piirissä. Päivähoidolla on suuri rooli maahanmuuttajalapsen kotoutumisprosessissa ja siksi haluamme selvittää vanhempien käsityksiä seikoista, joihin tulisi kiinnittää huomiota.</p> <p>Opinnäytetyön teoreettinen viitekehys: Opinnäytetyömme teoriaosuudessa käsittelemme varhaiskasvatusta, maahanmuuttoa, maahanmuuttajien kotoutumista sekä varhaiskasvattajien monikulttuurista osaamista. Lisäksi käsittelemme varhaiskasvatuksen merkitystä kotoutumista edistävänä tekijänä ja varhaiskasvattajien roolia kotoutumisprosessissa.</p> <p>Toteutustapa: Käytämme opinnäytetyössämme kvalitatiivista eli laadullista tutkimusotetta. Tutkimusmenetelmänä käytämme teemahaastattelua. Olemme analysoineet tulokset aineistolähtöisesti teemoittelun avulla. Teemoittelemalla pyrimme nostamaan esille tutkimuskysyksiin liittyviä teemoja, joita analysoimme heijastaen niitä teoriaan ja omaan pohdintaan. Haastattelimme yhteensä 10 henkilöä.</p> <p>Tutkimustulokset: Vanhempien haastatteluissa nousi esiin tarpeessa olevia kehittämisehdotuksia. Tämän hetkiseen kotouttamisen tilanteeseen maahanmuuttajalasten vanhemmat ovat pääosin tyytyväisiä. Suurimpia kehitystä vaativia alueita ovat maahanmuuttajalasten jakaminen eri Kemien päiväkoteihin, tulkin käyttö tarvittaessa, kasvattajien monikulttuuriset taidot ja varhaiskasvatussuunnitelma-keskustelujen lisääminen maahanmuuttajavanhemmille.</p>	
Asiasanat: Kotouttaminen, maahanmuutto, varhaiskasvatus, kasvattajan monikulttuuriset taidot	

ABSTRACT

KEMI-TORNIO UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES, Social services

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<p>Thesis description: The purpose of this research is to clarify immigrant childrens' parents' views and conceptions of the integration in kindergartens in Kemi. Our goal is to find out possible development targets and flaws concerning integration within day care services. Day care has an important role in the integration process of an immigrant child and therefore we want to find out parents' perspectives about issues to be noticed.</p> <p>Theoretical framework: In the theory part of our research we deal with early childhood education, immigration, integration of immigrants and multicultural skills of educators. In addition to that we also go through early education's role as a promoter of integration and educators' role in integration process.</p> <p>Method: We use qualitative research method on our thesis. We gathered the material by interviewing ten immigrant parents and with using theme-interview we could have those parents' opinions and views well heard. The analyse method used on this research is thematizing which enabled us to make conclusions based on the theory used on this research and also the results from the interviews. All together we interviewed ten parents.</p> <p>Results: On the interviews of the parents came up some targets and areas in need of development. Mainly parents are rather satisfied with the situation of the integration in kindergartens in Kemi. The biggest areas which need to be developed are the distribution of immigrant children into different kindergarten units, use of interpreter, multicultural skills of educators and having early education discussions more often for the immigrant parents.</p>	
Keywords: Integration, immigration, early education, multicultural skills of educators	

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1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The amount of immigrants in our society is quite large today and presumably growing in the future and therefore, there must be an awareness of the importance of successful integration. Integration has an important meaning and effect to the whole society, Finnish people and of course for immigrants themselves. Day care services are an important part of preventing immigrant children's exclusion and supporting families' integration (Social and Health Ministry 2007). Day care can be a large part of a child's life and therefore an important actor within integration, and listening to the parents and their opinions about the integration in kindergartens of Kemi, gives valuable information to the workers' of the kindergartens' and it enables that the quality of integration can be improved. We are also interested in finding out how the current situation of integration within early education is in Kemi.

As both of us study in a multicultural group, it felt natural to choose a topic with a multicultural aspect and a chance to use that as an advance. We have personal interests within early education, as we aim to become kindergarten teachers in the future and possibly even work within that field, so this research hopefully gives us some tools and knowledge which can be used in the future. Both of us have children whose parents represent two different nationalities and come from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Therefore this topic and area also concerns us in a way. We find different cultures very fascinating and also the possibility of learning from other cultures – new ways of looking at this from a different angle and open up our “image of the world”. The developmental aspect of our thesis is motivating us and we find it useful to bring a possibility for the immigrant parents to bring their “voices” heard.

As future bachelors of social services, it is good to widen our horizons within integration and find out how the situation is now and what could be enhanced. From a bachelor of social services point of view, immigrants are a growing client group and the meaning of integration presumably gets even a higher importance and as the society and people in it change, so should the legislation and ways of doing integration change and develop. Different immigrants from different countries and backgrounds have their own methods how their day cares operate in their original country. We want to find out the

immigrant parents' point of view on how they feel about the integration and how it is done in the Finnish day care. We are only focusing on the parents' view and perspective, because we believe that by doing it that way we get more valuable and current information and knowledge about the situation.

On this thesis we talk about early education, integration of immigrants, day care services and their role within integration. In addition to the previous we open up the term multicultural early education and also go through the educators' role in the whole integration process of an immigrant child as a client of early education services. We have a developmental aspect on our thesis. Developing integration is our theoretical framework that we work within. The important starting points are the focus group of this research, which are the parents of immigrant children who are in kindergartens' of Kemi city. The key concepts of our work are integration, immigrant, early education and multicultural skills of educators.

We chose the immigrant school of Kemi as the place to gather people who would be willing to participate our interviews, as we were told that it would be the most effortless way to get in touch with immigrant parents. The purpose of this research is to gain information to the early education unit of Kemi city how day care services could develop the services concerning immigrant children's integration and bring forward immigrant parents' voices and views about the state of integration. We hope that this research would evoke some discussion about the integration of immigrant children in kindergartens of Kemi and make easier to realize what could and should be done to develop the service's quality in that area. The frame of references on this research is based on integration, early education and multiculturalism within early education.

On this research we used qualitative research method. We gathered the material by interviewing ten immigrant parents and with using theme-interview we could have those parents' opinions and views well heard. The analyse method that we used was thematizing, which enabled us to make conclusions based on the theory used on this research and also results from the interviews. The parents who participated in our interviews come from Myanmar, Iraq, Russia, Ukraine, England and Nigeria.

2 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

2.1 Early education system in Finland

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Finland is referred to in short as EduCare. Educare fulfils the needs of small children under 6 years of age and provides instructions and education for them (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2000). Two main aims of early childhood education and care in Finland are to support children 0 – 6 years with basic needs and provide them with early childhood education care (Governments resolutions concern 2002). Parents with a child are entitled to get benefits from the state. The state has arranged benefits for parents in form of parental leaves which includes both paternal and maternal leaves, home care allowance which parents are allowed to choose between taking care of a child under 3 years old at home or placing the child in day care (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2000).

The Finnish system of ECEC consists of health services which are provided through the municipalities. The health services nursed introduces the ECEC system to the parents with small children. The health service nurses also explain the importance of the ECEC to parents and their cooperation in needed with the educators for the sake of the child. The rights of a child to use day care services in Finland are conveyed by the law and they are according to the parents' desire. In the end of parental allowances parents have to make a decision of taking their child in day care. The types of day cares that are available are family day care, municipality day cares, private day care or take the child straight to pre-school and that is if the child is already six years old (Ministry of Social Affairs and health 2000).

The implementation framework of ECEC is provided by:

- “the Act and Decree of childrens’ Day care (1973);
- the Government Resolution Concerning the National Policy Definition of Early Childhood education and Care (2002);

- the National Curriculum Frame Work for Early Childhood Education and Care in Finland (2003);
- the Basic Education Act (1998);
- the Core Curriculum for Pre-School Education (2000). (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2004).”

In Finland, municipalities must offer the day care services in Finland’s official languages, which are Finnish, Swedish and Sami. In the municipality of Kemi day care services are offered in Finnish. Day care is encouraged to support children of Romany and other immigrants' languages with their cultural background (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2003). In Kemi Immigrant parents are encouraged to speak their own language (mother tongue) at home and the use of Finnish language takes place in day care (Kemin kaupungin varhaiskasvatussuunnitelma 2011). The provision of day care is normally at public day care centre and family day care homes. There is a provision of various open activities in open day care centres and playground supervised open activities available for everyone (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2003). In Kemi there are provision of activities in all open day centres and supervised activities in certain playgrounds, such as day and family clubs offered by the congregation of Kemi (Kemin seurakunta 2013).

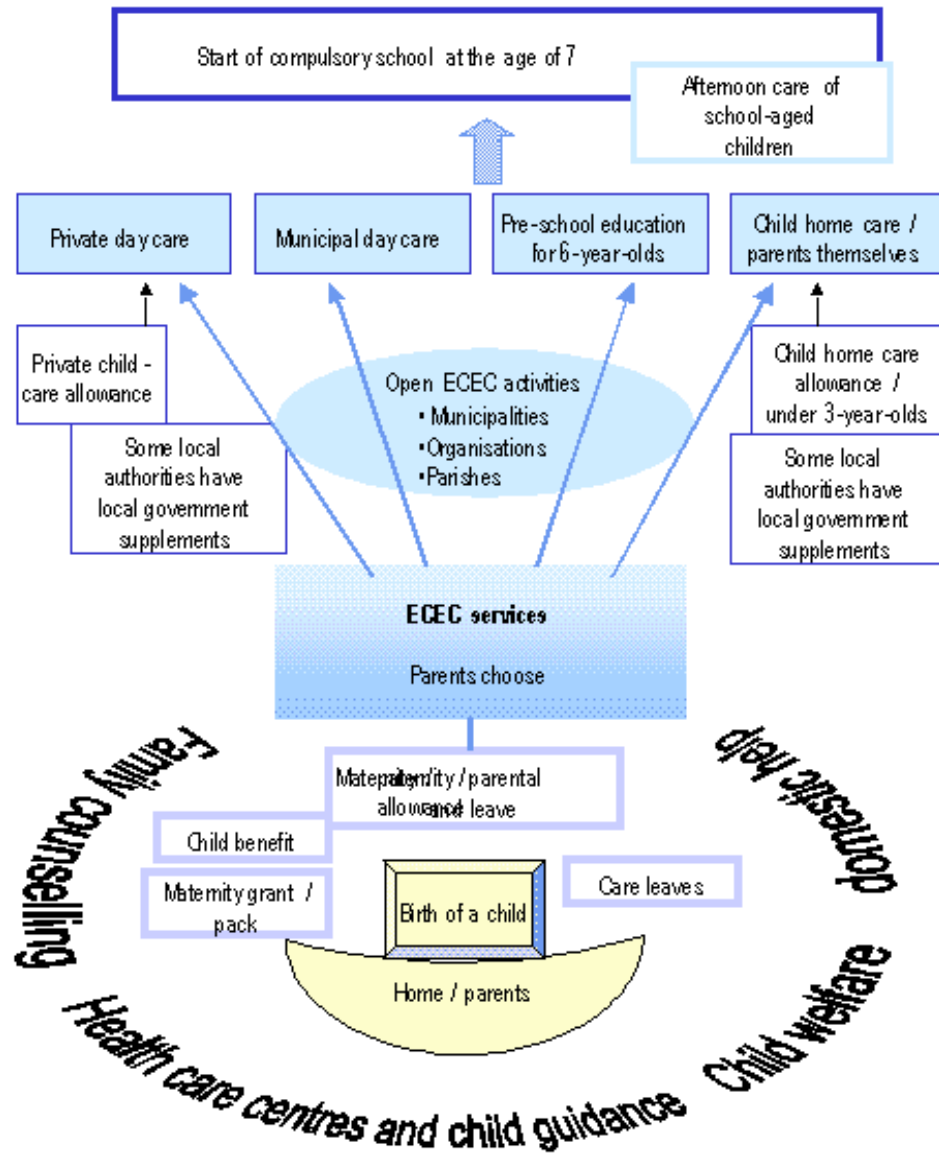


FIGURE 1. The ECEC system for children aged 0-6 in Finland.

The diagram above shows various kinds of benefits which are provided when a child is less than 7-years old and all the ECEC benefits that are offered. The diagram is drawn by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. In Finland, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health are in charge of services offered to families and young children. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health cooperates with other governmental ministries to provide the service to the families and children. The services are offered by the state and the parents have a right to choose which services to use with their child.

2.2 Laws and documents regulating early education

The main control means of early education in Finland is the legislation, which defines the goals and demands of action. Based on the day care legislation one of the main goals of day care is to support the parents with their upbringing and promote one's balanced development of personality. The day care services must offer safe and warm relationships, versatile action which supports child's development and offers a favourable growth environment. (Law on children's day care 25.3.1983/304.) The essential laws concerning early education in Finland are the law of day care, enactment of children's day care, basic education act, enactment of basic education, social welfare act, law on social welfare status and rights of a client and law on social care professional qualification requirements for personnel (THL 2013). The basics of early education plan is a document which is to guide implementation of the contents of early education in Finland. The plan consist of early education and its plans, realization of early education, parents' participation within early education, special support, language and cultural aspects and early education plan in municipalities. (Stakes 2005.)

The enactment of children's day care, in chapter 1 a, defines one of the educational objectives to be supporting Finnish or Swedish speaking and Laps, Romany's and different immigrant children groups own language and culture in co-operation with representatives of that particular culture. (Enactment of children's day care 16.3 1979/239). The main goal of the law of social welfare status of a client, act 1 chapter 1, is to promote confidentiality of client-relationship, client-orientation and client's right to good service and treatment within social care. Within the same law's second chapter,

client has a right to receive good quality service and treatment without discrimination. A client must be treated with the respect of his/her dignity, belief and privacy. Client's wishes, opinion, benefit, individual needs, mother tongue and cultural background must be taken into consideration while implementing social care. (Law on social welfare status and rights of a client 22.9.2000/812.)

2.3 Co-operation with parents – care-partnership

Care-partnership is parents' and staff members' cognizant function and commitment for supporting child's development, growth and learning. Shortly, it is equal interaction between staff and parents. Parents do have the primary educational responsibility and right over their own child. The main goal of care-partnership is that child as his/her own life's experiences will be comprehensively seen, supported and understood. Some of the important issues concerning that are how to speak to a child and what will be spoken to him/her and perception of child's play, experiences, needs, act and wishes are in an important role. In the early education plan (2005) one of the goals of care-partnership is to recognize any possible needs for special support and together with parents to seek for suitable actions to be taken. (Kaskela & Kekkonen 2006, 11, 17-18.)

The guidelines guiding care-partnership are respect, hearing, trust and dialogue. Especially when confronting diversity and different types of a families, it is important to create a reverential relationship and with immigrant parents it is in a crucial role. Respect eases the derivations for actual interaction, where two persons can freely take up issues without having to hide anything. Hearing is a certain kind of focusing and empathetic listening and it always includes the presence of claim. Trust grows up if there is time, dialogues and common meetings between the staff and parents. An important goal of care-partnership is to create a confidential atmosphere for every dialogue of the staff and parents. Dialogue can be defined as a skill to speak, think and act together. In an educational atmosphere the importance lies on creating a good atmosphere for discussion between educators and parents. (Kaskela & Kekkonen 2006, 32, 34, 36, 38.)

In ECEC the cooperation between educator and parents has to be reliable. The main responsibility of upbringing a child lies on the parents and the feedback from the ECEC educators. ECEC partnership calls for cooperation, commitment, interaction, continuous

and mutual understanding on matters concerning the child in all possible means. To attain shared understanding the experience should be heard and mutual respect attained by all involved in the partnership. In ECEC partnership, parents are given a chance to choose for their child which ECEC they want and parents also discuss all the matters concerning the ECEC of their child with the staff members. Each child has his/her own individual plan which the parents are involved in planning and assessing the child's activities.

The main aim for the ECEC is to increase discussions and cooperation between parents and the educators. The educators support parents with the upbringing of their children. The process of educating, supporting, looking after and nurturing children forms a flexible support as to each child individually. "The main aim is to further the development of services system from the perspective of families and their children" (Governments resolutions concern 2000). A child develops in what is known as a bio-ecological system theory, meaning that the child's development occurs in a system of relations, which includes family environment and societal landscape. There develops relationship between the child and the parents. A child develops relationship with the key persons, who in turn should develop relationship with the child in a professional context. The parents develop a good relationship with the key persons in the child's life (Bruce 2011, 178).

Bruce (2011, 176) talks of a research which is carried on parents, and the results showed that every parent wants to do what is right for their child. Most parents do not know what quality provision involves, they rely on instructions given by friends or experts in deciding the alternatives made. Families differ and have dissimilar needs, therefore the key to partnership is based on the network strategies that can be engaged for dissimilar approaches that can be used by dissimilar families - approaches that can build on what families can do rather than what they cannot do.

The network of strategies is done by pulling together a variety approaches to help the parents/carer/staff partnership to build up success, meaning all important people in the child's life pull their strings together for the sake of the child. The importance of considering the child in context which include dissimilar skills, strengths that have been offered by professionals and voluntary agencies to improve the ability of the child as a member of family. (HM Government 2004.) Bruce (2011, 187) talks about five strands

that support every area of the early-childhood practices. The previous include: contributing positive contributions; economic well-being; being safe; enjoying and gaining and being healthy. Multiagency-work in early stages of a child, the health visitors are the key professionals and can link the family to other professions (Bruce 2011, 188). Working team is accomplished when different roles of educators complement each other and partnership emerges strong (Bruce 2011, 194).

2.4 Early education plan

The basics of early education (2005) is guiding the implementation of the contents of early education nationwide in Finland. As a basis for this plan is the Council of State's 28.2.2002 accepted guidelines and areas of development. The goal of the early education plan is to promote the realization of universal early education in the whole country, guide the development of contents and create premises for developing the quality of early education by standardizing the basics of organization of activities. An other major goal of the basics of early education plan is to increase parents' co-partnership within the services of early education of their child and also to increase multiprofessional co-operation between different services which support children and families before a child's school age. The increase of educators' professional awareness is also one of the important goals of the plan. Municipalities create their own strategies and guidelines for early education based on the nationwide early education plan of Finland. Every day care unit do have their own early education plan, which is more accurate and specific. Each child gets an early education plan, which is being drawn together with parents. Some of the important substances of the early education plan are realization of early education, parents' participation, special support, language- and cultural aspects and early education plan in municipalities. (Stakes 2005.)

Bruce (2011) mentions for children to develop and learn in ways that are right for them at the right time and there should be planning to ensure that they are learning what they are required to know and equipped with good strategies on how to learn in future. Planning should help in finding out how deeper possibilities and interests children have and these can help them to function in the society and in the world as general. Planning is a process which is ever-changing and therefore it involves analysing the observation of the child, getting to know his/her interests and needs. Looking at the previous official

framework documents should be in use and compared. The need to offer the child what he/she is interested in calls for a better integration, because then he/she will be motivated to learn even if he/she finds it difficult.

Each child has his/her own individual plan which the parents are involved in planning and assessing the child's activities. Bruce (2011, 129, 212, 213) refers to formative and summative methods. Formative is one way in which the children are involved in learning overtime. Formative assessment emphasizes on daily context of learning rather than tests. Formative assessment can be used by gathering information continuously and regularly about the child in non-test conditions for example photographing, drawing, painting, keeping examples of written efforts, sing and dances. Summative assessment is all about stopping for a moment and give thought by bringing all the knowledge about the child's progress together. Summative assessment is one method which can be used in partnership by collecting all the knowledge together to form a better evaluation on the curriculum/plan. This information is collected from parents, educators, policy, inclusion and diversity and additional needs.



FIGURE 2. Possible lines of direction.

The figure above is used for planning children's development and learning. "It is referred to as PLODs (Possible Lines of Direction), which was developed in 1990s by the author with Lynne Bartholomew, June Byne and the staff of Redford House at the Froebel Institution and later taken up by the staff Pen Green. Planning helps children to learn what really interest them and show areas which they must know in order to being able to function in the society and world. By planning children learn what they need to know and helps to look for necessary strategies for future learning. (Bruce 2011, 218.)

2.5 Early education plan in Kemi

In Finland it is recommended that each municipality have their own early education plan based on the basics of national guidelines for early education. This plan is to give guidelines to implement and also to direct the evaluation and development of early education. The mission statement of the plan in Kemi is to organize high-quality services for its habitants and promote well-being of the sub-region by its own action and with co-operation. An other important mission statement of the plan is to support child's growth and development in order to have a good and balanced life. Based on the Finnish early education and the values of Kemi city, the main values of early education are safety, childhood, equity and customer orientation.

The main educational goals are promoting individual well-being, strengthening different aspects of behaviour and action which takes others in consideration and also increasing one's independence. In Kemi the early education for children with different cultural backgrounds is being organized together with normal early education services and it is to support the possibilities to learn Finnish, which is the language of instruction within early education. It is mainly the parents' responsibility to maintain a child's original culture and language. The early education plan of Kemi is only offered in Finnish language. (Early education plan of Kemi 2011.)

2.6 Quality work in early education

Definition of quality work within early education can be defined as developing work, such as evaluation, measurement, compilation of plans and different kinds of project work. Based on the statement of the Social and Health Ministry of Finland, quantitative evaluation is being done on a regular basis almost in every municipality. Qualitative evaluation of actions is not so frequent. Municipalities need more support with developing the contents of early education, e.g. with care-partnership, special early education and developing quality on the services. (Ministry of Social and Health 2003, 3-4, 90.)

The essentials documents concerning early education and quality in Finland are the national guidelines of early education (Council of State 2002) and the basics of early education plan (2005). The aim of the national guidelines is to promote development of

the content and quality within early education. The importance of care-partnership, multiprofessional work and acting to the quality are emphasised on those guidelines. A child and his/her family should be seen as a centre for creating the service package of early education. (Council of State 2002.) The basics of early education plan is to promote universal realization of early education in the whole country, direct the development of contents and to standardize motifs of organizing action. The goal of this plan is also to increase parents' participation as a part of their children's early education services and increasing multiprofessionalism is also as one aim. (Stakes 2005.)

The manual of quality of early education in Kemi was being made on 2011 and it is based on the Excellent Early Education project in which Kemi was participating during the years 2004-2005. The evaluation of the action is based on the values of early education and goals which are set together. Parents have an opportunity to evaluate the realization of early education for supporting and guiding their child individually. The staff members are constantly evaluating their own work and it is the manager's responsibility to make sure that evaluation of actions is being made. During the financial year, the staff is to evaluate whether or not the early education plan has come to fruition. (Early education plan of Kemi 2011.)

In Kemi the quality work within early education is planned and carried out – practices are being developed, functionalities of different practices are being evaluated, everyone does as agreed, everything that has been agreed will be written down and there is an agreement what to do and how. Rauvala points out some of the matters concerning quality work within early education: child's right for childhood, child is seen and heard, present interaction between child and adult, importance of care-partnership and common vision about upbringing between educators. Some of the possible tackles hindering quality can be the large size of a group, lack of money and space, rush and pressure, lack of time for planning and lack of education of educators. (Rauvala 2013.)

Within Leseman (2007, 3, 14) some of the important principles concerning quality are educated and motivated staff, sensitive and safe social relationships, the content of the program should be done in co-operation with parents and it should also be culturally relevant regarding language, quantitative literacy and also cognitive and social skills. The quality and quantity of informal education at homes is influenced by factors such as low social class, poverty and cultural backgrounds with no mainstream, among others.

All those different factors mentioned above have added more responsibility for day care service systems as a part of upbringing children. The quality of services should match those ever growing demands of early education.

3 INTEGRATION OF IMMIGRANTS

3.1 Immigration

The Finnish government's immigration policy defines guidelines for immigration and integration in Finland. The immigration and refugee policy program matured in October 1997 – it determines Finland's international action's guidelines, entry- and asylum policies and also the basic principles of integration of immigrants. The basic quest of the immigration policy is the effectual integration of immigrants into the Finnish society and working life. Our society should also guarantee immigrants' possibilities to retain his/her own culture and language. (Räty 2002, 134.) Different forms of manifestation of the Finnish immigration policy are refugee, asylum, Ingrians- or emigration policy and also integration policy and work permit policy. This policy practice of Finland has been called to be *active immigrant policy*. (Pehkonen 2006, 16.)

Based on the future of immigration -strategy by the Ministry of Interior (2013) the immigration shall be controlled and predictable and it is to strengthen Finland's competitiveness and also promote the whole population's well-being. Immigrants should be able to use their know-how and participate into building our society. The future of Immigration 2020 also points out the importance of valuing diversity and universality, and equality are to belong to everyone.

Lapland's migration strategy's purpose is to act as an outlining document for developing the immigration and integration and also one of the goals is to be prepared for growing amount of immigration and recruitment from abroad in the area until the year 2017. The guiding vision of this strategy is that by the year 2017, Lapland is pluralistic and multicultural province where everyone has universal prerequisites and possibilities to live and work. There are four different sets of measures which are outlining the strategy: individual needs of immigrant as a basis for integration, skilled immigrants as employees and entrepreneurships, working life which is constantly getting more international and last, workable service systems and multi-professional networks as a support to integration. (Petäjämäa 2013.)

Immigrant refers to a person who has a foreign nationality and has an intention to live in

Finland for a longer period of time (Väestöliitto 2013). Paavola and Talib (2010, 30) describes immigrant as a person who has moved from one country to another temporarily or permanently, and who stays in a country which is not his/her birth country and also has created social bondings in a new country. "Family reasons are the major reason for immigration" (Säävälä 2011, 13). Säävälä (2011, 8-9) also points out the stigmatizing tone on the word immigrant. Over half of all the immigrants coming to Finland come from many different nationality groups and therefore the concept of immigrant is not so uncomplicated.

Refugee is a person who has a justified reason of fear to be persecuted based on his/her race, religion, nationality or political opinion (Paavola & Talib 2010, 30). The department of immigration defines if a person is refugee and those who are given as an asylum or who are taken into Finland as quota refugees will get a status of refugee. Asylum seeker can also get a residence permit based on subsidiary or humanitarian protection, but in that case he/she does not have the status of refugee. (Maahanmuuttovirasto 2013.) If a human being cannot be dependent on his/her own home country's protection, the international community which belongs to the United Nations, offers international protection. There are altogether 113 countries who have signed this contract and Finland is also a part of it. The countries who have signed the contract must offer an asylum to a refugee if there are enough grounds for it. (Alitolppa-Niitamo 1994, 15.)

Asylum seekers seek for protection and residence permit. He/she must leave an application for the residence permit right when arriving into the country or at least as soon as possible after the arrival. Asylum seeker does not have the status of refugee until he/she has given that status. (Halme & Vataja 2011, 8; Paavola & Talib 2010, 32.) A total of 4,018 people sought for asylum in year 2010 in Finland. The largest nationality groups seeking for asylum during the same year were Iraq (575 persons), Somalia (571) and Bulgaria (485). Residence permits in 2010 were granted to 1,298 persons and asylum to 181 persons in Finland based on subsidiary protection or humanitarian reasons. (Ministry of the Interior 2010.)

Remigrant is a person who has roots in Finland but has lived in some other country and returns back to his/her original homeland. In Finland remigrants are mainly Ingrian-Finnish. A person with foreign nationality has a Finnish ancestry if he/she has been a

Finn or at least one of his/her parents or grandparents is or has been a Finnish citizen. The largest groups of remigrants in Finland since 1980's have been from Sweden and the United States. (Maahanmuuttovirasto 2013; Rätty 2002, 32.)

A person who moves into a country permanently with the idea of earning his/her living is a migrant. Migrant leaves his/her homeland with the hope of getting a better future and livelihood in some other country. Migrant can be an immigrant or emigrant. (Paavola & Talib 2010, 32; Maahanmuuttovirasto 2013.)

On this thesis the word immigrant children refers to all of those children who came to Finland with their families based on any of the reasons mentioned above. Those reasons are not specified on this research, as we think it is not relevant to our topic. The nationalities do have a role to play concerning the process of integration, so that we take into consideration when analysing the results.

3.2 Laws and process of integration

The integration Act 1999 defines integration as following: “the personal development of immigrants, aimed at participation in working life and society while preserving their own language and culture.” The concept of integration is not easily and simply described, as it is a rather complex concept. Integration is a “two-way” process which happens to those immigrants arriving into their new country and also to the society receiving them. Both “members” must be active and participate into the process. Integration can have a variety of meanings to every individual at their personal levels – the previous experiences and past have an immense effect on the whole process of integration. (Ministry of Labour 2005.)

The new and updated law on the promotion of integration was being set on 2011. The purpose of the law is to promote and support integration and facilitate immigrants’ possibilities to be able to act as an active member in our society. In case a family is to be seen in a need for an integration plan, it is the municipality’s task to form a plan, which draws focus on a child’s or adolescent’s development’s support. (Finlex 2011.) Issues than can hinder the process of integration can be lack of language skills, paucity or a total lack of social contacts and unemployment. As the primary goal of integration is

reaching for a good and balanced life, the components of well-being are the same as the original population is reaching out – finding one's place in the society, livelihood, health and human relationships. (Pehkonen, 2006, 76.) In 2011 there were altogether 20 453 immigrants who got an integration plan, and 11 245 of those were women and the rest of them were men. Most of those plans were drawn to people aged 25 – 34. Integration plan can be made for three years, which is the maximum time. (Ministry of the Interior 2012.)

There is a rough division of the process of adaptation into a new country and culture, the other is the merger of cultural minorities into our main culture whereas the other one focuses on multiculturalism. Within the national curriculum guidelines on early childhood education (2005) the early education should act with the model focusing on multiculturalism and the focus is on child's mother tongue's, culture's and religion's support and by doing that supporting the whole integration process into the Finnish society. The most pursued option is integration. Assimilation happens when a person gives up his/her own minority identity and wishes to be part of the majority. Separation can happen if an immigrant avoids contacts with the majority and strictly sticks into his/her own minority group. Marginalisation is the worst option – an individual totally differentiates from his/her own background and do not either identify with any other groups. Immigrant child's risk of exclusion is growing if his/her family is going through exclusion of our society and in those situations multiprofessional network is needed in order to prevent immigrant child's exclusion or marginalisation. (Halme & Vataja 2011, 65-68.)

Children seem to adapt into a new environment and culture rather quickly, but still needing support to orientate into his/her new lifestyle and also support for developing the Finnish and at the same keeping up the native language skills. Day care has an essential role in supporting child's and his/her family's integration. Preschool should create a founding for bilingualism and multiculturalism. (Räty 2002, 147-148.) The day care law from year 1994 focuses on the importance of supporting immigrant children's own language and cultural background together with the representatives of that particular culture (Finlex 2013).

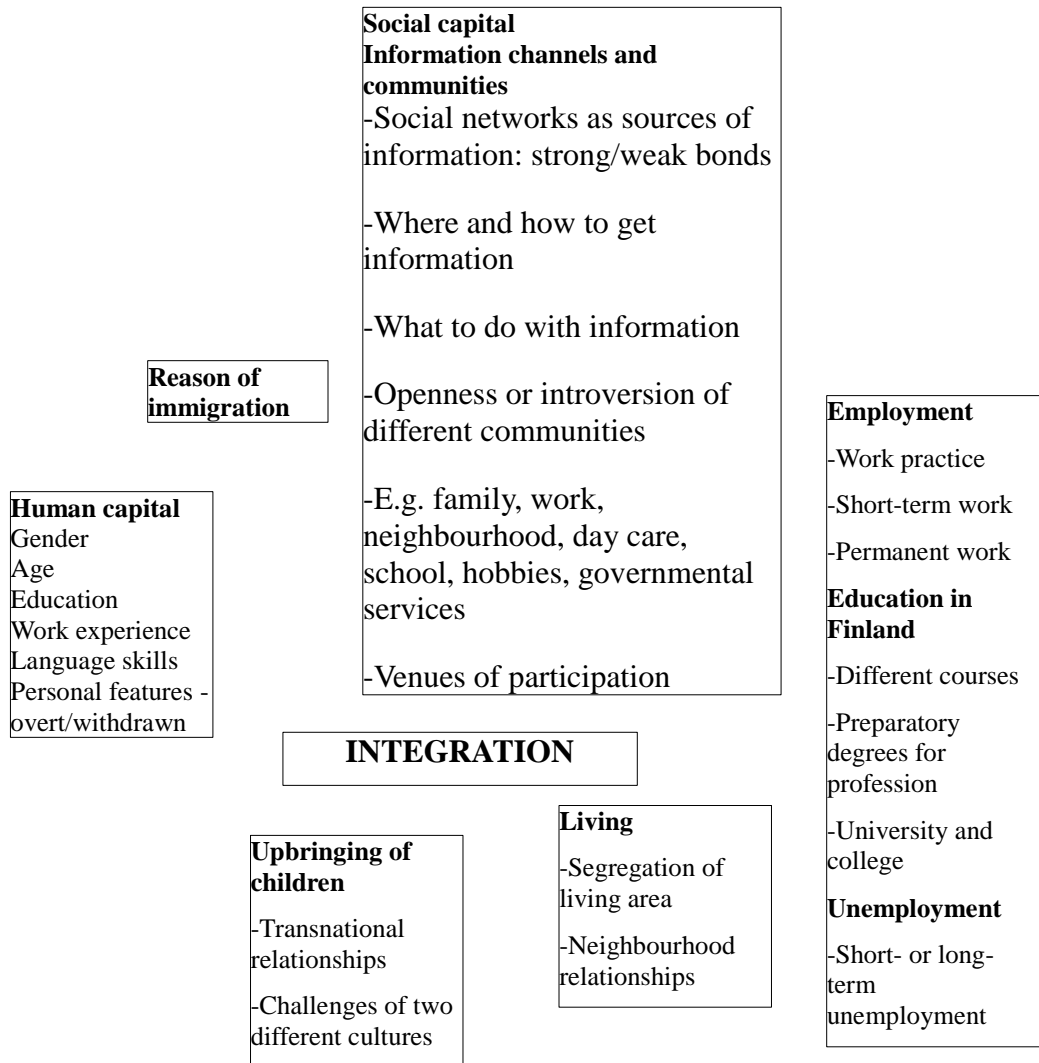


FIGURE 3. Integration (Pehkonen 2006.)

Based on Pehkonen's research (2005) can be drawn a figure above. Different factors such as attitudes, human capital and the reason of immigration effect on the whole integration process. Lack of language skills and unemployment can hinder that process. Co-operation and interaction between immigrants and Finnish people can ease the creation of social capital. Human capital (such as know-how and attitudes) of a person, societal situation, society's networks and receptivity of society affects to whether or not there is any social capital within confluences of immigrants and the majority. The emerge of trust and functioning interaction can be said to ease the collaboration between immigrants and majority. As the main goal of integration is reaching a good and balanced life, the important factors connected to the integration process are human relationships, health, finding one's place in our society and livelihood. (Pehkonen 2006, 76-77.)

3.3 Osallisena Suomessa -project

One of the broadest projects of intensifying the integration of immigrants going on now is Osallisena Suomessa -project. The project is time-limited and it lasts from 2011 until 2013. The results of this project will be targeted into nationwide use. This project will develop immigrants' social contingencies, employment and education and some of its main goals are to construct new educational paths for young immigrants and create new types of approaches for supporting immigrant children and their parents within early education and basic education. The project is carried out with co-operation and fundings with the help of the Ministry of Employment and the Economy, local and regional authorities, the Ministry of Education and Culture, Culture Fund of Finland and Svenska Kulturfonden. (Ministry of Employment and the Economy 2012.)

The results of the project will give basis for estimating if there are any need to develop legislation, system and methods. Some of the objectives are that the needs of mother who are staying home will be taken into account when providing education, teachers' and educators' workmanship will be strengthened and developed further and one of the objectives is to provide immigrant adolescents universal and societal preparedness to further education, such as the original population has. (Kariuki 2011.)

3.4 Immigrant families in Finland and Kemi

Within the Statistics Finland the amount of people with a foreigner background in 2012 is 285 471 and in Lapland region there are living 6 524 persons with a different birth country than Finland (Statistics Finland 2013). The biggest foreigner groups in Finland in year 2010 were Estonians, Russians and Swedish and the next biggest groups are from Somalia, Chinese and Iraqis (Suomen Kuntaliitto 2013). The principal reasons for moving to Finland are work, family and studying and over half of the immigrants come from outside the region of the European Union. In 2000 there has been 1 500 – 6 000 asylum seekers per year coming to Finland as based on international agreements and national legislation, Finland is obligated to offer international protection to those in need. The majority of immigrants in Finland live in the biggest cities, as the immigration is not focused evenly on different areas, and in the capital area every tenth citizen has an immigrant background. (Ministry of the Interior 2013.)

In Finland, there live over 30 000 families with children where other or both parents are foreigners. The amount of families with children where both parents are foreigners was about 13 600 in year 2008. There were more families with a mother having a Finnish background and a foreigner man, than families with a Finnish speaking father and a woman from abroad. As the figure below shows, the largest group of people with foreign background comes from Russia. (Statistics Finland 2009.)

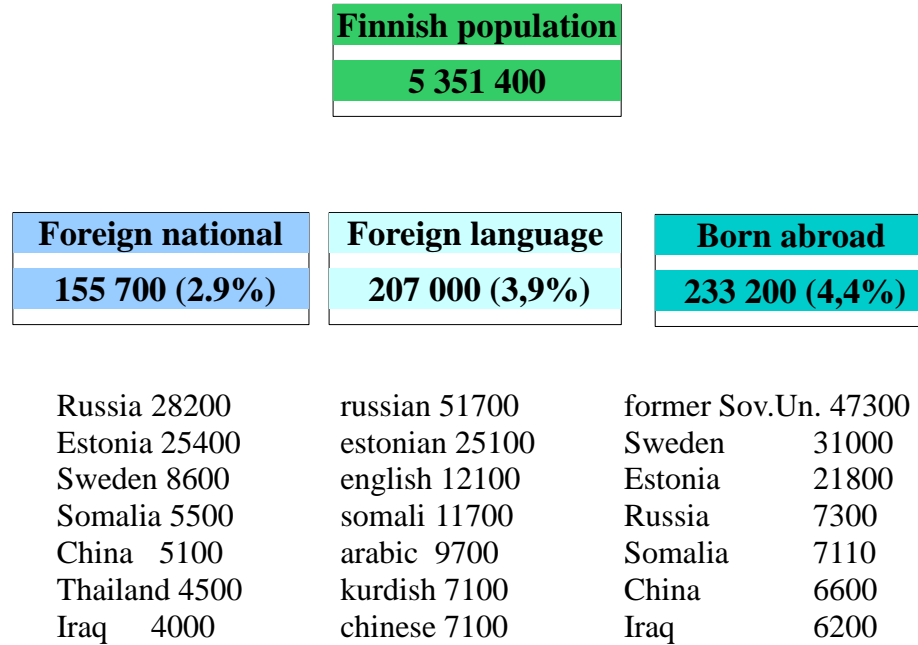


FIGURE 4. Finland's foreign population based on nationality, native language and birth country in year 2009. (Statistics Finland 2009.)

Kemi has received refugees since year 1988 and for four years it has had a contract with the Labour and Economic Development Centre (Työvoima- ja elinkeinokeskus) for receiving 50 quota refugees per year. These quota refugees have been Somalis, Kurds, Vietnamese, Burmese and Albanians. Since year 2009 Kemi has reserved 20 municipality places for those refugees who got a positive decision on their residence permit application. Those refugees come from the Finnish Red Cross' reception centre, which is situated in Kemi. As mentioned in the following paragraph, the integration plan is being updated/renewed during the project of integration of immigrants, which took place in 2010. In the end of year 2009 there were 120 persons within the scope of refugee work in Kemi. There are around 200 persons in Kemi with the background of refugee. (Kemi 2013 D.)

Kemi city has an ongoing project in which the main focus is on the integration of immigrants. The goals of SILMU -project is to develop service processes of integration and promote the beginning of different measures from a client's point of view. Creating new tools supporting integration and preventing exclusion, developing already existing services and creating new forms of service in co-operation with different agents in Kemi area are some of the aims of this project. One of the operations of SILMU -project is to

develop an immigration program for the municipality, which should be finished by the end of year 2013. (Kemi 2013 C.)

The reception centre of Kemi receives asylum seekers and refugees coming from different countries. The centre is responsible for offering basic services needed for its clients. Immigrants live in the centre during their asylum process. Kemi's reception center started its functioning in 17.8.2011 and it is subordinate to Rovaniemi's reception centre unit (Rauta 2010). In September of 2011 the amount of clients dropped down to 150 (Yle 2011). The contents of this service are mainly based on accommodation, income support, all the indispensable social and health care services, interpreter services and securing one's basic needs (Rauta 2010).

The biggest nationality groups in Kemi in year 2007 were Myanmars (79), Russians (79), Swedish (49), Ukrainian (22) and Iranian (21). The following figure shows the amount of immigrants in Lapland from year 2007 and as it can be seen, the population of Kemi has decreased but the amount of immigrants has increased slightly from year 2006 to 2007. The population in Finland in 2007 was 5 300 484 and the amount of immigrants in the whole country was 132 708. In 2007 there were 10 969 immigrants more living in Finland than a year before that. (Lapland's Economic Development centre 2008.)

SUB-REGION	POPULATION (change 06-07)	IMMIGRANTS (change 06-07)
Rovaniemi	63 337 (+606)	1018 (+160)
Kemi-Tornio	60 892 (-263)	783 (+32)
Tornionlaakso	9 159 (-297)	86 (+7)
Fell-Lapland	14 091 (-12)	192 (+35)
Northern-Lapland	17 271 (-157)	162 (+9)
East-Lapland	19 640 (-446)	120 (+3)
Lapland in total	184 390 (-545)	2361 (+246)

FIGURE 5. Lapland's immigrants on 31.12.2007 by sub-region (Employment and Economic Development Centre).

In the Internalization program of Kemi immigrants are to be seen as resource and possibility for the city. All the international functioning of the basic services is focused on receiving refugees and the mastery of different educational and integration processes. Immigrants' cultural and professional know-how is to be supported. In order for immigrants to understand the important values and norma of the Finnish society, the whole integration process is to be efficient and successful. Immigration in Kemi area has created new kinds of business activities and different cultures and languages can be seen to create this area some vigour within tourism, business and culture. (Kemi 2010 A.)

4 DAY CARE SERVICE SUPPORTING INTEGRATION

4.1 Multicultural early education

Constantly growing amount of immigrant children within early education services in Finland creates need for assessing the current state of services and its quality. For an immigrant child kindergarten is a major promoter concerning integration into a new society and country and therefore in each municipality there should be awareness and readiness for developing the processes of integration in day cares. The educators at kindergartens today need knowledge about multicultural education and cultural diversity in order to provide high-quality early education services. The co-operation between educators and parents is extremely important and demands flexibility and openness from both sides. Values, norms and different cultural features come into existence when an immigrant child starts his/her journey at a kindergarten. How to support this child so that he/she could begin his/her integration process and become a part of the kindergarten community and in a wider aspect a part of our society?

Opening up the concept of multicultural is not a simple task. Paavola & Talib (2010, 11) defines it to include culture, language, ethnicity, exclusion, socioeconomical status, religious diversity, matters of gender, disability and sexual orientation. Multiculturality indirectly refers to relationships between different groups and other relevant factors are relationships between individuals, where attitudes and behaviour come into existence. In this context the concept of multicultural refers to immigration and immigrants and issues related to those. Multicultural early education is active interaction, learning from each other and co-operation and it is to be targeted to everybody and it is care, upbringing and education from different perspectives. Educators need to take comprehensively into consideration child's language- and cultural background and also his/her individual needs when planning and implementing activities and also within pedagogical solutions. (Sivén 2011.)

Multicultural education's main aim is to offer children different cultural, ethnical and linguistic experiences and help him/her to achieve a greater self-understanding. Racism, attitudes, stereotypes and discrimination are to be diminished and eliminated within

multicultural education. Halme and Vataja (2011, 45) have listed some of the cultural aspects within early education's contents' orientations as following; construction of knowledge, reduction of attitudes, justice within education and change of school/day care culture and social structures. There are many kindergartens in Finland which have immigrant clients but it is not enough for a kindergarten unit to call itself a multicultural kindergarten (Paavola & Talib 2010, 227).

Some of the essential principles of multicultural education can be seen below. These principles or more like the lack of them can hinder the integration process of an immigrant child and therefore we want to highlight their importance. All in all, a certain kind of positive and open atmosphere in a day care community is rather important, especially when there are immigrant children in a group. As it can be seen on the figure below (page 29), the educators are in a huge role concerning the success of an integration process and it is their task to create a favourable basis for an immigrant child's integration and participation into his/her group in the kindergarten. It came up on the interviews which we performed, that there is not enough support for a child's mother tongue and there is plenty of confusion and mixing up different languages. On the figure one of the points is supporting a child's linguistic and cultural background as it has a direct effect on his/her identity and its development. Care-partnership and co-operation with parents is also listed below and especially with immigrant children's parents it is of great worth – reliable and open adult/educator can create trust and favourable basis for plentiful dialogue between parents and educators.

- Multicultural education and knowledge of different cultures should be aimed to main and minority groups
- Educators' high expectations and positive attitudes towards everyone are essential concerning child's success and development of a healthy self-esteem
- All different ethnic and religious groups, cultures and perspectives should be taken into consideration when planning curriculums and activities
- Teaching materials and other should be chosen so that they respect and take account of diversity
- Child's mother tongue is a part of his/her identity and therefore valuing it and teaching it if possible is important thinking of the positive development of identity
- Teaching the second language offers a child a chance to participate into the surrounding community and society
- Cultural and linguistic background of a child must be noticed on evaluation
- Continuous educating of educators creates a good basis for versatile upbringing and development of teaching/education
- Co-operation with parents creates trust
- Existing situations should try to be changed so that they are fair to every child

FIGURE 6. The basic principles of multicultural education. (Paavola & Talib 2013.)

Religious education is one of the areas where educators need to take into consideration an immigrant child's cultural and religious background. Educators must respect child's parents' religious background while supporting child's religious education. Day care

must support child's aesthetic, ethic, religious and intellectual education. (The law on children's day care 25.23.1983/304.) The national curriculum guidelines on early childhood education (2005) says that child's own religious or worldview will be orientated and a child will be given a chance to ask questions, wonder and experience silence. At its best religion supports the overall well-being of a child and religious education of child's own religion helps immigrant children on their integration process, as religion can function as an important safety structure in a new culture and country (Halme & Vataja 2011, 51). Those immigrant parents who we interviewed were pleasant and satisfied with the religious education at kindergartens of Kemi – educators respect each individual's personal beliefs and take it into account when planning activities. Those issues concerning everybody's religious and cultural background are being discussed on the early childhood education discussions with educator and it does offer an immigrant parent a calm and appropriate moment to talk about such a personal and perhaps even intimate area of one's life.

4.2 Language education

Large part of integration process of an immigrant child is the issue of learning Finnish and also remaining own original linguistic background. The biggest challenge of integration within those immigrant children's parents, who were being interviewed, was the issue with language. The parents wish understanding and flexibility from educators and also the importance of supporting child's own mother tongue was seen rather important. Halme & Vataja (2011) highlight the parents' responsibility of supporting their child to remain and use his/her mother tongue as it needs active work in order for it to remain in memory. For an immigrant child mother tongue represents a certain kind of continuity and roots, and learning a language is connected to his/her overall development and it also has a significant role in learning all in all (Halme & Vataja 2011, 16). As an educator how can one know, how to support parent's participation and motivation on remaining their child's original linguistic background?

In day care units educators must show their respect and interest towards immigrant child's mother tongue and also close co-operation about the language matter supports the learning process of a language – new and original. The goals and information about learning are to be written down on the early education plan together with parents.

Immigrant families are to be encouraged to spend time and meet other families with similar linguistic backgrounds, so that a child would have a chance to identify with his/her cultural community. Immigrant child should have a possibility during a day to play with his/her mother tongue and also using Finnish, and it is educator's responsibility to make sure it is possible that way. (Halme & Vataja 2011, 17-18.) This support from educators' side was being mentioned also on our interviews – parents were encouraged to use their mother tongue at home and children's linguistic skills and progress is seen by educators.

Learning the second language, in this case Finnish is of primary importance for an immigrant child in order to integrate well into our society and concerning his/her future in Finland. Teaching the second language for a child offers a chance to participate into the surrounding society and community. Paavola and Talib (2010, 232) talk about the socialisation viewpoint – situations and activities in day cares comprises certain types of language models, which arise from the Finnish culture and may not be familiar to other than Finnish children. The important areas of learning are how to say and with what expressions certain subjects are being communicated.

Functional bilingualism is the goal of an immigrant child's language development within early education. It means that child can automatically switch languages and actively speak, think and understand both languages. Finnish as a second language -teaching (S2) aims to offer immigrant children continuous, goal-oriented learning and on regular basis. The goal is to construct basis for functional bilingualism and also to develop child's awareness of the Finnish culture and also strengthen his/her multicultural identity. Play, functionality and child-orientation are the starting points of Finnish as a second language -teaching. In day care setting this teaching requires all the educators' co-operation and flexibility and it should be a natural part of child's everyday life in kindergarten. It is educators' task to evoke child's interest towards Finnish language and create versatile and meaningful communicative situations, where child can feel that speaking is pleasing and natural. (Halme & Vataja 2011, 21, 24-25, 27.)

4.3 Educator's role and skills within integration process

Early childhood educator who respects immigrant child's language and cultural

background works as his/her empowerer in a way and in order for it to function that way, educator must avoid showing his/her own stereotypes and attitudes. The very basis of early education work is building up own concept of upbringing and pondering the concept of human perception. Educator must be aware if he/she sees immigrant child as an object or subject and what is the educator's way of reacting on an immigrant child and his/her skills. Values and attitudes are in the major role concerning educators' work with immigrant children. Educator should be capable of identifying and developing his/her value world and have a clear frame of reference when it comes to values. Immigrant families are to be faced without any attitudes or prejudices and every individual must be treated universally and educator must understand the importance of treating immigrant families with respect and appreciate their original culture and background and show some interest into that. (Halme & Vataja 2011, 97-100.)

Paavola and Talib (2010, 82) speak about educator's intercultural know-how – it is a certain kind of expanded empathy, self-understanding, critical relation with work and perceiving of different modes of life and reality. Proficient educator has a skill to look at his/her own action and workmanship in a critical and reflective way and be willing to develop his/her work/actions if needed. The previous calls for continuous co-operation with other educators and parents and also observation of others and own action. In a multicultural kindergarten educator needs to have knowledge of different cultures, situational cultural competence and skill to interpret society's parlance (Hallinoja 1996).

Intercultural competence is built of cognitive, prejudiced, functional and elaborate dimensions and all those facilitate intercultural confluences. It is also a comprehensive process where one must reflect his/her own behaviour, attitudes, values and norms. The main goal of intercultural competence is to grow to respect and be aware of diversity. (Halme & Vataja 2011, 104.) One of the issues we have come across during this research project and also during one interview was the situation of multicultural education within universities with units where kindergarten teachers study. Is there enough education for facing immigrant families, as that is a growing client group within early education and therefore needed and valuable education thinking of the future? Within Social and Health ministry's statement (2007) in all universities of Finland teaching early education have taken into account the growing multiculturalism within day care services and therefore multiculturalism is one of the content areas. Some of the themes offered in that area are facing cultures, own and other culture, bilingualism and

multicultural competence.

As discussed above, educators do have an important role in integration processes of immigrant children. The lack of self-reflection and skill to reflect one's own work and actions can form challenges for making immigrant child's everyday life at kindergarten easier and adaptation into a new community and society. Educator also has an important role in a multiprofessional team, where he/she can give valuable information to other professionals and therefore effect on a whole family's well-being and situation. Co-operation with immigrant parents is relatively important thinking of the whole integration process. Below we will open up the importance of care-partnership as a supportive actor of integration.

4.4 Care-partnership supporting integration

Care-partnership's importance cannot be questioned when it comes to immigrant families and their children's integration as a whole. As Halme and Vataja (2011, 71) point out, day care worker can be the only Finnish support and contact person in a new country and culture and thus very important on a child's and whole family's integration and adaptation process. The role of parenthood is what is being focused within day care. Parents and educators together can talk about the upbringing and goals to be achieved and work together to achieve them. The common starting point for both sides should be the child's best interest. One of the most important areas to be discussed is the goals and contents of early education and also opening up the concept of learning and what it really means in practice.

Family-based approach highlights family's needs and wishes and every family's values, ways of acting and dealing with different issues should be noticed. There are many different ways to increase immigrant parents' participation within early education – different kinds of sessions of discussions and parents evenings in parents' mother tongue can be arranged and also an interpreter can be arranged for those meetings. Educators should guide immigrant families to have some hobbies, which would help children and also parents to create friendships and contacts. (Halme & Vataja 2011, 71-73.) Educators can and should function as a supportive factor within immigrant child's integration process and guide the whole family with early education matters.

Unfortunately it can also work the other way around – in case an educator is not willing to try to understand immigrant families' cultural backgrounds and reasons for certain actions or ways of dealing with different matters. Obviously there can be some clashes or differences when two persons with different values and cultural backgrounds face each other, but is it always our way that is the right one? Self-reflection and review of one's own actions and behavioural patterns can ease to see if there is anything that should be developed or changed. All in all care-partnership if done right and in a respectful way, can offer a major support for the whole immigrant family on their integration process.

5 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RESEARCH

5.1 Implementation of research methods

Our research is based on qualitative research method. The premise of qualitative research is the description of real life with the notion that reality can be seen as manifold. The aim of qualitative research is to try to study/investigate the subject as comprehensively as possible. As values have an effect on one's understanding of different phenomena, a researcher must bear in mind the importance of values of the starting points. The main aim in doing qualitative research, however, can be said to be a pursuit to find or reveal facts. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2009, 161.) We want to hear the voices of the parents of immigrant children and qualitative excerpt and method brings out their voices. Qualitative research method gives chances to recognise the examinees' past and factors effecting to their development and enables to see their observations/perceptions of different situations. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000, 27.)

We chose qualitative research because it allows us to look into details of the experiences that the parents of immigrant children have in details. We want to identify and understand the experiences foreigner parents have on integration of their children in Kemi's kindergarten's, from their own perspective. As researchers on integration issue we are curious, open-minded to listen to foreign parents stories as part of their experiences in integration of their children. We want to study the foreigner parents in their natural settings and identify their way of behaviour and life experience, for example the context in their social and cultural life. We want to understand the foreign parents' opinions of behaviour and beliefs from their own perspective as participants in the interview. One part of the research process is to find ways to find better and more suitable tools which can be used to manage and develop the day care system in Kemi from the foreigner parents' perspective. Understanding social interactions between immigrant parent and educators, values and norms shared between day care educators and immigrant parents is also important in this context. We are also curious to know how the social, cultural and physical contexts take place in the kindergartens.

5.2 Data collection and analysis

For collecting data we use theme-interview, semi-structured interview method. The interview is focused on certain themes and its basis is the supposition that all experiences, thoughts, beliefs and feelings of an individual can be researched by this method and the focus is on the experience world of interviewee's and how they define situations. Meanings come into existence during interaction and theme interview gives space for human beings' interpretations and meanings of different issues. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000, 48.) How the interviewer can interpret the answer of an interviewee's answers in context of different cultural meanings and worlds of meaning, is in a crucial role (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara, 2009, 207).

We chose theme-interview for allowing us and the interviewee to be in direct interaction and enhancing possibilities to direct our data collection the way we want in different situations. This method also enables motifs behind the answers to come out and it is also possible for interviewers to regulate the order of interview. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000, 34.) It is typical for theme-interview to have certain themes known but it is lacking the strict form and order of questions (Hirsjärvi et. al. 2009, 208). The characteristics of this interview method are that all the interviewees have experienced a certain situation, secondly the researcher has done some preliminary clarification of important parts, processes and whole of the phenomena. In the third phase is the elaboration of the frame of the interview and lastly the interview is targeted to those subjective experiences of situations which the researcher has already analysed. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000, 47.)

The analyse method we use on this research is data-driven analysis, which can be used to analyse documents systematically and objectively. The aim with this method is to seek to get a description of a certain phenomenon in a compressed and general way. Data-driven analysis is based on interpretation and inference and different concepts are being pieced together and by doing that, getting an answer to research questions. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 105, 112.) We approach our material by thematising, which means reviewing some certain features that are common among several interviewees. The themes are based on interpretations of the interviewees. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000, 173.) By bringing up themes which enlightens the research questions it is possible to compare certain themes' occurrence within the material. In order for thematising to be

successful it requires interplay between theory and empiria (experience). (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 175-176.)

5.3 Research questions and target group

The purpose of the research is to clarify the immigrant children's parents' perceptions of integration of their children in kindergartens in Kemi. We want to focus on the developmental aspect – how the integration could be developed or its quality enhanced from a client's point of view (in this case parents). By interviewing the parents of immigrant children we believe we gain some valuable replies to our research questions. The interview questions were formed in a way that we think would give answers to our research questions.

Research questions

1. What kind of conceptions/views do the parents of immigrant children have about the integration of their children?
2. How can the integration of immigrant children be developed within early education in Kemi?

With these questions we aim to get answers concerning our thesis. We want to get ideas for developing the integration in day care units of Kemi. As a target group of our research we chose some of the students from the immigrant school in Kemi and we also interviewed one immigrant who also is currently working with groups of different cultural backgrounds. All together we interviewed ten persons. Three of the interviewees were from Burma, two from Irak, one from Myanmar, one from England, one from Ukraine, one was from Russia and one parent was from Nigeria. We believe with all those different nationalities, we get diverse answers and from different perspectives and therefore hopefully valuable ideas for development. Types of interviewed people were: women married to Finnish men, men married to Finnish women, single mother, couples who are both immigrants and one divorced man who was not participating his child's everyday life, so we did not see the need of this interview and we discontinued it. We chose parents who have been going through some kind of process of integration of their child/children, which would give relevant replies into our research questions. Most of the interviews were done at the immigrant school

during their classes – that way we would easily reach the persons who are volunteered for the interviews. All of them had not been told why we were there, so it took some time to orientate for the interview from their point of view.

Qualitative research is not after statistical frequency, it is more about trying to understand or describing a certain action or phenomena, so it is important to choose persons that know something about the phenomena being researched or that they have experience of it. The criteria for choosing a target group for the research can e.g. be a language skill. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 85-86.) For the interviews we chose persons who were participating language courses which were on a rather advanced level, so that the lack of Finnish language skill would not be such a large issue concerning performing the interviews. Our interview questions were based on different themes because we think it would make it clearer and somehow give space for flowing conversations and also for the interviewees it would perhaps be easier to follow the interview and construct answers. Our choice of words for the interview questions were perhaps not the best ones, because of the lacking Finnish language skills of the interviewees, all the questions were not properly understood without explaining deeper.

5.4 Thesis process

We started with our thesis process in the end of October 2012, when we began to think of the possible subject and quite quickly we found a subject that we both were interested in. Both of us are interested in working with client groups who have a multicultural background and also children is one of the client groups that fascinates us and as we want to be qualified to work as kindergarten teachers, this subject felt perfect for us. As one of us has a same kind of background as our target group, immigrant parents, we thought it would somehow benefit us and we would get a wider perspective into our subject.

In the beginning of this process we contacted the day care manager of Kemi and she gave us an idea of going to the immigrant school of Kemi and that way it would be easier to reach the immigrant parents who have children in the day care in Kemi. We started our interviews in May and performed all of them during two days. We planned to interview seven people but we found out it was not enough. The teacher in the

immigrants' adult school told us in the beginning that seven people is perhaps too little and she also mentioned that people from Burma when asked questions, they just answer yes or no. We were so discouraged with the first four interviews, because we did not get much of constructive answers from the people we interviewed. The language was not clear for example for those who have been here in Kemi for two years or shorter period of time. The questions had difficult words for the people we interviewed and they did not understand the words, for example integration, early childhood plan and more. We also realized that in our questions there was this word "problem (ongelma)" and most of the people who just heard it said immediately there is no problem. One person did not want us to record her interview so we had to listen and make some notes and therefore that interview was not so successful.

After performing the interviews we went through them right after, so that we would not forget anything. Analysing the results was surprisingly easy, as in the beginning we thought that it would be the most challenging part of our research and the themes were easy to pick up as they came up so clearly on the interviews. The most challenging part of doing this research has been choosing the relevant material/references and to know what to leave out and what would be the most essential concerning our topic. We were also struggling to find books and material in English, as one of us preferred that language.

<p><u>STRENGTHS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are two → support from each other • interest and knowledge in early education and multiculturalism • one of us has a similar background as our interviewees • one of us understands and speaks Finnish • high motivation to graduate and get into work life 	<p><u>WEAKNESSES</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncertainty during our process • different styles of writing
<p><u>OPPORTUNITIES</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gaining knowledge • creating new contacts • possibility to have an effect on integration of immigrant children in Kemi 	<p><u>THREATS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of finding common time • lack of English material • stress and pressure • lack of understanding each other

FIGURE 7. SWOT-analyse on our thesis process.

The SWOT-analyse above shortly shows how we find the whole process and what possibilities it offers us. In our opinion it has been a benefit that it is two of us doing this research – we have been able to look at our topic and themes from very different angles and got into diverse conclusions. As our mother tongues are very different, there have been times when we could not understand each other and some misunderstandings took place. We have rather different styles of writing and that can perhaps be seen on our thesis. The meetings that we arranged to discuss our thesis and plans for the future went fast and often we used nearly the whole time for talking about something totally out of our topic. It feels a little bit sad to spend the summer time for writing this thesis but then in the end, we planned to be finished with this thesis by the end of August. We have both grown up in a way during this process and learnt valuable matters concerning immigrant children and their integration and also opened up our ways of thinking about

that area.

6 RESULTS AND FINDINGS

6.1. Finnish language supporting integration

The purpose of our research was to clarify what kind of views the parents of immigrant children in Kemi have about the integration at the moment. We also wanted to find out if there are any need for development and how the integration could be developed within early education in Kemi. Below are the themes that came to prominence from the interviews. Finnish language and its importance concerning integration came up on every interview and it was highly valued. Immigrant childrens' own cultural background is also an important theme and the quality of early education was being discussed quite a few times and therefore we wanted to highlight its importance and chose that to be one important theme, based on the interviews. Multicultural skills of educators are seen as an important factor supporting integration and the lack of them can harm the process of integration of an immigrant child. We have gone through the interviews many times and formed these themes based on that and we also looked at the themes in the light of our research questions.

Learning Finnish language was to be seen as one of the most important areas concerning integration – everyone thought that if one wants to integrate into the Finnish society, he/she must learn the language and also the lack of language skills can hinder and complicate the whole integration process. One interviewee mentioned that an immigrant child's only place and possibility to interact with Finnish children is kindergarten and by doing that learn to speak and understand Finnish. Few answers had a point that a child is really interested in learning the language and then the educators should support him/her on that area of learning. One issue is mixing up two different languages – one mother was worried about her child's skills to express himself clearly. Within one mother, the fact that Finnish language is difficult to learn, has also effects on the success of integration and for her child it does hinder his integration in day care and also in our society on a wider perspective. One father mentioned that his children get extra time from the educators at kindergarten, so that the learning process of language would be easier and perhaps quicker and therefore ease that child's integration and possibilities to widen his/her social environments and connect with other children.

“Minä vähän surullinen koska minun lapsi ei ymmärrä, osaa puhua.. jos haluaa mennä vessassa, hän ei osaa puhua. Joskus hän nukkuu päiväkodissa, hän... koska hän ei osaa pestä. Kotona hän puhuu, mutta päiväkotia ei.” (Case 5)

Most of the interviewees think that interaction between educators and clients (children and parents) is good and adequate; only one person thinks there should be more interaction and discussions between parents and staff members. One person pointed out the importance of having early education plan discussions more than just once or twice a year and the most important areas/issues should be in written texts afterwards, so it would be easier to understand the relevant and main points to be noticed.

“Interaction is quite formal and straight to point.” (Case 9)

Need for an interpreter in cases where there are no common language, was seen important and valuable from the immigrant parents' perspectives. Sometimes a child must act as an interpreter and in those cases there is no communication between educators and parents, due to lacking language skills. Most parents highlighted the importance of the use of simple Finnish, it seemed that too often the educators did not use clear words and meanings and therefore the message was not received fully or understood at all. Few parents mentioned that there is a threshold to speak Finnish with the educators and due to that the communication and interaction is rather little. Within some of the interviewees, it is also a great benefit for parents as well, to have their children at kindergarten – that way the parents also learn about the Finnish cultural norms, habits, language and etc.

The interview results show that there is no need for day care services served by any other language than Finnish – nearly everyone mentioned that Finnish language is the basis and the beginning for integration process. One parent thinks that it would be a benefit also to have a day care in Kemi which would offer services in English language. Some mentioned that it would be good to get the most important issues translated in their own mother tongue, so the understanding could be guaranteed and there would be no space for misunderstandings.

“Offering day care service in Finnish language is a way of getting the children properly

integrated into the Finnish system which I believe is good. “ (Case 9)

“No se on hyvä asia, että lapset osaavat monta kieltä, mutta se on paras että tämä on suomenkieli. Hyvä asia.” (Case 4)

One of the important themes concerning integration related to language was the need for supporting a child's own mother tongue. Some of the interviewees told that they have been encouraged to speak only their mother tongue and not mix any languages, in a way leave the teaching process of Finnish to the educators at the day care and give the parents the responsibility of encouraging children to speak their mother tongue at home.

“Oma kieli. Poika on vaikea suomi. Kotona puhuu meidän oma kieli, mutta päiväkodissa puhuu suomi ja vähän sekoittaa.” (Case 8)

6.2 Cultural background

Issues related to cultural background of a child came up in every interview that was being performed. Getting into Finnish norms, habits and culture was to be seen difficult and in the day care setting those issues mainly mean clothing, food, bringing up and attitudes. One parent mentioned one issue which within his opinion can hinder the integration process of a child and also parents – Finnish people's attitudes towards foreigners and speaking different languages. Within his experiences the educators had been timid to confront him as he was a foreigner and did not speak any Finnish and that in some cases had been a bit challenging and limited the interaction.

It was visible that the background of the interviewees could be seen on the answers concerning cultural background. Parents with a Russian background value the authority of parents and see the need to limit children more – one parent mentioned that in his/her opinion children have too much freedom at kindergartens and should not have so much power to decide for themselves. Those different expectations of early education and bringing-up can be seen on the answers.

“There were some, not a problems but things what I couldnt understand. Äää..I believe it was just a Finnish system..ää..In Russia for example,mm.. they dont give so much

freedom for kids, e.g. for me it was really terrible to see how those kids are just sitting in those ponds and they all wet and dirty and.. So and they do whatever they want to do and those aunties are just standing there and watching.” (Case 10)

In some countries such as Russia and England e.g., children start school at a very early age compared to Finland and parents from those countries mentioned the paucity of different types of educative games and emphasis on teaching. The importance of playing outside in Finnish kindergartens was being questioned in few interviews, as within the person being interviewed, children do not learn just by playing outside.

“In Russia,mmm.. especially now, they organize all kind of activities for kids and they those demands or criterias for development are really high. In kindergarten they, so they.. in preschool they think that after the preschool kids should write and read.” (Case 10)

“Introduction of more educative games for the cognitive development of the child is needed.” (Case 9)

In order for a child to benefit from kindergarten as an important part of the whole integration process, a child should be placed in a kindergarten unit where there would not be so many children sharing the same nationality, language and cultural background. One parent was worried about his/her child not learning any Finnish because he would only communicate and play with his mates who come from the same country and has a similar background. Most interviewees highlighted the importance of children having Finnish friends and possibilities to communicate in Finnish and if there are many children sharing the same nationality, it would not be as likely to happen.

“Minun päiväkotissa paljon Burmalainen, minä haluan, että laittaa sama suomiystävän kanssa. Minä haluan muuttaa..” (Case2)

Bullying was mentioned only once – one parent told that his/her child is being bullied at the kindergarten because of his/her background and looks and this child has not been very well integrated into his/her group and this is hindering his/her integration process. Most parents thought that there is no support for child's own cultural background and it

is not specifically noticed or taken into account within everyday routines and habits, such as clothing. One parent would like his/her child to wear their original clothing in the kindergarten, but it is not allowed. This brings us into the question whether or not there is enough cultural education at kindergartens. Based on some interviews, cultural education would raise awareness of different cultures and habits to other children and also to educators and by doing that it might be easier for everyone at kindergarten to support children's own cultural background and take it into account within everyday activities.

6.3 Quality of early education and integration

The views and conceptions of integration of immigrant children were mainly positive and based on our interview results parents are rather satisfied with the way it functions in Kemi. Those immigrants coming from poorer or developing countries, such as Burma, were very content about the day care services offered in Kemi city and life in Finland all in all - there are no wars and the educators treat children with respect. Some countries from which some of our interviewees come from, there is no social security or any kinds of day care services offered.

“Hyvää on suomilainen on rauhallisesta. Asua rauha ja se on hyvä kulttuuri. Eri kulttuuri meilä.” (Case 1)

“Ei ole huono, kaikki tämä hyvin. On erilainen tämä oma maassa. Tämä suomessa erilainen. No.. suomessa minä tykkään, tämä on rauhallinen, hyvä tämä kaveri, hyvä ystävä, mutta omassa tämä ei rauhallinen, sota..” (Case 2)

Few parents took up the lack of educational games and teaching in the Finnish early education system, but after living in Finland for some years it was seen that children must be able to be children and time for more serious learning comes later at school age. A parent from England mentioned that he/she is really happy to have his/her children in the Finnish early education system instead of an English one, where children start school already at the age of four. Parents appreciated that the focus is on learning by playing and also different types of outdoor activities were being mentioned nearly on every interview. Those outdoor activities can ease an immigrant child's threshold to get

in contact with other children and create new social relationships and friends.

Care-partnership and communication between educators and parents could be improved, as many of the parents mentioned the paucity of communication and therefore the information about child's situation was not being received and some important matters have been missed. Lack of language skills is obviously one of the issues concerning communication and it complicates interaction between educators and parents. Educators do not always check that information has been received in a right way and the point taken and in some cases it was the child's task to act as an interpreter.

Many parents saw the importance of kindergarten's role with teaching Finnish and by doing that ease a child's integration process into our society. What a child learns at kindergarten, he/she will take it home and teach it to the other members of the family and therefore have an indirect effect on their integration process as well. Early education and a child's social life and relationships at kindergarten do have an important role in the whole integration process and therefore those should be also seen from immigrant children's perspective and how it functions from that angle. Is there enough emphasis on finding better ways of integrating children with different cultural backgrounds in our system? During the interviews we as interviewees noticed that there were some small matters that for us are self-evident and do not need to be explained, but a person coming from very different culture with different type of experiences, would not see it the same way. Many parents mentioned the difficulty of knowing what to wear for their children, as winter is totally a new season for them. Based on all these interviews educators could explain more thoroughly what kind of outwear is needed and using images is a good tool for that, as few parents mentioned.

“Ei ymmärrä kaikki, mutta, kuvilla.. Hyvä asia! Ja miten siellä päiväkotissa tapahtuu ja lapsi minne menee heidän kanssaan. On hyvä.” (Case 8)

“Joo, alussa kuin me haastattelimme heidän kanssaan, he kertoivat kaikki, että jos sataa ulkona, pitää satavaatteet, jos kylmä on tarvii haalari ja villavaateet.” (Case 4)

Immigrant parents give prominence to early education discussions with educators – they are seen as an important matter concerning an immigrant child's integration. Most of the parents think that having them twice a year is not enough as there are not much time to

communicate with educators every day. A calm and private conversation with an educator is valued highly and also gives a chance for an immigrant parent to ask questions or take up a worry, if there is some. That kind of confrontation is also good from an educator's perspective as there is more time and effort to focus on that certain child and his/her situation and also look at it from the parent's point of view. For these meetings most of the parents wish to have an interpreter or at least have some kind of written text or document of the discussion, so it would be less challenging to understand the important points. Few parents admit that they say yes to what has been said, even though they do not have a clue of what has been said and that can be a problem. The previous demands openness and close observation from the educator, also a certain kind of sensitiveness is needed in those kinds of situations.

Food culture is a rather large part of culture itself and therefore also a part of integration – a child should learn to adapt him/herself into the prevailing food culture. Finnish food and the heavy use of dairy products had been seen challenging from a child's perspective. The moment of dining might be a little bit stressful for a child who is not used to the Finnish nutrition and ways of eating. Parents wish more flexibility with eating and the use of different products. If a child does not like something, could there be an alternative option sometimes?

“Minun lapsilla on vaikia juoda maitoa ja se maiton tuotteita. Haluan lisätä ja oppivat vähän syöminen ja... No, en minä tiedä, ehkä heillä on lisätietoa (=educators).” (Case 4)

Finnish language and the lack of being able to speak it was seen as a challenging factor of hindering integration. Everybody thinks it is the corner stone and the very basis for integration. Our main language (Finnish) is seen as a very difficult language to learn as there is no consistency with it and in Kemi area people tend to have quite a strong dialect on their speech, which naturally makes it harder for foreigners to understand. All in all, the parents seem satisfied with the situation of integration of their children in day cares of Kemi. Everybody thinks that they can easily give feedback about the service if needed and get in contact with the right person. All the services had been clearly instructed in the beginning of the use of this service. Couple of the parents think that the early education plan should be available online also in English and in languages where the biggest immigrant groups come to Kemi, and one of them is Myanmar.

6.4 Multi-cultural skills of educators

Based on our interview results, parents were satisfied with educators' way of dealing with issues related to integration. The instruction of the day care services is adequate and almost everybody said that they had given enough information about the service in the beginning. The instructions about everyday routines and activities, timetables, rules and clothing is clear and adequate. The realization of lacking Finnish language skills is to be noticed by the educators – parents wish more clear use of language and in a slower speed and in the end educators could check that everything is clear, as it is so easy just to say yes even though nothing is been understood. One parent mentioned that he/she understands clear Finnish rather well, but as the educator uses his/her own dialect when speaking, it is impossible to get any idea of what is being said.

“I remember that in our kindergarten was one, one teacher, so she was really talkative but her way of speaking was so strange, so she was telling same thing several times in different words. It was frustrating. To trying to understand what she was telling and then did something else, and then you are trying to understand, then you understand that she is talking about the same.. so it's really difficult.” (Case 10)

Most of the interviewees were satisfied about the educators taking into account that a child might have lacking Finnish skills. Children needing extra time for learning the language, do get it and that was seen as a valuable matter. Few interviewees mentioned that there are times and cases when there would be need for an assistant for a child with immigrant background, in order to integrate into the day care. The mother who spoke about her worries concerning her child only spending time and talking to a child with the same background and nationality, would appreciate if the educators would support this child to integrate better into the whole group and not isolate from it because of his/her cultural background and lack of language skills. Educators' role as supporting child's own interest towards learning Finnish should be visible.

The parent whose child was being bullied at kindergarten was afraid if the staff members see or realize it happening, even though he/she has talked to them about that concern. One parent brought up an issue concerning child's cultural background. Within this parent the educators do have less value for child's cultural background because they are tending to teach to imbibe the Finnish culture and norms without taking the child's

background into account. It is important for the educators to realize the importance of being aware of different cultural habits and norms. Power distance, different kind of methods of bringing-up and gender gaps were some of the issues that came up during the interviews. In a way the educators should be able to take into consideration these differences between different cultures. Those matters highlight the importance of cultural education.

7 ETHICS AND RELIABILITY

Important parts of credibility of a research are reliability and validity. Reliability means the repeatability of a research results and validity is the chosen research method's capability to measure exactly what it is meant to be measuring. Researcher's explicit commentary about the realization of his/her research enhances the credibility and all the conditions of producing material should be narrated clearly and truthfully. Reader of the research should get a clear idea why the researcher has made certain conclusions and what they are based on. (Hirsjärvi et. al. 2009, 231-233.) Researcher's own age, sex, political attitude and religion might be seen on the interpretations of results if he/she does not manage to avoid their affect while interpreting the results. As the researcher itself is the creator and interpreter of the whole study set-up, it cannot be totally avoided. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 136.) Our own backgrounds obviously might have an effect on the interpretations of the interview results – our cultural backgrounds, own experiences of day care in Kemi and the knowledge we already have about the situation of integration in kindergartens of Kemi.

During the whole research process we followed the basic ethical principles. Some of the good scientific practices are honesty, accuracy within research work and presentation of results, and the researcher should choose ethically secure data acquisition and evaluation methods. We wanted to respect highly the anonymity of the persons who were being interviewed, also on the finished written work. As the target group was rather small, the anonymity was to be obeyed precisely. All the interviewed must stay anonymous and their data should only be used for the promised purpose. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 131-132.)

Eskola and Suoranta (1998, 62-63) talk about saturation in the context of the size of interview material. A certain amount of material is enough to bring up a theoretical basic pattern and gaining extra and new information does not bring any valuable or additional perspectives into the research. In our opinion we have enough interviews if thinking about the credibility and validity of the research – any additional interviews would not have necessarily given us any fresh or new information concerning our topic.

We tried to form the interview questions so that they would not be manoeuvring any answers. As we performed the theme-interviews, there were space and time for focusing on the questions, if the interviewee did not understand. The lack of Finnish language skill of the interviewee was obviously an issue that might have affected the reliability of our research, as we are not sure if everyone had understood the meaning of the words used on the questions. We had a presumption that most of the words used on our interviews would be familiar to at least most of the interviewee, as we talked to one of the teachers at the school before performing any interviews. It appeared that some of the most important words concerning the interview were not understood by many. Some of the interviews remained very concise which was mainly due to the inadequate language skills, as we only had an interpreter during one of the interviews.

Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2000) point out the importance of transcription of the material as soon as possible after performing interviews. The reliability of the interview material is dependent on its quality – if the audibility is poor or the regulations for transcription vary and if the classification is arbitrary, it can have diminishing effects from the quality perspective. The prompt transcription after the interviews supports our research's credibility – we were able to remember everything clearly. It was challenging to perform the process of transcription, because some of the interviewee spoke their mother tongue when they did not know the correct word and also the intonation of the language was different occasionally and it made it harder for us to hear what was being said.

We believe that the cultural background of some interviewee might have had an effect on their answers. For some it was obviously challenging to say anything negative or mention anything in need of development, therefore we probably did not get as valid answers as we were hoping for. Some might not have been understanding the whole purpose of our interviews, even though it was being thoroughly explained to everybody. On our research we only focus on the parents' conceptions and views and therefore a rather significant perspective, the immigrant children is left out. We as authors of this research think however that we got more valuable information and points of views from the parents, as the topic of integration would not be necessarily familiar for immigrant children as concept.

Triangulation is the use of different materials, methods and/or theories on one research

and the same phenomenon can be researched by more than one researcher. *Researcher triangulation* consists of two or more researchers studying the same phenomenon. Two or more researchers can diversify the research and often provides wider perspectives and points of views on the same subject. (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 69-70.) We approach our topic from two very different perspectives – one of us can identify to our target group (immigrant parents) as she has a similar background and experiences, while the other one has pre-existing knowledge about the early education system in Finland and our cultural norms and behaviour. We believe that those issues mentioned before add some extra value and credibility for this research. Our backgrounds do have an effect on the way we approach our themes and how we analyse them.

8 DISCUSSION AND AREAS IN NEED OF DEVELOPMENT

This research's most essential area is/was the situation of integration of immigrant children and finding possible aspects in need of development. We believe that immigrant parents' experiences and viewpoints are very valuable concerning developing the integration within early education services in Kemi. As the amount of immigrants is presumably growing in the future, we think it is necessary to find ways how to enhance services' quality and improve client's participation in it. To find even more concrete practical level ideas for development, we could have chosen immigrant children as our interview target group but by choosing the parents we think we get a bit wider aspects and views and hopefully direct the results to the manager level working within early education in Kemi. Integration is not only a concern of immigrants but also the whole society benefits from successful integration. Lack of integration and services supporting it in a municipality can cause different types of issues and also create misunderstandings and unnecessary confrontations.

Immigrants' life situations and integration processes are not just individualistic – it is also about how the society faces and receives them and organizes possibilities towards well-being and safe everyday life. Society needs to find ways of actions on supporting balanced living, immigrants and majority together. The challenges brought by immigration put the functionality of society's services to the test. Day care services should also respond to ever growing manifold needs and problems of families. Immigrant children create new cultural ways of action and combine some Finnish features into them – they do not only internalize our society and culture but also participate actively into cultural production and modification. (Ikäläinen, Martiskainen & Törrönen 2003, 99-101.) Based on our interviews and conclusions immigrant parents' perspectives could be brought visible and that way we also got answers to our research questions and enlighten some possible issues concerning integration.

On the whole, parents are rather satisfied with the integration and the services offered by Kemi's early education. The trust to competence and skills of early educators seems to be of high degree – educators are being appreciated and their role on the whole integration process is seen very important. There were no signs of attitude issues, which

could be noticed from the parents' point of view. As our target group consists of six different nationalities we recon we have gotten a rather wide-ranging scale on our answers. Most of the parents come from a poorer and some even developing countries, which is something that we have to take into consideration when analysing our results. Parents coming from Burma e.g. have a very different society and services and that could be seen on our interviews – all the areas related to integration and day care services in general was highly appreciated and praised. Could these parents be missing out some of their rights and services due to guidance of their original culture and lack of information of available services? On the results it can be seen that the areas in need of development were focusing mainly on the language and problems of interaction or the lack of it. Most of the parents highlighted the importance of getting adequate information and knowledge about how to dress up their children in this country with four seasons.

How integration was seen, depends on the situation of the family – families who had their children born in Finland there were no problems with integration process in whole and parents whose children had been born in some other country, had more difficulties and issues with cultural confrontations and therefore integration as well. All of the parents being interviewed agreed that children learn very fast and are constantly willing to learn and adapt more things. The previous is obviously benefitting the process of integration, but in order to success it demands workmanship, precise observation and multicultural awareness from educators.

The social security system is very developed and comprehensive in Finland and is far more supportive than in many other countries and it makes the integration easier for parents and their children. Most immigrants who have come to Kemi are living more pleasurable life than what life had to offer in their original country. They get welfare benefits, peaceful life and no need to suffer of war or hunger. It is the duty of the municipality who take them in to stress on the point of integration and find work and support – avoiding exclusion from the society and also avoiding relying on the welfare benefits and staying inactive.

We believe from our research that it is important if the plan of early-childhood education is translated into those languages that the biggest immigrant groups use in Kemi, such as Burmese and Kurdish. In this way the parents can get access and vision

of what reasons their children go to day care and how they are being offered some support. Most of the parents we interviewed did not know what is the plan for early childhood education. Some of them have never seen or heard about it and they asked what it is and showed their interest to know and learn more about it.

The integration of immigrants starts at home and parents' attitude matters a lot. If the parents have negative attitude towards integration and their new country, its culture and norms, it might slow their child/children adaptation to the culture and if they have positive attitude it speeds up the integration leading for positive results for their children too. Successful integration is done through language, food, norms and regulations dressing, that have to be learned in respectful way, appreciated and obeyed.

One of the areas that came up during interviews was the food culture and its effect on the process of integration. Different kind of products and ways of making food caused worries for some of the parents – does their child get enough energy during the day at kindergarten if he/she does not feel capable of consuming any food offered in the day care? We think it could be useful if the kindergartens would arrange some 'getting to know new culture' days and by doing that, spread cultural awareness and understanding of other cultures. That kind of day could be attached into the plan of action in many ways and areas – music, literature, dance, theatre, environmental education and food.

During our thesis process we discovered that Kemi city does not have an updated general program of integration. Kemi city has made one integration program on 2003 according to the law and the plan is being updated during SILMU-project which began 2010 (Kemi 2013 C). Every immigrant does get a personal plan but updated general guidelines about integration are missing, and in order of being able to provide adequate and high-quality services every municipality should have some kind of renewed plan for integration. At the moment Kemi is participating in making a regional integration program, which should be finished by the end of this year. This program is to be based on the Lapland's immigration strategy 2013. (Heimonen 2013.) The program also eases educators work in a way as the whole process and what belongs into their tasks would be clearer Immigrant families would benefit from it the most, the meaning of integration process would probably open up better and its benefits might be seen and understood easier - what is the meaning of successful integration and what are its benefits to an immigrant as an individual and to the whole society?

One of the obvious developmental targets that came up from the interviews is the placement of immigrant children – several parents stress out the importance of placing immigrants into different kindergarten units. Instead of assimilation it is important to support integration. By dividing these children there might not be such solid and formed groups of immigrants but there would be better chances to bond with Finnish children and it would also effect on learning Finnish language. On the other hand, as mentioned earlier, it is important to support child's mother tongue and cultural aspects and that becomes more difficult if immigrant children are placed in different units. So it is a two-sided matter.

Language and the lack of Finnish skills were seen as the biggest issues when it comes to integration. The parents feel they do not get much out of early education discussions as they do not understand much of what is being said. Few parents mentioned that written documents would help them with understanding and getting a deeper idea of the Finnish early education system and its services. Some parents feel they were given too much information at once when they were introduced to the service. Based on the interview results, we suggest some kind of written information package or material and all the practical matters about this early education services offered in Kemi. It would perhaps also ease the educators' work and hopefully possible misunderstandings and problems could be avoided that way. Interpreter would be needed for example for early education discussions and in situations where it is important that the message gets received and educator and client fully understand each other. On the law of promoting integration it is stated that authority must make sure of translating or interpreting a matter which immigrant cannot understand or use the language (FINLEX 2010 C). In order for care-partnership to come into existence educators and clients must understand and respect each other, and if there are some language barriers it might not work the way it should and would be convenient from everyone's viewpoint.

During this research project we came across into to the lack of multicultural areas/matters on nationwide early education plan. Why is such an important area being ignored? Could early education plan offer more general guidelines into multicultural sides and challenges of multicultural early education? Educators might also get more concrete tools and practical guidelines on their everyday work and that way also the quality of early education service might indirectly be affected from immigrant childrens'

and parents' point of view. Based on the knowledge and feedback from parents whom we interviewed, day care services should have more of common regulations and ways of operating when it comes to supporting and immigrant child's integration process. For clients it should be clear what the services really include and what clients (immigrant families in this case) can expect from it.

Multicultural skills of early educators is one area that we think is worth mentioning here. Should the skills of educators or the education line and its' contents be updated concerning multicultural areas? What is the level of know-how at the moment? How much is this emphasized on the education of kindergarten teachers and practical nurses? One interviewed told that in the beginning, the educators seemed to feel rather uncomfortable to face parents who were not speaking Finnish or have some other cultural background. Could it be due to fear of speaking English or feeling uncomfortable and not knowing how to approach clients with immigrant background?

TARGETS OF DEVELOPMENT	
<input type="checkbox"/>	updating the plan for integration for the municipality of Kemi based on current laws
<input type="checkbox"/>	divide immigrant children into different kindergarten units
<input type="checkbox"/>	pay more attention into multicultural areas on the early education plan of Kemi city
<input type="checkbox"/>	use of an interpreter in situations where it is needed
<input type="checkbox"/>	multicultural skills of educators
<input type="checkbox"/>	documents concerning early education in client's mother tongue
<input type="checkbox"/>	use of written text for immigrant clients
<input type="checkbox"/>	early education plan discussions more regularly
<input type="checkbox"/>	clear guidelines about the service in the beginning of customership
<input type="checkbox"/>	multiprofessionalism
<input type="checkbox"/>	monitoring the quality of service and developing better tools
<input type="checkbox"/>	finding better ways of supporting immigrant child's well-being within day care services

FIGURE 8. Targets of development.

9 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis work was to research the situation of immigrant children's integration in kindergartens of Kemi from the parents' point of view. We also wanted to figure out how it could be developed and therefore get valuable information for the early education department in Kemi. In our opinions this topic is current concerning the whole society and both of us are interested in multicultural early education and those are the main reasons for choosing this particular topic. The meaningfulness and attraction of this work to both of us made it motivating to do this all the way into the end and we gained very much new knowledge about this topic.

Integration and services provided to immigrants should be well covered in every municipality. The earlier the integration process begins the better possibilities and chances for an immigrant to become a functional and well-being member of our society grows. Integration in early education should not be underestimated and services in that area should be well planned and monitored and client's voice brought out – what services and approaches serves the needs of immigrants' families best? In what ways can an integration process of an immigrant child be supported within early education? In Finland immigrants do get support for their integration from different quarters which can promote the success of the whole process of integration. Multiprofessionalism and its importance within immigrant work should not be underestimated – together different professionals (early educators, doctors, social workers, public health nurses) can promote and develop integration of an immigrant child. The previous is something that Kemi should also invest and develop – find ways to act towards to best of supporting immigrant child's integration and by doing that, have an effect on his/her life.

Looking at the results and the wholeness of this work, we think that perhaps we could have used more time and effort in collecting the empirical material – interview more parents with more diverse backgrounds. Apart from the previous we feel we got quite a lot of material answering into our research questions. We believe it has been a certain type of advantage that both of us are parents and have our own experiences from day care services offered in Kemi. One of us has been going through an integration process herself and she has also seen how integration of an immigrant child is being supported

by educators in kindergarten. Based on our experiences and the results from all the interviews, we think the care-partnership does not come to fruition into its full in all of the kindergartens in Kemi. The biggest obstacle is probably the lack of language skill and therefore the communication between parents and educators is very poor. A child's best might not be seen because of the previous and also attitude issues of educators might be preventing it – as there is no common language, it takes quite some courage to deeply go through all the important matters which affect child's everyday life and well-being. This refers to the need of multicultural skills of educators.

As parents, we have come across into the scarcity of interaction during delivery and picking up situations in kindergartens. It makes us to think about the situation with immigrant parents. Based on our interviews the same issue seems to be with those parents as well – there is very little communication or nothing at all. How is the care-partnership to work when there are so little confluences with parents? Parents do want to know how their child's day has been and if there have been any possible issues or problems during the day. Some of the parents wished to have some kind of written message system so it would be easier to understand and figure out what is being said and also parents felt they had to face too much information at once and not much was taken in.

Doing this thesis was an interesting and meaningful process. The topic is current and deeply interests both of us. The theory part and collecting all the relevant information about the subject has taught us many valuable knowledge and created some basis for looking at different areas from very diverse angles. We believe this thesis process will help us professional wise in the future, as we aim to work within early education and also with immigrants. One of us has some experience of working with immigrants at the reception centre, so some issues within this area felt familiar and probably helped in understanding certain matters and immigrant parents' viewpoints.

Further research proposals could be researching the educators point of view and how they see the situation of integration in Kemi's kindergartens and what areas do they think could be developed and with what kind of tools. In addition to that based on our research results, there is space and need for developing multiprofessionalism and the co-operation with different occupational groups, who together work towards a best of an immigrant child and discover any possible barriers preventing integration to take place.

As the world gets more and more international and immigration grows, so should the importance of successful integration process be seen on the decision-maker level and from there distribute the right kind of message about its importance. Childhood is the most fragile time thinking of all the different developmental (psychological and physical) phases of children and kindergarten has a crucially important role in integrating immigrant children into our society and offering tools for life into the future.

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APPENDIX 1.

STRUCTURE OF THEME INTERVIEW

1) *Home country and language of the interviewees'*

- Where are you from and how long have you been in Finland?
- What is your mother tongue? How many different languages do you speak?

2) *Culture and religion*

- How do your children maintain their own culture at the kindergarten (language, food, dressing, behaviour), religion?
- How do the staff members value your child's cultural background and how can it be seen?
- What can you say about cultural behaviour in Finland/home country?
- What do you think about the day care system of Kemi, only offering day care services in Finnish language?
- If you took your child, who was less than three years old in day care, how did you feel about that? Did it help the process of integration? (was it of any benefit for you or do you regret it?)

3) *Language and communication*

- How do you interact with the staff and other parents or is there any interact at all?
- How do your children interact with the staff and other children?
- How do you feel as a parent when you dropped your child in day care and did not know Finnish?

4) *Prejudices and attitudes*

- What are the challenges you face as a parent having your child at the day care in Kemi?
- What are the disadvantages of your child being in a Finnish day care?
- How can you see if your child receives the basic early education needed?
- What do you like about the day care services of Kemi?
- What do you think about the Finnish day care system?
- How can you see if your child is interested in going to day care? If not, what are the reasons for that?

5) *The current situation and ideas for development*

- What do you know about the early education system in Finland?
- How were you introduced to day care services?
- What makes integration work? What makes it fail?
- How were you introduced to the day care services/system?
- What issues/areas could be improved at the day care of your child, concerning integration?
- What could the educators do differently?
- What kind of developmental ideas for the “early education department” do you have?
- How many children have you had in day care and how long have you used this service?
- Do you have any chances of giving or receiving feedback?
- What would you like to add?