



*Minority and migrant children's
transition from kindergarten to school
in Finland
– challenge for multiprofessional
cooperation?*

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Finnish day care and preschool policy

- **Day Care Act 1973**
- **Day Care Decree**
- ➔ Child has a biased right for the day care
- ➔ Contribute children's native language and their own culture
- Principals of the Early Childhood Education Program
- Council of State's decision in principle of the Early Childhood Education's guideline

- **Basic Education Act**
- ➔ free preschool
- Basic Education Decree
- Principals of the Preschool curriculum 2010
- ➔ Immigrants among ordinary preschool group, Preparative Education to Basic Education or combination of these two choices.
- National Board of Educations Principals of the Preparative Education to Basic Educations Curriculum 2009

The language minorities in Finland

The main language groups are **Romani language, Sign language as a mother language, Swedish, Sami (Lappish)**

Things to remember when working multidisciplinary cooperation with minorities:

- Requires unique customer-oriented multi-disciplinary work planned individually, there is no formula for how to proceed in the transition stage.
- May be accompanied by a family worker, social worker, cultural interpreter, sign language interpreter, interpreter, rehabilitation counselor, child welfare clinic, personal assistant etc.
- **Professionals skills to identify minority groups and their cultural practices are particularly important.**
- Regular communication is important but challenging with minority groups.



Educational partnership in day care

Day care is a part of the child's integration process

Educational partnership between the parents and the day care workers is very important

- it means that the parents and the day care workers are committed to do their best in order to support the child's growth, development and learning
- the parents are the best experts in child's affairs and the day care workers have a professional perspective
- it can develop through communication and interaction: if the parents have a lack of language skills, then pictures, body language and interpreter can help
- it requires trust, respect and equality
- it means sharing child's daily stories and support in everyday life
- day care workers must remember cultural sensitivity
- parents have the authority to determine the child's affairs



An individual Early Childhood Education and Care Plan (ECEC)

- aim at promoting child's balanced growth, development and learning
- it is made in day care together with the parents
- it requires being present, listening and supporting the parents
- also speech therapist or occupational therapist can participate if needed
- it is assessed regularly
- the child's special needs and how they are being responded must be written in the plan
- **bilingualism plan is a part of ECEC/ pre-school education plan**
 - child learns Finnish as a second language (S2)
 - education is regular and goal-oriented
 - learning Finnish alongside mother tongue, not aiming to replace it

Rehabilitative elements of early childhood education

- Small group activities, games and plays
- Structure: regularity and predictability
- Creating safe and tolerant environment
- Good interaction between the child and other children
- Effective interaction between the child and the day care workers
- Good cooperation and communication with the parents
- Supporting the child's own executive functions
- Supporting the child's growth in all areas
- Encouraging the child in the use of his/her native language
- Respecting the child's cultural background



Supporting families

- **Interpreter** if needed
- **Educational partnership** with multicultural families in daycare and preschool; Supporting parents' active involvement with their child's education
- **Child Welfare Clinic:** public health nurse and doctor; preventative and health promoting work, teamwork with day care and preschool
- **Pupil welfare team** in school: principal, special education teacher, school nurse, school welfare officer, psychologist; supporting children's transition from preschool to school
- **Department of immigration** and **local immigrant services**
- **Social services**
- **TE-office** offers public employment and business services
- **Churches**
- **Non-governmental organizations**



Experiences from day care workers

Positive Aspect:

- Cultural diversity and richness
- Materials and course of actions of the Finnish language education, helps all children and extend the work habits
- Gives new aspects and tools to operate in the global world
- Resource

Challenge Aspect:

- Workload has increased, become more demanding and burden
- Workers need more time and resources to plan and do your work. You have to consider more language and cultural aspects.
- Co-working with parents, openness about Finnish day care values etc.



Experiences from day care staff in Pöytyä

Pöytyä circa 8000 capita, little countryside community council. They have started to educate the workers to use S2- (Finnish as a second language) training. So far they have managed in their work by inventing their own methods of work and teaching the language by doing and playing

Challenges:

- They can't provide education on children's native language
- It's not always possible to use an interpreter when needed
- There are big differences in immigrant children's Finnish skills
- Immigrant families can leave Finland during summer from two to three months, so the children can forget what they have learned about the Finnish language.

Transition to school:

- There is a school class for immigrant children. Now there are 10 pupils. Pupils are integrated to normal basic education with their age-mates in some studies
- Pupils can stay in the immigrant class the whole elementary school time, or if their Finnish skills are good enough, they can go study in the normal education

Multiprofessional work and immigrant children: preschool to school in Pöytyä

- Preschool teacher and parents work together
- Every spring there is a so called transition meeting, where preschool teacher, special needs kindergarten teacher, class teacher of immigrants and Special education teacher process the student files.
- Pupils' welfare team with co-workers from social and health services department, like school nurse, school psychologist and social worker participate transition meeting if needed.
- If needed interpreter, speech therapist or some other professional person who is relevant for the case
- Bigger cities like Vantaa have district coordinator of basic education, special school psychologist for language and culture groups.



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