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East African Immigrant Children Experiences with Integration in
Finnish Day-cares

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ABSTRACT

The present investigation analyses critically the discursive and conceptual grounding of the experiences of East African immigrant children in the integration process in the Finnish day-cares. The literature review highlights the variables that have a cause and effect on the process of social integration for this vulnerable group in the Finnish society. The cultural misalliances between the two cultures are examined and their degree of disparities analysed through the experiences of the interviewees from the East Africa region living in Finland. The significance of language in the social integration process cannot be denied. However, multi-culturalism is critical in society and communities as individuals are bound to remember their cradle land when they grow up. In this regard, the thesis utilizes thematic analysis to portray the hegemony that exists in the Finnish culture through institutions such as the day-care and the way in which they are experienced by the vulnerable group of East African immigrant children. The empirical data is utilized to explore the experiences of East African immigrant children in Finnish day-cares, roles of parents and teachers and challenges in the social integration process. The results show the common challenges of East African parents and their eagerness to integrate into the Finnish society, a factor they consider important for the subsequent integration of their children.

KEYWORDS: Immigrant, Integration, Language, Finnish Day-cares, East Africa, Culture

1 INTRODUCTION

The thesis focuses on identifying the problems and other factors that influence integration of children into the Finnish day-cares; as such, parents and teachers of migrant children will be depended on to offer their perspectives while answering research questions. The investigation is motivated by the mismatches in adaptability, family norms and the disparity between the social environments amid both parties. It attempts to identify the incentives that inspire parents to take their children to day-care, daily experiences at the institutions (children, parents and personnel), role of the teachers, children-teacher -parent reactions in and out of the day-cares and the ease with which the children integrate into the institution and hence, the Finnish society. In so doing, the challenges experienced will be derived from findings from interview sessions with the parents and teachers.

The thesis is structured as follows: introduction, literature review, methodology, findings and the conclusion. The introduction will explain what the thesis is all about and what it addresses. The literature review part discusses the meanings and processes of immigration and integration, and their connection to multiculturalism. Further, the literature review describes further the effects of children in view of immigration policies and integration, that is, the immigration and integration processes will be explained as well as their social and cultural effects. Thus, the theoretical part of the thesis will give explanations on immigration theories and immigrant children.

The methodology and discussion chapter will be succeeded by the research questions that will comprise a large part of the interviews. Thematic analysis of the interviews will shed light on the integration of immigrant children in Finnish day-cares from the perspectives of teachers and the parents of East African children. Practical solutions of problems that have been presented shall be highlighted. Finally, the conclusion part will be a discussion of the findings, where methodological processes, discussion on the outcome of the

interviews and possible recommendations for future study will be highlighted.

The aim of this research work is to investigate the range of issues and challenges that arise amongst east African children in southern Finland. The scope of study was based on children attending day care facilities in the Espoo region in Finland. Experiences of the children's parents and day care teachers were targeted for this thesis work.

Since empirical evidence of this phenomenon is scarce, the purpose was to highlight, describe, and understand the concerns and problems involved, with a view to set up possibilities for further and more detailed future research. The change in demographics within the Finnish population has led to the development of a more multicultural and multilingual society. Qualitative methods prove to be an effective for discovering and studying new fields as they provide a richer and broader perspective on the research work (Hägglom, 2006).

This means that a qualitative research design is a systematic subjective approach utilized to describe life experiences that gives meaning to them. It is plausible to denote that in deciphering a social perspective and a focus to gaining more insight to the complexity of a phenomenon, a qualitative study is necessitated (Taylor, 2005: 5-7).

2 IMMIGRATION AND INTEGRATION

This section focuses generally on the process of integration that immigrants undergo during their stay in the Finland and what it encompasses, and the role of early childhood care facilities offered by both the local government and private companies entails for the immigrants. The literature review limits itself to the social variables that affect migrant children in day-cares in Finland.

2.1 Immigration

Immigration involves the movement of persons from their country of origin to a new country, also termed as the host country (Miriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 2018). Many reasons suffice as to the reason for one to migrate. For example, people migrate to other countries for personal reasons based on relationships such as family reunions or through marriage. Political migration is characterised by people escaping war or civil strife, while economic migration is characterized by the movement of people to other countries in such of labour opportunities (Turton & González, 2000). In Finland, political migration has been characterised by refugees who are fleeing war in the Middle East. Economic immigrants are those that move from their own country to a host country with prospects of advancing their professional and/or financial capabilities (Simmelroggen, 2015). An example in Finland would be students coming to study or doctors coming to practice in return for better remuneration.

Immigration in Finland has been on a rising tide. This can be explained by a multitude of factors ranging from the socio-economic status of the country, for example financial and political stability to the availability of progressive human rights records. The figure below manifests the gradual increase of

immigrants to who have relocated to Finland between the years 1980 and 2011.

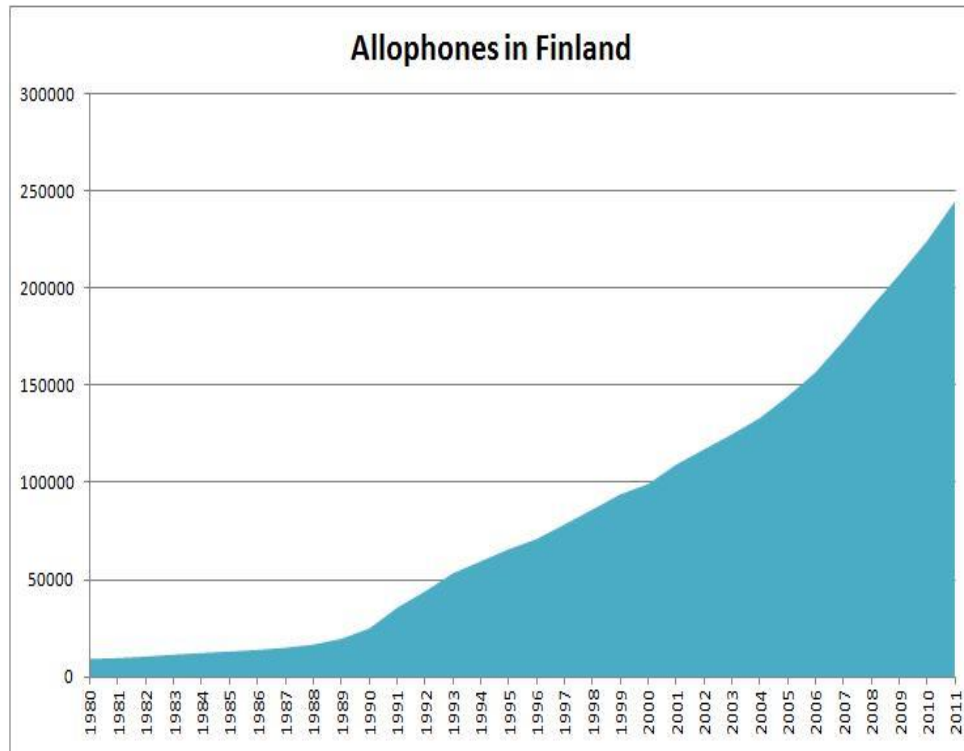


Figure 1: Immigration shift in numbers to Finland between 1980 and 2011 (Tilastokeskus, 2012)

Immigration in Finland has been in the headlines lately after an influx of refugees escaping war and destruction in the Middle East sought refuge in Europe. Discussions pertaining to immigration and integration of immigrants into the Finnish community has been a vital issue in the country due to the rigid factor of a dwindling population in Finland (Väestöliitto, 2018).

In mainstream media, both positive and negative discussions and reviews regarding immigration policies and immigrants, and as reported by Yle News, the influx of foreigners has itself created mixed feelings about integration, especially with a view to jobs and financial stability of many

citizens. Conflicts in norms and regulations have led to a myriad of discussions in the recent past pertaining to multiculturalism and the role of integration of immigrants in Finland (Brännare, 2018).

2.2 Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is a word coined in the 1960s and 1970s to refer to societies that had evolved by mingling newer cultures because of immigration (Parviainen, 2011: 28). Multiculturalism can be explained as a coupling of existing culture(s) with new ones that are because of immigration. Multiculturalism is used as a synonym to mean pluralism of ethnicities, whereby several ethnic groups share and harmoniously collaborate without having to discard off their ethnic cultures. This means that various ethnic groups are mixed in a common area hence the existence of multiple cultural traditions. Multiculturalism was first used in Finland in the early 1990's by the Finnish Justice Ministry in view of acknowledging that was developing into a multicultural society and thus the need to accommodate the different ethnic groups in the society with a view to sheer off discrimination (Lepola, 2000: 198) .

On one hand, multiculturalism is a demographic feature that reflects the multiethnic characteristic of a society. On the other, it involves the governmental policy towards cultural diversity that includes immigrants' engagement, their economic and social well-being, equal rights and anti-discrimination (Vijverab; Breugelman; & Schalk-Soekar, 2008)

Governments or states can adopt certain ideologies or policies that are directed towards immigrants. These main idea in this process is based on setting parameters that ultimately determine who should be declared as a true citizen of the state. These parameters vary from state to state, depending on the policies they decide to place on the immigrants. The policies,

according to Bourhis, Moise, Perreault and Senecal (2010: 370) include ideologies such as pluralism, civic, assimilation and ethnic ideologies (Bourhis;Moise;Perreault;& Senecal, 2010).

Pluralism ideology promotes an adoption of the public values of the host society by immigrants, meaning that immigrants must follow the rule of law and the host country's Constitution, its national ideals and processes that govern the country (Bourhis, et al. 2010: 373). Pluralism ideology, however, does not set rules or limits of the immigrant's beliefs and cultural norms, hence immigrants are free to practice and retain their social and cultural identity in the host country (Hakinnen, 2000). The state in this case provides the support for activities of immigrants to maintain their cultural heritage if they are within the boundaries of civic and criminal laws (Bourhis et al. 2010: 373).

This ideology emphasizes the value of cultural diversity which is the basis for multiculturalism. Civic ideology is based on two principles: first, that the host country expects immigrants to abide by its public laws; and second, that the state is not responsible in financially promoting or supporting the immigrants' private cultural values (Bourhis et al. 2010: 373). Although this means that less attention is given to ethnocultural groups and the maintenance of their cultural backgrounds, the state does not hinder these multicultural groups from practicing their cultural beliefs and norms. This ideology supposes that the state focus is directed towards enhancing integration of immigrants through inclusion and anti-discriminatory legislation while little attention is given to the different ethnic groups within its borders (Bourhis et al. 2010: 374).

The assimilation ideology constitutes in focusing on values of mainstream culture and abdicating traditions and activities associated with immigrants' background. It might happen either on a voluntary basis or by establishing laws and regulations which limit the possibility of expressing cultural identities (Bourhis et al. 2010: 374). This ideology is perceived to occur in

states where the aim is for the immigrants to serve a particular class or ethnocultural group, such that the immigrants have to abide to the existing laws set up by the domineering ethnic group (Bourhis et al. 2010: 374). This assimilation ideology was characteristic of the 19th and 20th centuries where rise of the nation state was rife, for example, in the United States of America with afro Americans and with the ‘American way of life’, Great Britain, France, Spain and Portugal during the colonial era. Lastly, is ethnic ideology, this can be presented in two ways. In the first case, immigrants are to accept and adopt values of the dominant group while neglecting their own cultural distinctiveness, and the state has the final decision-making power to limit certain private norms of the immigrants (Bourhis et al. 2010: 374).

The second variant of implementation of this ideology is that the state does not recognize immigrants as rightful and legitimate members of the host society and does not expect them to assimilate, for example, the Rohingya of Myanmar. Here, the approach of blood citizenship takes place when the position and status of citizen is determined by racial criteria. James Berry describes similar strategies but from an immigrants’ perspective and introduces the concept of acculturation (Berry, 2001: 616).

The individuals can have a different degree of motivation to preserve the cultural heritage and adapt to the culture of the host society. Thus, according to Berry (2001: 619), there are four strategies: assimilation, separation, marginalization and integration. Assimilation happens when individuals are not concerned about retaining their cultural background, but, in contrast, they are more eager to communicate and interact with representatives of the host society (Berry, 2001: 619). When individuals abstain from mainstream culture and demonstrate allegiance only to the original culture, separation strategy takes place. Marginalization is defined when neither original nor mainstream cultures are of individual’s interest. Finally, integration strategy, which is pursued by multicultural policy, reflects the desire of an individual to adopt values of a new culture along with preserving the home cultural heritage. For an integration strategy to be implemented and thus for the

existence of multicultural society, certain conditions are required, as a low level of prejudices, positive attitudes among groups and a sense of belonging to mainstream culture (Berry, 2001: 628).

Immigrant acculturation can be observed as unidimensional and bidimensional processes. A unidimensional assimilation model represents the passing process from the maintenance of immigrant's cultural background to adoption of the dominant culture. Biculturalism occurs between these extreme points and refers to the temporary stage when immigrants keep their cultural distinctiveness while adopting the culture of the host society (Bourhis et al. 2010: 375). A bidimensional model of acculturation described by Berry is based on preserving the own cultural heritage along with the engagement with another culture which constitute two aspects of cultural identity. These two aspects are ethnic and national identity which can positively correlate. This implies an integration strategy and a multicultural ideology (Berry, 2001:629).

2.3 Integration and Culture

The term integration is derived from the Latin word 'integer'. According to the Cambridge Online Dictionary, integration is a process of incorporation of a group into a foreign society to fit in and become effective (Cambridge Dictionary, 2018). The term 'culture' is broad and can be defined in various ways. For example, culture can generally be defined as a common understanding of certain aspects -physical, spiritual or ethical - amongst a group of people. Culture can also be broadly be defined when it gives the meaning of the thinking and way of life of a people or large society (Williams, 1983: 87-89).

According to the Cambridge English Dictionary, the term culture is defined as the way of life, especially the main customs and beliefs that a certain group of people hold over a time (Cambridge Dictionary, 2018). Culture is

therefore a set of norms and traditions that are practiced or viewed to be important in the structure of any group or society at over a certain period. This means that culture is a dynamic phenomenon, in that it changes also with time. Culture can generally be defined as the function and meaning-making process that separates human beings from other entities in the natural world. Some of the forms of culture include shared feelings, beliefs, norms and language as dictated in a society. The thesis does not focus on its in-depth definitions since the aim of the research purposes is to develop a position in relation to the prevalent discourse and perspectives. The term can be connoted to shape and determine the relationship and connections an individual has with his or her community (Moghaddam, 2002).

The UN department of Economic and Social affairs defines the meaning of social integration as a dynamic process that promotes discourse between two groups such as natives of a country and immigrants in an endeavour to achieve peaceful relations (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2013). The term social integration as used in the thesis, distinguishes itself from assimilation, forced integration and social functioning. Social integration includes more variables such as social connections, family, friends and involvements in the community. However, in the study, the definition implied describes integration as a continuous process of development of relationships between newcomers (immigrants) and the members of the host society. The meaning can be extended to inclusion of individuals to host society institutions such as day-cares (Tsai & Rosenheck, 2012).

Integration and culture go hand in hand. One main factor that determines the success in integration of any immigrant in Finland is the formation of his or her own multicultural identity (Parviainen, 2011: 29). A multicultural identity refers to an identity that sets off after the early childhood socialization process in communicative interaction with the new cultural environment (Kim, 2001: 191).

Integration is mainly focused on the participation, development of relationships and the cohesion of individuals that have immigrated into the mainstream society. The concept, however, is different from assimilation as it allows the retention of immigrant ethno-cultural identities and important cultural features. Segmented assimilation is guidance to acculturation through three ideologies that confront the second generation of immigrants: - upward assimilation, downward assimilation and upward mobility, a principle narrates the processes that put into perspective the relations between immigrant children, their parents and the wider community-consonant, dissonant and selective acculturation (Waters;Tran;Kasinitz;& Mollenkopf, 2010).

The process of consonant assimilation involves immigrant children and parents both learning the Finnish language together and through time abandoning their home country cultural beliefs and norms at approximately the same level of pace. Dissonant acculturation involves immigrant children adopting Finnish ways and language faster than their parents. In theory, it occurs in situations where there exists significant racial discrimination and feeling-out-of-place syndrome among children and young, though practically it does not form the norm in second generation immigrants (Portes & Rumbaut, 2011).

The notion of pluralism or pluralistic cultures is accredited to the German researcher Johann Gottfried Herder who matured the ideology that culture is a crucial quality attached, to a group of persons and constitutes specific world views, values, resolutions, norms and practices (Parekh, 2001). The pluralism of culture exhibits diversity and a mix of tradition with modernity. The society's basic norms and regulations played a vital role in creation of a distinct culture, shaped by the same environment with structured experiences that coincided with human imagination (Parekh, 2001).

This study focuses on the significance of social factors and influence on the diverse types of acculturation within the Finnish society (Xie & Greenman,

2005). The theory puts forward the notion of the importance of parents as a variable that affects the success of their children. The theory is wholly applicable in the thesis as it accentuates the social context that surrounds the immigrant family and the treatment in the host country. The selective or dissonant mobility of children is dependent on family structure, parents and the methods or systems of incorporation into a new society (Xie & Greenman, 2005).

The world currently is more centralised thanks to the existence and fast development of media channels. The internet has significantly fastened communication channels over the last few decades, and the rise of social media channels conceptualized the existence of a global social-cultural boom. These channels have had ripple effects on immigrant children and their families in modification of their acculturation process (Linton;Choi;& Mendoza, 2016).

2.4 Integration in Finland

One of the law reviews in Finland developed to assist in the integration of immigrants was in the year 2010 that allowed them to participate in economic, political and social spheres of the society with the integration policy dissected into three levels: national, municipal and individual level (Hakinnen, 2000). The Finnish law requires the national government to assist in the integration process through promotion of integration of immigrants, both children and adults, through provision of accommodation for the immigrants, education possibilities, social and health service and later assistance in search of employment (Oikeusministeriö, 2018). The law also articulates the preservation of the migrant culture and language and provision of interpretation and translation services (Hakinnen, 2000).

The Finnish government developed the Finnish Equality Act in 2004 that objectifies to foster equality in the Finnish society by prohibiting discrimination of individuals based on ethnicity, nationality, language, religion, opinions, health, disability and sexual orientation. The problem of integration of immigrants into the Finnish society is a new concept as compared to other European countries such as Britain and France. The Finnish authorities have opted to promote integration through multi-linguicism and the multi-culture feature. The immigrants can study Finnish as the second language as well as retain significant norms, practices and beliefs from their background cultures (Finnish National Board of Education ,2005).

This definition implies that integration as a continuous process of development of relationships between newcomers (immigrants) and the members of the host society. The meaning can be extended to inclusion of individuals to host society institutions such as day-cares. In Finland, the process of integration is well defined in the Finnish law (Oikeusministeriö, 2018). The concept is a process in which an entity develops connection to the unfamiliar environment. Integration is mainly focused on the participation, development of relationships and the cohesion of individuals into the mainstream society. The concept, however, is different from assimilation as it allows the retention of immigrant ethno-cultural identities and important cultural features. Integrating to an unfamiliar environment is always a challenge. Upon getting to a new country, most immigrant children and their parents are affected by what is termed as culture shock (Laiore, Carpena-Mendez, Tyrell &White,2011).

Life in a new country such as Finland is different because of many variables between the country of origin and the host country. For example, communication is usually difficult if the languages spoken do not match, and with-it language barrier brings forth frustration even for the simplest tasks as surfing the internet (He, 2007). The first part that becomes challenging is

adapting to the language that is spoken. For example, Swahili is the lingua franca in the East African region while English is commonly used in official matters.

In Finland however, Finnish is commonly used amongst the population. With such a disposition, it becomes challenging for newly arrived immigrants in Finland to go about their business in market places, reading bus timetables, or making reservations in a restaurant. Culture brings alignment to matters of food, religion, and normative social constructs among others. As such, the differences in culture make immigrants spend a considerable amount of time before they become accustomed to the ways of a new country (Pyykkönen, 2007).

2.5 Children

According to the Merriam-Webster online dictionary, a child is described as a young person between infancy and youth (Merriam Webster Online Dictionary, 2018). The Finnish law defines a child as an individual below the age of 18 years of age, with the provisions on how a child shall be treated and the responsibilities for and of the child (Oikeusministeriö, 2007).

The contemporary idea of the child has changed to a more child-focused direction. Currently, children cannot be assumed to be only receivers of information or activity but active participants in community learning and progressions. Learning can be said to be based on a child's individual experiences and beliefs. Immigrant children can be either those born within Finnish borders from non-Finnish parent(s) or whose parent or grandparents were born in another country. The families of the children can have a variety of legal status or rights, for example, asylum seekers and students who have limited rights on residence or families with full residential rights such as Finnish citizens and immigrants working in Finland. However, children rights are enshrined in the constitution of Finland, meaning that children,

either citizens or not, have the same rights. According to the constitution, immigrant children are accorded basic rights like those of citizens. There is nearly no distinction in the services provided for children across the board (Oikeuministeriö, 2007).

Children are affected with the surroundings, and this is evident on how they perceive their environment. This is because children are quick to amass cognitive and behavioural skills during their early years due to their brains undergoing a vast neural development, hence become conscious of their surroundings faster than adults (Rohr; Arora; Cho; Katlariwala; Dimond; Dewey; & Bray, 2018: 204). In a study carried out by Berivan Ekinci, immigrant children tend to show distinct features of the surroundings emerging from experiences in new surroundings (Ekinci, 2012).

Factors concerning immigrant children, for example cultural backgrounds would be essential for the caregivers to familiarize themselves with such to achieve cultural competence that will go a long way in safeguarding them (Akilapa & Simkiss, 2012). This is because, regardless of their background, children act as a supplement for the future, in that, in the eyes of the governments, these will be the 'adults of tomorrow' and that is why it is vital for policies to be in tandem with their needs to produce students, taxpayers and parents that fit in with the norms of the societies they reside in (Hernandez;Takanishi;& Marotz, 2009).

3 FINNISH DAY-CARE

Finnish day-care centres provide upbringing to children who are under the school going age, with alternatives comprising of municipal, private or home-based child care givers (City of Helsinki, 2017). Additionally, the day-care centres act as a leap towards knowledge by provision of early education, which is paramount to a child's development of cognitive and behavioural skills and maturity, including top-down attention (Brown & Jernigan, 2012). This means that Finnish day-care centres continue to be of paramount necessity within the Finnish society as they act as a major step a child's upbringing and development. They offer space for children to develop outside their comfort zones at home while at the same time catering for increased attentional demands that face them and the expansion of their cognitive scope that may include symbolic stimuli that requires perceptual know-how (Ristic & Enns, 2015).

The Early Childhood Education and Care curricular program in Finland, is guided by four conventional principles on child's rights that include: - non-discrimination and equal rights for the child, the child's best interest, right to life, full development and the consideration of the views and opinions of the child (Sosiaali ja terveystministeriö, 2005). Additionally, the Early Childhood Education and Care has its individual grounded ideologies on the basic rights of the child that additionally include: - warm personal relationships, security, special support and maintenance of their individual cultures, healthy environmental surroundings that allow playing and other activities that allow children to receive comprehension dependent on their age and level of maturity (Sosiaali ja terveystministeriö, 2005).

The Early Childhood Education and Care goals are to ensure children are given the opportunity to be part of their background cultural communities and Finnish society (Heinämäki 2008). The Early Childhood Education and Care program in Finland is based on values derived from international

conventions on the rights of a child, national law and other guidelines. At the day-care centres, children are given support in learning the national languages, either Finnish or Swedish if the child has another mother tongue, while some municipalities go an extra length to teach and communicate with children another language other Finnish or Swedish (City of Helsinki, 2017).

A report on the Early Childhood Education and Care Finnish program- the National Curricular guideline for pre-school Education caregivers should follow- accentuates the fact that the best strategy or approach on assisting children from culturally diverse backgrounds is through cooperation between families and educators and discussions of the disparities in parenting (Heinämäki 2008). The reason behind this can be said to be because parents are concerned on the child losing their cultural identity through associations and interactions with children from other cultural descent. A study carried out by Natalia Ivanova discovered that active participation and involvement of kindergarten youngsters into children's subculture creates a working structure in developing social skills whereby a child positively fits in into a peer group, gains important life experiences to the appeasement of his hunger for independence vis-á-vis involvement in social changes (Ivanova, 2016)

A qualitative study on the Somali parent's experiences of bringing up children in Finland done on 21 families with more than 5 children indicates that raising children in Finland by is not a collective endeavour unlike in the Somali (Degni;Pöntinen;& Mölsä, 2006). According to the study, in western societies such as Finland, biological parents are responsible in bringing up the families by themselves, hence there is minimal reliance on members of the extended family or neighbours in caregiving. The lack of integrative social interactions and co-operation between families and societal stakeholders denotes a hindrance to efficient and effective adaptation into the host country's culture, norms and beliefs (Degni;Pöntinen;& Mölsä, 2006).

The cooperation between parents and teachers is integral in assisting immigrant children integrate wholly and easily into the Finnish culture and society. It extends to acclaiming the fact that many of the teachers saw the cultural mismatches between the host community and the immigrant children as an opportunity to enrich the Finnish life with their presence, denoting that diversity is advantageous for all the children in the Finnish society, whether they have an immigrant background or not (Brännare, 2018). A phenomenographic study done on seven Finnish teachers on their perceptions of immigrant student's preparatory teaching and experiences of cooperation in basic education in Finland, accentuated the fact that cooperation between teachers is necessary for everyday practice in school but most especially for the holistic development and integration into Finnish society (Lääkkölä; Määttä; & Uusiautti, 2014).

It is a well-established sociological phenomenon that children who do not learn the host country language are left behind throughout their period of education. Therefore, the Employment and Development Ministry through the department of integration continues to foster programs that are meant to strengthen immigrant children as well as parents, in efforts to harmonize their basic understanding of both their cultures. (Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö, 2014). The teachers and parents should have a two-way communication in order that both entities progressively work together to support the child's growth, development and learning processes both at home and in the day-cares (Kaskela & Kekkonen, 2006).

The comprehension of children is not the same everywhere and such disparities may pose as a challenge on the development of the immigrant child. According to Montgomery, such differences and changing notions have led to numerous scientists laying claim that the 'childhood' concept is a social construction (Montgomery, 2013). Montgomery extends to give examples to the argument such as the children of Beng, a small ethnic group in West Africa, who culturally think that young children understand whatever language they are addressed (Montgomery, 2013). It can also be

noted that the level of parent cooperation is dependent on the immigration legal status. For the refugees, there is more cultural conflict since the individuals with their children integrate to the point of temporary survival as compared to voluntary immigrants (Lääkkölä;Määttä;& Uusiautti, 2014)

Children are influenced by the social, cultural, economic, psychological and historical circumstances or environments surrounding them. The cognitive development of children is influenced by the socio-cultural context and this proves the point that there exist distinctions in childhood experiences and attitudes across cultures. Development of children is a process of continuous learning and improvement (Burchinal;Peisner-Feinberg;Bryant;& Clifford, 2010). Children, therefore, require the support of their parents, teachers, friends and other siblings in their childhood development process. The issue of language is prime in the integration and development, according to most theories and researches completed on the subject (Burchinal;Peisner-Feinberg;Bryant;& Clifford, 2010).

The government of Finland has stepped up in utilizing resources to integrate children into the Finnish society through education. A recent report showed that this European country is one of the most literate in the world (Rubin, 2009). This can be ascribed to the collaborative networks that are enhanced amongst parents and other professional players in the society. This is obligated under the Finnish law on provision of basic education (628/1998) and the national core curriculum that is augmented by the Finnish National Board of Education (Lääkkölä;Määttä;& Uusiautti, 2014).

According to Döbert, Kleime, and Sroka, immigrant teaching has the same instructional, educational objectives and central policies like those of the rest of comprehensive school teaching .The authors provide an example of the municipal schools of Oulu where the institutions have the following measures: preparatory instruction, schools with support measures, teaching of students in their first language and Finnish as second language .The preparatory instruction done for six months is aimed at assisting the children

familiarize with Finnish culture and language whilst maintaining or reinforcing their own cultural identities (Döbert; Klieme; & Sroka, 2004).

A great number of immigrants are concentrated in specific areas and hence, persistence of the challenge for the teachers which creates fear that children who don't learn the host country language would be left behind throughout their period of education. Also, it can be noted that the level of parent cooperation is dependent on the immigration legal status. For the refugees, there is more cultural conflict since the individuals with their children integrate to the point of temporary survival as compared to voluntary immigrants (Lääkkölä; Määttä; & Uusiautti, 2014).

The study on the social development theory was guided by two primary principles. The first principle is called the More Knowledge Other - that gives the meaning of an entity who has a higher mental ability than the learner or apprentice (Vygotsky, 1962). The principle is not limited or restricted to adults as teachers to the children as it includes also their peers, for example, in day-care institutions a child's peers may know a little more in one area for example in dancing and thus the other children can learn from him or her. In context, the theory accentuates the fact that kids can acquire more skills and knowledge around their peers and by this, immigrant children are influenced by the host culture and adapt to it (Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö, 2014).

The second primary principle is termed as the zone of proximal development that entails or relates the variances between what a child can achieve without the help and guidance of a skilled partner and with their assistance (Vygotsky, 1962). The two main principles from Vygotsky's view, express that social interaction with peers is an effective and efficient way of the development of skills and strategies. From these, we gather that day-care-institutions can be significant tools for immigrant children to learn and develop both from a social context and cognitively with not only the guidance from parents and teachers but also their peers. It enlightens on the

parameters of and helps pre-schoolers to avert cultural misalliances that lead to challenges faced by older immigrant children, during the social integrative process of immigrant children mostly, especially on language. The role of language in Vygotsky's theory is that, it is a mode of transmission of informational messages between the parent and the child as well as a significant vessel of intellectual adaptation (Vygotsky, 1962).

4 DATA AND DATA COLLECTION

As mentioned before, empirical data concerning experiences of East African immigrant children in Finnish day-cares is scarce. For this reason, a qualitative study research was done. The idea behind the research was to establish the experiences and challenges of East African immigrant children undergo through the viewpoints of their parents. Research questions were formulated in this regard in order to formulate a study in order to establish these experiences and challenges. As such, eleven parents from four different East African countries and two day-care teachers were interviewed.

4.1 Research Questions

The research questions enabled me to find out the tutors' perspectives in teaching children from a multicultural background and the parents' perspectives regarding the teaching modules in a view to integration. Two research questions were formulated regarding addressing the issue of integration of East African children into the Finnish society:

1. To what levels can parents attest the benefits that stem from experiences of East African immigrant children on integration in Finnish day-cares?
2. What are the roles of parents and teachers in assisting immigrant children on integrating into the Finnish culture?

4.3 Data Collection

The study utilized a narrative approach with the aid of open-ended questions. Therefore, information was primary- in-depth dialogues of the parents and day-care teachers in the Espoo region. Yin highlights some of the main advantages of carrying out an empirical data research underlies their focus to the target population and the founding of causal relationships (Yin, 1994: 81).

The facts above justify the choice of interviews as a data collection method for the study. This is because the investigation motivates the opinions of the immigrant parents and some of the day-care teachers as the foreign children reared in a totally different culture are integrated into the Finnish society. The in-depth interviews were recorded on tape and later transcribed to ensure no loss in information. Recording interviews provide an in-depth collection of data with positive yields from the engagements between the respondents and interviewers through the discussion and the direction taken by their interaction (Mishler, 1986: 39).

The snowballing technique was used to sample the qualitative data. Biernacki and Waldorf connote that the process of snowballing is founded on the assumption that there exists a definitive linkage between the initial sample and others in the same target population, allowing referrals to be made (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981: 141). The technique offers advantages as concerns explorative, qualitative and descriptive researches. The incentive to the choice of sampling was driven by its economical and efficient nature. Being a member of the East African immigrant community was also a motivation to better understand or comprehend the thoughts and feelings of the immigrant parents (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981: 141).

A total of thirteen individuals were interviewed for this research work. Of these, thirteen were parents of day-care children with an East African ethnic background. This means that all parents interviewed have originally

emigrated from East Africa. Of the eleven parents, five were from Kenya, three from Uganda, two from Tanzania and one from Somalia. All parents had or have had at least two children in Finnish day-care at the time the interviews were carried out. The other remaining two individuals were day care teachers in two different day-care centres in the Espoo region. These day-care teachers have an average of 20 years' experience working with children at day care centres. The interviews were carried out between April and November 2016.

Interviewee	Country of origin	Gender	Number of Children	Children in Day-Care
A	Kenya	M	2	2
B	Kenya	F	2	2
C	Uganda	M	3	2
D	Somalia	M	7	2
E	Uganda	F	3	2
F	Kenya	F	2	1
G	Tanzania	F	1	1
H	Kenya	F	2	1
K	Kenya	F	2	1
J	Uganda	F	3	1
L	Kenya	F	2	1

Table 1: Profile of the parents of immigrant children

Interviewee	Gender	Number of years teaching
M	F	25
N	F	15

Table 2: Profile of the day-care teachers

The language used for conducting interviews was English as it was common for all the interviewees. Although English was not a native language for any of the interviewees, this did not deter communication and interaction. This fact was put into consideration and questions asked to interviewees were done in simplified English, and where an interviewee didn't understand a question, it was explained again thoroughly. The sampling method utilized can be said to be also purposive as the cases chosen were based on benefit and knowledge on the subject that could be retrieved for the research.

George R. Taylor also forwards the fact that researchers have the understanding that reliability in their studies can be controlled by safely keeping or storing the information derived from observations and interviews. The method of data collection proved adequate and reliable as the interview sessions were duly recorded to be transcribed later through a verbatim format. The step ensured no information was lost. The interviewer prior to the interview had acquainted with the proper methods of conducting interviews and ensured systematic specific measurements to the context under discussion were made (Taylor, 2005:12-16).

The interviews were done through open-ended interviews to incite the perception of the respondents. Patton reiterates this fact as he acclaims that open-ended questions and probes produce in-depth information about people's experiences, perceptions, opinions, feelings and knowledge on subject matter of discussion (Patton, 2006: 136). The choice of doing the interviews in the interviewees' home or places of work was to ensure familiarity and comfort to encourage them talk more freely. During the interviews, the background of the participants was inquired, experience of the teachers as well as the level of education. Qualitative interviews are particularly geared towards exploring, discovering and inducing lucidity and rational attributes. Aspects and facets used in analysis are born from open ended surveys; as the interviewer proceeds to recognize and comprehend patterns in the issue being investigated (Patton, 2006: 138)

4 DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter explains the methods and framework of data collection and also the structure used to analyze the data collected. Semi structured interviews were used to collect the data and thematic analysis used to get most of the data from narrations got through the interviews.

5.1 Methodology

There are a variety of methods utilized in qualitative research designs. In this case, a thematic analysis is conducted because it was conceived to be better in conducting the research and best answer the research questions. Thematic analysis is employed as the method of analysis to identify power inequalities and gaps shown in discourse from empirical data collected from interviews conducted with immigrant parents and day-care teachers.

Thematic analysis endeavours not only to capture literal meanings but to analyse what language does or what individuals or cultures accomplish through language. The methodology seeks to investigate and highlight how meaning is constructed, and how power is structured and distributed in a society. Thematic analysis acts as a connection between speeches or direct text and the connotations insinuated on the audience. As such, this thematic analysis approach was based on two methods, that is, a mixed inductive method where the topics were based on the data and theoretically, where topics were guided primarily by literature from topics relating to migrant children.

The aims of thematic analysis are: -

- It assists in the revealing of social problems due to power relationships and beliefs

- It helps in the comprehension of the real meanings of texts so that individuals can appreciate their exercising of power or resist it.
- It also encourages the implementation of corrective action in situations where there exist power imbalances and inequalities.
- It expresses the role of relationships between the processes, relations and structures of society, events, texts and discursive practices in securing domination and power (Braun & Clarke, 2008).

There are several types of critical discourse analysis, however, the thesis chooses on the more developed Fairclough's approach that is broadly used in a multiplicity of researches and studies. Fairclough believes that discourses replicate and alter knowledge and social interactions and are subject to the pre-existent social structures (Fairclough; Mulderrig; & Wodak, 2011: 358). Research work based on thematic analysis proves to be more independent and also reliable as a qualitative research analysis method (Vaismoradi; Turunen; & Bondas, 2013: 400).

5.2 Validity and Reliability

The validity of qualitative data is not easily justifiable as compared to other traditional data sources and traditional measurements. However, George R. Taylor highlights the methods to validate data derived from the qualitative interview approach is through observations, participants reviewing the information for accuracy and deterrence from bias motivated by one's agenda or motivations to the agenda (Taylor, 2005).

The empirical data for the study was collected through in-depth interviews as aforementioned. The interviewer ensured no leading questions in the open-ended questionnaires and ensured probing was done without any bias

or prejudice. However, to validate the results of the findings, written sources are utilized to accentuate the findings and conclusions of the study.

The interviewees that comprised of parents and teachers in the day-cares as the key stakeholders involved in the integration process of East African immigrant children. The interviews lasted between twenty and sixty minutes; which was enough to acquire detailed responses to be used in answering the research questions. The interviewees were assured of privacy and confidentiality. They were carried out face-to-face and recorded to enable extensive analysis without limitations of forgetfulness to what was said during the interviews.

Some of the interviews carried out involved both parents, with the same engaging in answering the questions alternatively or together. It was enlightening as this would prove crucial in the analysis in the acquiring the uniformities and dissimilarities of their statements and experiences in raising their kids through the Finnish day-cares.

This study made sure that the information was gathered in a way that would not prompt any moral or ethical questions (Taylor, 2005: 17). As such, the names of the respondents included in this text are anonymous. What's more, the respondents were assured that all the information that they would give would not be used for anything else other than for the purposes of the study; this made them comfortable to speak openly about matters of immigration into a foreign land and integration without fear of retribution or having their words being used against them.

5 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I will present my findings from the research data collected. As described before, a narrative approach was used in conducting and analysing the data. Subsequently, the main themes from the data are identified through thematic analysis and incorporated into the theoretical framework of this research work.

5.1 Analysis of Interviews

In this part, I will present the analysis of each interview by using a holistic narrative approach. All interviews are denoted in alphabetical letters in order to protect the identities of the interviewees, hence the references to the interviews are denoted as IA or IB where I means the interview and the following letter referring to the person that I interviewed.

5.1.1 Interview A

The interviewee has been living in Finland for the last ten years. He is originally from Kenya and speaks four languages; his mother tongue Kikuyu, Kiswahili, English and Finnish. He has two children, both of which are attending day care in Espoo. Both his children were born in Finland.

The interviewee admits to a culture clash in some instances when he cannot comprehend why children in day-care are at times let to do everything and in his view a lack of discipline:

We are from different cultures, and when we do things, we usually do the according to our cultures and hence the cultures clash and becomes a bit tricky. (IA)

Interviewee A explains that integration in Finland is solely based on learning the Finnish language. His experience at the day-care centres was not that pleasant when he came to Finland:

I came to Finland a few years after my wife, and by the time we had children start day-care, my Finnish language wasn't still so good, and I communicated in English. So, what I noticed is that when my wife picked up the children, she was given a lot of information regarding our children, but when I picked them up, the teachers shied away because of language barrier. (IA)

The interviewee agrees that it is a challenge to live in Finland if one does not understand the Finnish language and believes that learning the language is part of integration. But more so, he supports the idea that Finnish day-care teachers should also be able to communicate with the parents in English because it would ease the communication barrier and simplify both the parents and their own work:

It would be good for the teachers to speak more in English especially for the parents to understand and offer cooperation. It's difficult if we don't have a common language to discuss our cultures and understand either cultures to help in integration (IA).

Interviewee A adds that day-care staff take an initiative to learn more about other people's cultures, especially the children backgrounds beforehand in order to assist them well. He acknowledges that cooperation and teamwork is essential to get things done the proper way:

Sometimes he doesn't like some Finnish things, like soups. We try to find solutions, also with the language. The teachers ask about our opinions and we try to give them our feedback on how we can solve the situation together. Teamwork with teachers is important to boost integration (IA).

Interviewee A believes that integration is important because he sees that his children can fit in the society; his children enjoy being at the day-care centre playing with other children: “Most of the time we find them playing, so it is difficult to get him off from the play because he wants to continue” (IA). He continues to add that a lot depends on the role of the teachers at the day-care centre:

Depends with the day care, teachers and age. If the day care is interesting, like the teachers have activities all the time, the kid enjoys being there. Now, he is quite comfortable with the day-care service (IA).

The interviewee A also feels that it is difficult for his children to integrate into the Finnish culture outside the day-care setting because he doesn't see other children interacting freely with his children: “With Finnish culture, it's difficult to find other kids in the neighbourhood” (IA). Although he feels this way, this does not deter him or his spouse from taking their children to communal playgrounds where other children usually come to play. He reiterates that that is another way to support integration in Finland:

When we go to the playgrounds and parks, he will want to play with other kids [...] that's why we take him to these playgrounds. Interaction is a good tool to enhance integration (IA).

Interviewee A praises the teachers for their outstanding service delivery. He recounts that the teachers keep the children busy with a variety of activities and this factors in providing an interesting area of development for the children:

Teachers are well trained here. They give a lot of different activities like painting, askartelu and so on to children and shows that they are interested in the development of these children (IA).

He also adds that the teachers are effective in their scope of work: “They teach them about the Finnish culture, food, games and so on” (IA).

5.1.2 Interview B

Interviewee B moved to Finland from Kenya twelve years ago immediately after completing her high school studies. She is a registered nurse working in Espoo. She has two children aged four and three years, hence both attend day care regularly. She has a positive viewpoint of the day care service in general, as it supports her in bringing up her children in a multicultural setting so that her children can easily cope in Finland.

However, she has reservations with the Finnish society as she feels being accepted and feeling a sense of belonging to the culture, one needs to act, speak and behave like a Finnish native person and “being different is frowned upon”:

Integrating in the Finnish culture, one must accept their way of living, to an extent making you forget where you come from; and since there are many cultures here in Finland, there is conflict. (IB)

Interviewee B also takes note of the differences between the cultures and how teachers at day care would be anxious in seeking explanations to certain cultural issues. “Teachers would ask why we teach or act in a certain way at home with our kids” (IB). Interviewee B describes her dissatisfaction with the role of teachers not wanting to aid in integration by not seeking to learn and accept the different cultures portrayed by the children attending day-cares:

Some teachers need to get their act together and realize that immigrant children need extra attention because they are living in two cultures. At home they are mainly experiencing the culture of their parents and at day-care the Finnish culture (IB).

She goes on further to support the notion of teachers in day-care needing to show the children that all cultures are equal so as alleviate racism or segregation amongst the children themselves since she had “noticed on several occasions situations where the finish children played in one group and children from an immigrant background played in another group” (IB). Interviewee B suggests that the teachers must keep their roles in check and be able to instil respect at the day-care:

[...] and it’s the role of teachers to make sure all children in the day care respect one another and by portraying all cultures as equal (IB).

Interviewee B also continues by suggesting that integration should be done in such a manner that children do not feel different. She bases this notion on the fact that “children are learning a new language and a new way of life at day-care and have started to question many things such as why we do some things different, for example, regarding food or praying and so on, from what they do at the day-care centre” (IB). She explains that she once had to switch day-cares for her child because she felt “her child wasn’t being allowed to integrate with other children”. Her view of the teacher’s roles is to help the children appreciate both cultures and norms:

To integrate a child, you should also help them to appreciate their own culture, so teachers should learn a bit more about each child’s background to balance both cultural views in the child. The child should learn that both cultures are important and should learn to respect that diversity (IB).

Interviewee B regards communication as a key catalyst for the integration process. She backs the notion of immigrants learning the Finnish language because it is the language used to communicate with children at day-cares, and “teachers would use the same with the parents while discussing issues pertaining to the child” (IB). She feels that the teachers would generally not relate well with immigrant parents because of the language barrier. She narrates a situation where language can lead to discrimination:

For example, when picking up my child and find out that the child is all wet, I would need a reason of what happened and how it happened. If I don't know Finnish language, I cannot engage well with the teachers in discussing the issue, and usually these kinds of situations are common. Understanding the Finnish language is important because the teachers know that you are also well versed with the law, and you can question the actions and methods in the day-care. Any incident at the day care that goes unexplained to the parents creates room for discriminatory practices in future (IB).

Interviewee B continues by adding that “integration starts at home” (IB). Her view on integration is that it starts with the immigrant parents of the child. The parents “should not be like zombies that do not understand the host country's culture and expect the children to fully integrate and have an interest in it”. Her experience is that most of the immigrants do not take their children regularly to the parks and this affects the children at day-cares too:

When you go to the parks, majority of the children are Finnish natives. Immigrant parents don't take their children outside, only let them play in the house. The result is that these children are over energetic and when they are taken to the day-care centres, they become cumbersome to the teachers and other children. Parents need to integrate themselves first before they can ask the teachers to integrate their children (IB).

Interviewee B also comments that by taking her children to the parks, she creates an opportunity for the children to get new Finnish friends, which is

another way to support integration: “if you do not take your children out, no one will come in to get them” (IB). She adds that in Finnish culture, there are many opportunities and events whereby parents can take their children to be with other children from different backgrounds: “playgrounds, sport events and fairs arranged by municipalities or private individuals are a good way to help integration” (IB).

5.1.3 Interview C

Interviewee C has been in Finland for the past thirteen years. He is originally from Uganda and speaks three other languages in addition to Finnish. He has three children aged six, four and two years and all were born in Finland and is cohabiting with a Finnish native. Currently, the second and third child attend day care in Espoo. Interviewee C is very responsive to how integration has helped him and is hoping the same for his children. He cites attention and warmth as basic principles every day care teacher needs, especially while working with immigrant children:

Children will always feel comfortable with a teacher if they get the necessary attention. When children of immigrants start attending day care, they need to feel that they are attended to all the time (IC).

The interviewee C refers to integration as “something that makes the person comfortable and unfearful” and believes that in order for this to happen for the children in day-care, “teachers and parents discuss on the background of the child” (IC).

The interviewee C also addresses the significance of parents and teacher’s cooperation in enhancing integration. He explains that children feel a sense

of belonging in the day care centres when the teachers and parents work hand in hand, especially in the beginning.

[...] probably that's why parents are encouraged to accompany them during the first few days and keep them company in the new environment (IC).

He also identifies the role of teachers as pivotal in enhancing a smooth integration process for the children in this new environment: "kids might be shy and not willing to express themselves, and that's where the teacher comes in" (IC). The interviewee C continues by suggesting that the teacher's role is to assist the child in matters concerning each child at the day-care: "if the child doesn't feel loved/wanted/accepted/helped in the group, he will not want to attend the day care" (IC). He continues by citing that "it is difficult for the child to go to the day care when the teachers don't provide enough attention" and believes that "if the child gets enough support and attention, it would even be a problem to even get him home from day-care centre" (IC).

Interviewee C connotes that the teachers should work to ensure that the children of immigrant parents are adapting well to the learning environment:

If a teacher realizes that there is a problem, like language barrier for example, the teacher would separate the child from others and explain to him/her why or how something is done. Like the teacher wouldn't leave the child on her own and assume that they'll catch up. The teachers explain and ask the children all the time if they understand a certain issue or situation, attend to them all the time (IC).

Language barrier and cultural diversity is considered by the interviewee C to be an obstacle for teachers and children from parents who have emigrated to Finland in facilitating the integration process:

[...] like language barrier is a huge problem. When explaining to children from different ethnic backgrounds, it might be difficult for the teacher to communicate with them. There are other things like the way children play or behave; so cultural difference is also a challenge (IC).

Another challenge identified by the interviewee C was divorce and separation. He reiterates the how married couples assist one another in taking care of their children together and share responsibilities in rearing the children:

[...] but a bigger challenge is when parents are separated and one of them is not Finnish. It's a big challenge for the children, teachers and parents. Separation also disorganizes the child's mind (IC).

Interviewee C considers the fact that although he is in a foreign country, his duty is to put his children's affairs as a priority and "encourage the child to be active because as a parent, one must remember that their role is to better the child's future, no matter the background or hardships that have been there before" (IC). He also brings out the need for immigrants to acknowledge the need to get assistance to enhance their children's integration process:

[...] for example, when the child needs to do their homework, I don't know so much Finnish language so even assisting in this is trivial, so we just wait for their mother to assist. Parents must support one another, share chores regarding children (IC).

Interviewee C praises the developments brought about by technological advancements in helping to foster integration in Finland. He sees the internet as a key factor that has brought about rapid change:

The internet has really opened the integration divide. A simple search and you get an event where you can mingle with other cultures, for example music or soccer events. In these events, language is not needed, just you as a person (IC).

Interviewee C also suggests that “communication with teachers concerning the child is essential” because both parties must monitor the progress of the child (IC). The idea to this is to enhance the relationship between all the three parties and create trust between the parents and teachers such that in the long run “helping both sides to understand the child better and this simplifies each other’s job” (IC).

5.1.4 Interview D

Interviewee D is a resident of Espoo region, emigrated from Somalia 25 years ago. He has seven children, the oldest is 15 years while the youngest is two years. He has two children currently attending day-care. Interview D has a positive view on the current situation regarding immigrants and their integration process. He basest his view on his experience living in Finland:

[...] before it was not as easy as today. The government has really stepped up its game and support of immigrants can be seen everywhere you go in the country (ID).

Interviewee D views integration as a process where both the host and immigrant cultures must learn from one another for it to work. The hosts must be submissive in trying to learn or understanding the new cultures that are coming into their environment. An open-minded society will create a faster integration process:

[...] it's more like a two-way street or, like buying and selling, that's how integration works. The immigrants and Finnish citizens must work together and learn from one another. (ID)

Interviewee D adds that the teachers in day-care centres must have an interest of learning more about others' cultures because it would go a long way in helping immigrant children integrate smoothly:

Children need assistance in getting used to day cares, and having their priorities listened to since immigrant children may have different interests from those Finnish children have, for example, the food they eat or how they dress. (ID)

He also emphasizes that acceptance of the changing dynamics in the world that have led to multiculturalism, and this fact cannot be denied anymore:

The teachers must be active with learning other cultures. It's essential for all parties for integration to work, but patience from both sides is paramount for integration to work (ID).

5.1.5 Interview E

Interviewee E is a Ugandan national and has been living in Finland for the last eleven years. She has a bachelor's degree in social services. She is married and has three children, two of which are attending day-care. Interviewee E has had a great experience so far in how her children have fitted into the Finnish culture while at the same time adhering to the Ugandan norms at home. Although all the children have been born in Finland, she and her husband instil Ugandan customs at home:

I respect the Finnish culture, but that doesn't mean I don't appreciate my cultural background. So, some mutual respect is needed. Like my children needs to learn how to appreciate both cultures (IE).

Interviewee E also expresses her opinion that process of integration depends a lot on where the child is born:

If born here, it is the same for the teachers as a child whose both parents are Finnish. it's a different affair if the child s brought into the country and the integration is stepped up for the hold to cope with others (IE).

The interviewee agrees that the Finnish culture is quite variant as compared to Ugandan culture but sees this as an advantage for the immigrants and their children. "It's always good also for adults because we learn something new from others" (IE). She portrays that the differences between these cultures pose a challenge especially in child rearing aspect:

We have different views of the world. I was brought up in a different way than the Finnish people. Different upbringing creates a challenge for the parents on rearing their children in a new society. (IE)

Interviewee E states also that her children's eagerness to attend day care depends mostly on the based on the day-care environment: "[...] so, if my son had a good experience the previous day, he is eager to go to day-care the following day" (IE). She explains that day-care teachers are pivotal in ensuring the day-care centres remain attractive for the children to enjoy being there:

Teachers invite us to talk when they realize there is a problem with my children. I appreciate this because it shows that they are ready to help the children get along with the day-care system. (IE)

On the integration aspect, Interviewee E claims she is keen in fostering her ethnic cultural norms to her children:

[...] and yes, I support that because I want them to know where I am from. I usually visit my Ugandan friends and take the children along so that they can play and communicate with other Ugandan children in our native language, Baganda (IE).

Interviewee E claims that although she must go to work to earn a living, pay bills and ensure a smooth running of her family's financial affairs, she feels robbed of time with her children and "they[children] lack good care since parents must be away at work for at least 8 hours a day" (IE). She states that she supports the teaching methodologies at the day-care centre, but she has not encountered any odd situations that might bring a cultural conflict with the day-care teachers:

I haven't done it so such, maybe indirectly yes; but if I feel something is not quite right with the culture, I must discuss the same with the teachers and clear the air (IE).

Interviewee E adds that she “cannot keep her children always locked in the house” and for this reason, she tries as frequently as possible spend time with them outside the perimeters of their home so that “they can get used to other surroundings beyond home and day-care (IE). She continues by saying that she knows her children won't stay young forever, but she will be ready to assist them conquer the challenges associated with both cultures:

My children haven't yet started asking trivial questions but when they start to, I must be prepared to provide solutions and answers that portray both cultural divides (IE).

5.1.6 Interview F

Interviewee F is a mother of two children, with one child currently in day-care. She is originally from Kenya but has been living in Finland for the past eight years. She holds a master's degree in business administration and views herself as well integrated into the Finnish society because of her exposure through her education and work background. She continues by suggesting that in this interview, she considers that what goes on with her children at the day-care as experiences rather than challenges. She opts for this choice because she sees “the word ‘challenge’ as being on the negative” (IF).

Interview F vies integrations as a blend of many aspects in each society hence making it a complex phenomenon. She says that it “is a marriage of cultures, expectations, tolerance, prejudice, beliefs, norms, you must join all these bits and components (IF). She continues by stating that it has not been

all the merrier after moving to Finland because she has been disappointed along the way:

I had high expectations for the western world. Accommodation was lacking and language problems. If you don't meet your expectations, then a go slow on integration creeps in. Colonial history and prejudices may affect integration (IF).

Interviewee F continues by states that day-care teachers play an important role in provided a haven for the young children in the new surroundings, claiming that the teachers are “an epicentre for integration as kids are the future thus the children will grow with a right setting for integration” (IF). As for her, she must deal with adjusting some aspects that are in the Finnish culture. She explains that “culture is a shocker” and gives an example of how she has had to change her routine and habits concerning punctuality because Finnish people are very strict with keeping time (IF). Her children do not have a problem going to and coming from the day-care because “they have mastered punctuality” (IF). However, she had realized in the beginning how the new environment ‘shocked’ her child because of the reality she was facing at the day-care centre:

My daughter noticed she was black for the first time at the day care. I didn't think she would notice that, but she did immediately. I've notice she paints using black, no other colour interests her (IF).

She credits the cooperation between her and the teachers for her children's welfare at the day-care centre, claiming that “regular communication and collaboration with the teachers helps to solve issues” concerning her children (IF):

They've done it quite right. The teachers should have room for adjustment because the children need some time to cope with the change. Children must synchronize these cultures and it's not easy in the beginning (IF).

Interviewee F has her reservations regarding the Finnish culture. She is unhappy with way the it is difficult for her children to make friends easily, claiming that they have been at the parks on many occasions but usually the kids are not there or non-cooperative in this endeavour and claims that “this is a parents' problem” (IF). She adds that another factor could be because of the situation that brought her to Finland:

Majority of us are economic immigrants, in that we don't have lots of time or money to take kids to amusement parks and play areas where the children are (IF).

She continues by claiming that her children have very few friends outside the day-care environment, and interviewee F squarely blames this on the lack of an agenda or cooperation among the East African and other immigrants living in Espoo and Helsinki. She adds that “at the day-care, her child has a biracial friend” but no Finnish friends outside the day-care surrounding (IF). She expresses dissatisfaction with the current state where they “are living in such a world where integration is also difficult for with other immigrants” and claims it is a problem that needs rectification:

We are our own enemies as East African parents. We need to start it with ourselves so that we create an EA community that serves and strengthens the culture of East Africa (IF).

5.1.7 Interview G

Interviewee G is a Tanzanian national who emigrated to Finland eleven years ago. She has a bachelor's degree in social services and employed in the greater Helsinki region. She is married and together with her husband have one child who is currently attending day-care.

She describes integration as the process whereby immigrants fit in the Finnish society. She doesn't have much experience challenges facing her child at the day-care because her child is still young and has not been there for long, but that the teachers are pivotal in "instilling good behaviour to the children, good manners and Finnish language" (IG).

She claims that it is a challenge to work and take care of the child at the same time. She is "very sad to wake him up in the morning" to go to day-care and claims she is "saddened by the fact that the child suffers" especially when they are in a bad mood (IG). Her child enjoys mostly being picked up from the day-care because she wants to spend time with her mother. Interviewee G notes that her "child enjoys playing with other children" of his age in the neighborhood but adds that this becomes "difficult in winter because it minimizes their movements outside" (IG). She encourages integration with other children families from different parts of the world as it is an opportunity to learn new things:

I do support immigration and integration because I came to a foreign land, and I want my child to grow up in a place where he is accepted for who he is and not by his background (IG).

Interviewee G explains that the day-care teachers keep her "well informed" about the ongoing at the day-care concerning her child. She "appreciates the feedback" she gets from the teachers and considers the collaboration an "important step in fostering growth and development" of her son" (IG).

5.1.8 Interview H

Interviewee H is a resident of the Espoo region, originally from Kenya. She came to Finland seven years ago to study but says she decided to stay in Finland after she got married by a Finnish native. She thinks that the work of day-care teachers is to “make the child fit in the day-care” and that integration is ‘measured’ by how the children mingle with teachers at the day-care environment” (IH).

Interviewee H continues by adding that it is a big challenge for integration process since East African and Finnish cultures differ a lot” and other factors like “language differences, food and the type of care provided” proves to be different from that in the day-care as compared to home (IH). However, she is proud of the care and interest the teachers have about to her children:

There are introductions for children to get used around the day care, also teachers paid attention to common words the child used and their meanings to familiarize themselves (IH).

But although this was the case, interviewee H explains that it “wasn’t easy in the first few weeks when the children started the day care program” but after a month the children had found a safe haven at the day care and the relationships with the teachers were brilliant” (IH). She adds that her children’s behaviours and wants to differ in that one likes to stay a little longer and play with other children at the day care but the other likes to go home immediately when interviewee H comes to pick them up from day-care. She goes to caution that she feels day care teachers need to up their game about to how they transfer information to parents:

I have noticed that if you approach the day care staff in English, you’ll either get half the info or no info at all. It’s something we have experienced with my husband; more so because of

language barrier. If you speak Finnish, it feels as if people suspect you fit in and know your rights (IH).

The biggest of challenges according to interviewee H are the cultural differences. She explains that in her own culture, “children have a duty to listen to what the parents decide on their behalf but in the Finnish culture parents and children decide together and reach a compromise, which then means that the children have a chance to express their views and feelings freely” (IH). The discussions with her children generated some conflict because interviewee H felt as if “the children had started to rebel at such a tender age” (IH).

Interviewee H expresses dissatisfaction with the fact that their neighbourhood doesn't have families with small children or native Finnish families, but it doesn't mean that her children are always inside the house. There are other immigrant children always at the parks, so they can mingle together and learn a wide range of other attributes from them. She adds that at church or at the library, the children then have “an opportunity to interact also with Finnish children” (IH). Additionally, “day care children come to visit them at home with their parents occasionally” (IH).

5.1.9 Interview J

Interviewee J is a single mother of two children, originally from Uganda. She has lived in Finland for the past eleven years, and speaks Finnish, English and Swahili fluently. Currently, only her youngest child attends day-care. She describes her children's integration process as comprising of “the experiences her children get while mixing with other children” with different ethnic backgrounds (IJ).

She claims that in the day-care centre, there are children from different backgrounds and this might be a challenge for the teachers in trying to get

these children get used to the day-care setting. This challenge is brought about by the fact that the children speak other languages other than Finnish at home, and “so many day cares don’t have a lot of immigrant kids, so they might feel out of place in the day care” (IJ). She continues by adding that “teachers in day-care try to solve this situation by “putting all kids together for them to mingle and get a sense of belonging” (IJ). She continues:

I noticed some Finnish kids don’t easily mingle with immigrant kids. It’s difficult for me also to approach a Finnish family and ask them to allow my child to play with their kids (IJ).

Interviewee J continues by adding that she relates to her children’s situations when taking them to the day-care centre. Her children “did not like the experience and cried a lot because in the beginning, the children feel lost/abandoned with strangers” and continues by adding that after the day-care program, her “children are happy to go home” (IJ). She adds that the children insist on their daily routine at the playground and in the neighbourhood, where her children usually associate “with other familiar faces” though the “friends” are quite older than them. However, due to her children’s tender ages, her children “do not venture out for long” at the playgrounds or playing with other children (IJ).

On integration, interviewee J understands the need to be positive and open minded about it because she has to think about the future of her children in addition to hers. She accepts the fact that she is in a foreign land and has to work her part to fit in and “by being a good Christian, she believes she has an important role to play in making sure that her children feel at home in Finland (IJ). She adds that integration involves getting used to the surroundings, and that means associating with other immigrants too:

I support it by taking her to the playground where there are different immigrants, Spanish, Roma people, Russians etc. Also, when we go to visit a family friend, we may visit playgrounds there too and she mingles with other kids (IJ).

5.1.10 Interview K

Interviewee K is a Kenyan national who has been residing in Finland for the past nine years. In addition to her mother tongue, she is also fluent in English, Kiswahili and Finnish. She is married and has two children aged three years and one year, so now, only the eldest of the two attends day-care. She is open about the current day care situations regarding her children and views the current legislation as a progressive step towards better integration of both herself and her family.

Interviewee K continues by suggesting that integration needs time, that is, it is cultivated over a period for it to be being effective and thus "... it might take a long time for the child to adjust to the new environment" (IK). She brings this notion forward because she feels that "children are anxious [at the day-care centre] because they are separated from their caregivers and this poses a challenge to the teachers since the child needs time to adjust" (IK). Therefore, she feels that it solely lies upon the teachers to uphold the integration process because "teachers are meant to make children feel at home and also to help children to overcome difficulties in the new environment" (IK)

Subsequently, she considers the role of teachers as important in supporting the integration process of her children at the day-care centre and that "the teachers communicate well with the parents ...we are well informed on the progress of our children at day care (IK). She goes on to add that the teachers ascribe to learn a great about the children in the day-care centre who may have a different background from the Finnish one:

Most of the teachers are used to children from many different cultural backgrounds. The teachers usually ask about the child's culture because they ask beforehand and do some research on it (IK).

Interviewee K also admits that “it is a good thing that many cultures can be found in the surrounding area” and that is why it is important for “integration to work” (IK). She continues by adding that “for integration to completely work in the society, Finnish natives too need to be on board and learn more about the cultures of the new people coming to Finland and its importance to the society” (IK).

Interviewee K goes on to add that she has “a few Finnish friends who visit her and her family” and makes it a point to involve her family regularly in multicultural events and gatherings too:

Every weekend, there are social gatherings like church service where the child has an opportunity to play with other children from different countries. They get to learn more from other kids, behavioural also (IK).

Interviewee K encourages her children to mingle with other children in her neighbourhood and “encourages them to be with other children from other cultures and takes her children with along when she visits her friends so that they can play with the children they find there” (IK). She adds that in summer, she finds it easier to have her children wander along with her at the beach during summer and go at playgrounds where there are other children because it is easy to be a where other children are” (IK).

Interviewee K has mixed feelings about her children's experiences at the day-care centre. She claims that her children “might be happy to see their parent while they are getting picked up from the day-care but doesn't mean

they want to go home immediately, especially if their day has been good” (IK).

Interviewee K adds that when taking the children to day-care, it depends “the child is asleep, its usually easier than when awake because then they know they are being separated from the parents” (IK). Interviewee K appreciates the effort shown by the teachers in having the children get used to the day-care environment. She attests that without this, “working parents must be away from work if the child is not getting on well in day care (IK).

5.1.11 Interview L

Interviewee L is a married mother of three children, originally emigrated from Kenya. She has a bachelor’s degree in nursing and has been living in Finland for the last seven years. She describes the role of the teacher as pivotal in “creating routine to the child, as at home the child is used to a different routine” as compared to that at the day-care, “to create a family at the day care” (IL).

Interviewee L claims that integration has a way of changing attitudes and instilling cultural norms to immigrants, and in the day-care setting, to “make children feel part of the class environment” (IL). She describes a situation that brought conflicting views with the day-care staff and suggests that one must be careful on what to absorb and what to leave out:

There was this Halloween thing that happens around November and the children were expected to dress in some satanic attire. As a Christian parent, I know what my child needs and it was difficult in the beginning for the day-care staff to swallow my point of view, and the kids do not understand why they cannot take part in Halloween (IL).

Interviewee L describes the day-care centre where her children have attended as a multi-cultural one, and the staff were from different parts of the world. The richness in cultural viewpoints was good in her opinion because it fosters acceptance. She adds that the day-care staff create a safe learning environment by providing up to date information on the going on in the day-care centre.

Interviewee L cites cultural differences which she says have made her adjust the way she handles her affairs at home in line with the needs of her child:

When children are still young, children need a structural timetable, and since the cultures differed such that East African feeding times are different from Finnish ones, so I have had to adjust and maintain the same routine for my child similar to that in the day-care (IL).

Interviewee L continues by claiming that her children “do not have Finnish friends outside the day-care surrounding”, citing language barrier as the reason because her children speak only English” (IL). She however takes the children to children groups organized by the church to mingle with other children. Interviewee L claims to be “very protective with whom her children associate with, because she feels it is always dangerous to talk to strangers”

5.1.12 Interview M

Interviewee M is a day-care teacher in the Espoo region of southern Finland. She has been teaching in three different day-care centres for the past twenty-five years. She explains that her “experience supercedes education” from a higher learning institution at the moment because she “understands what it involves being a day-care teacher and working with children” (IM).

Interviewee M adds that “it is the work of the government to fulfil its obligation by providing services as in the constitution”, meaning that day-care centres have to be enough for the children that need them and personnel, both qualified and unqualified (IM). She explains the importance of children having a safe and relaxing educational environment as the basic step in ensuring learning takes place:

Children must get to know the teacher and other children in the day care, the rooms and playgrounds, rules and day rhythms, and to learn how to express themselves, Finnish language. Some children can be quiet for even a year, just observing what other children are doing, when others can be immediately aggressive. It’s okay that a child is quiet, as we have learnt. We can try to activate the child to speak but we cannot force them to do so (IM).

Interviewee M fronts the importance of cooperation between the teachers and the parents because “parents know more about the children than the teachers” and that the parents “act as a good reference” concerning the children. She explains the importance of the parents accompanying their children to day-care in the beginning because “the child gets moral support and courage to familiarize with the new surroundings together with their parents”, adding that this is a “sure way to make the children at ease and helps the teachers a lot” (IM).

Regarding multiculturalism, interviewee M connotes that she has seen a sharp rise in immigrant children in Espoo and in her classes too. She views this as a positive step as the dynamics of the world are changing, but that does not mean that anyone is different:

We do have many multicultural children here, so it’s a normal thing. The school encourages such because the world is changing. With kids, they don’t see colour or any other of those

things adults consider different like language or cultural habits; for them it's either you want to join in playing or not (IM).

Interviewee M cites the differences in cultural habits, but notes that “even in Finnish families, there exists a wide range and differences in habits” hence the need to explain why “acceptance and tolerance” are important in each environment, regardless of the origins “because there is no right or wrong culture”:

The child needs to feel, think and know that they are safe here in the day care centre; it is important for people to understand that although we look, dress, smell differently, we are all the same (IM).

Interviewee M notes the downside of the not having enough personnel at the day-care centres as a detriment to learning and cites “lack of trust as a sore” in having cooperation with the parents because it hugely affects the learning process. She cites “openness and professionalism as an important in building bridges” with the parents of the children because in “difficult situations such as bullying, cooperation is vital in solving the problem” (IM). In the event of an unpleasant even such as fighting, interviewee M explains that as teachers, they must immediately discuss the situation with the children involved:

We show them pictures about fighting and why aggressive tendencies are not allowed; personnel must be present always to interpret why such is not allowed. We then listen to what the children have to say and tell the child immediately when there is a wrong done. Then we talk to parents when they come to pick their children from day care/or call them when its serious. We ask the parents also to talk to their children about the same issue at home (IM).

Interviewee M adds that she is happy with her teaching modules and the additional learning seminars the city of Espoo provides for them. She notes that all the immigrant children that she has taught are “eager to learn Finnish” and considers this a “major step towards integration and positive immigration” (IM).

5.1.13 Interview N

Interviewee N is a day-care teacher in the Espoo region of southern Finland. She holds a bachelor’s degree in social services which entitles her also to work as a kindergarten teacher and she has been working for the last fifteen years in two separate day-care centres. She commends the local government and Finland Ministry of Education initiatives and regular supports when it comes to issues pertaining to children’s welfare by “granting aid and resources in underdeveloped spheres” (IN). She explains that now, the youngest child at the day care is two and half and the oldest ones are 6 years old; while they have a total of eighteen children, fourteen from Finnish parents and four from immigrant parents” (IN).

Interviewee N cites shyness and fear of ‘breaking the ice’ amongst children when they are new at the day-care. She adds that the backgrounds of children do not matter to anyone of the children present because “children are only interested in playing, so for them their biggest challenge is to find courage to start associating with one another and make new friends, and that’s where we as teachers come in”:

We mix the kids so the other the good friends are not always playing together and that they are different kinds of groupings that when if we are playing a game or something similar so that the children are brought together by the games. They need to bond, and we encourage this by doing things together. This is a very functional way of doing it and helping the children

associate with one another and bring harmony into the day-care centre (IN).

She continues by adding that “children do not see colour or ethnic or social backgrounds” because children minds are “not yet able to figure out such complex things” (IN). Because of this, they easily break the barriers of non-communication and “association is faster as compared to adults”:

Children are usually quite open to new ideas and suggestions, and if they have a common language, it is another advantage because playing becomes easier. Some of the children that we have had here spoke very little Finnish, but of course spoke English or at least understood it. Being a multilingual teacher is an advantage, but also understanding what a child needs to feel comfortable is a plus (IN).

Additionally, interviewee N views the children’s activities to break cultural barriers. She acknowledges that children unknowingly break the cultural barriers that are essential in building integrative atmospheres:

Of course, it is the atmosphere of the kindergarten that plays a big role ... if there is a new child in the day-care centre, we have to address the fact he needs to be comfortable on not feel different from the other older children. we are all different, but we can still play together and have fun and be friends (IN).

Interviewee N comments further by saying that encouraging acceptance of other means of communication is important in fostering integration. By this, children learn at an early age to accept variety and accept other children’s backgrounds:

Some children might be from totally different backgrounds so some of them are using another language other than Finnish. For example, if the immigrant child can communicate in English, we encourage them to use this language in interacting with other

children and the same for native Finnish children can answer in English. It's part of the teaching process where we encourage use of other means of communication and foster variety in the day-care setting (IN).

Interviewee N describes a situation where conflicts arose in view of integration. She recalls a situation where a certain child's parents refused to allow her child to sing or get involved in singing games at the day-care centre. She claims that if the families or parents "are not open to the Finnish culture then it's more challenging to the teachers to do their work and difficult to know those things if the parents are not willing to be open about it" (IN). She is, however, positive because she says that this was a random incident and she has never encountered it again, though she has heard from her colleagues of similar incidences. She is satisfied with many immigrant parents for their support their work by being open about their cultures and what they expect from the day-care staff:

Some parents are very willing, and they speak to us about their way of doing things, so then it's easy as a teacher to follow these wishes how the parents want their children to be taken care of. If you know these things, then it's easier to also talk to the other kids and help the other kids to understand that the other children's cultures and norms (IN).

Interviewee N considers integration efforts as "an important leap towards multiculturalism in Finland" and has a positive outlook on the laws put in place to support it, as "Espoo municipality has had a good progress in the past few years about to immigration" (IN). She expresses satisfaction in working with children from different backgrounds because "it brings new methods of teaching because day-care teachers have to do more research regarding the different cultures in the day-care environment" (IN). To assist immigrant children in fastening their integration process through the Finnish day-care centres, interviewee N suggests the teachers need more training on

a regular basis and encouragement of partnerships with the parents of immigrant children to foster cooperation:

I think it would help if that there would be more training for the teachers and partnership with the parents, because the parents are the experts of their children and as daycare staff we need to respect that this how they want their child to be raised. Consequently, the education plan that we do it for the kids should be done in good cooperation with the parents, so I think some more training in this field for the staff would then benefit more that they would integrate faster (IN).

Interviewee N cites language as a barrier to effective communication between day-care staff and the parents of immigrant children, claiming that “if there’s no common language that the parents and the staff understand then there is need for a translator” (IN). She continues by suggesting that although translators are used in occasions where language becomes a barrier to communication, the translator cannot, however, “translate emotions” and some aspect of communication will be lost in this circumstance.

Interviewee N believes that the parents are the biggest influencers of their children because “the kids learn a great deal from their parents, so if the parent is saying something or act somehow ... usually the child acts the same way or repeats the same words” (IN). She thus recommends and wishes that parents be careful on the way they behave and communicate around their children:

The way parents react to people from other cultures, their speech or actions play a big role because even with the best attempts from the kindergarten staff to take everybody into consideration, if the parents at home says nasty things about others, then that is usually how the child reacts towards the other kids in the day-care (IN).

Interviewee N claims that parents of children attending day-care should be very careful on the way they talk and behave in front of their children because “the children learn aggression and bullying tactics mostly from home or surrounding environment” (IN). She explains that bullying, fighting or any acts of aggression are not tolerated at the day-care, and when they occur, these must be immediately discussed with the parents of the children involved:

A private talk with the children is usually the best way to deal with that situation then having everybody who was involved to talk about the situation, what happened and why, and how one would feel if this was done to them and so on. In this way, the children learn to solve problems together and this also fosters togetherness. Then possibly to have the discussion with the whole group even to the ones that weren't involved and later with their parents (IN).

She continues by saying that “if the child is a danger to the other kids, by being aggressive and bullyish”, the need to discuss the issue with the parents and a professional is essential to get a solution to what the child is going through “because such behaviour is not normal” (IN).

I think it's always important to talk with the parents that this is what has happened so that the parents can also talk to the child at home and then we can make a plan together that this is how we will work to prevent this kind of thing from happening in the future and then it's important to give the child the time to adjust (IN).

As a member of the teaching staff, interviewee N explains that when the aggression from a child seems unending, there is need to involve other professionals and parents to assist the child or children:

If the child is a danger to the other kids, and that the aggression is constant whilst the methods that we have used are not working, then that might be something to discuss with other professionals, but I think it's always important to talk with the parents first. The parents can also talk to the child at home and then we can plan together that this is how we will work to prevent this kind of thing from happening in the future and then it's important to give the child the time to adjust to the new rules that because they are growing up. But if this doesn't work, we must seek help from psychologists and school curators (IN).

Interviewee N adds that equality is paramount to having a great atmosphere at the day-care centre. She explains that they have regular discussions with her peers regarding the on goings in their classes, and how to solve common issues that arise regarding the children. She acknowledges the importance of events arranged for the parents, which “opens up doors for interaction among parents, their children and the day-care staff and this gives all parties a sense of belonging, integration and reduction of prejudices”, and creates a channel for future interaction:

From my like teacher's point of view, that it's to be open towards working with parents from different cultures and that's when after you have created that relationship with these parents and that you have opened a channel to interact and ask all the questions to get clarity from parents and their children (IN).

She continues by adding that “children learn from their surroundings” and that is why the day-care staff try as much as to have many events around the children and invite the parents “so that children learn the importance of togetherness” and show that “by looking, dressing or acting in a certain way is not a bad thing” (IN). As a teacher, she admits that bullying has been a common worry with children:

As a teacher you need to have open eyes for those situations that if you hear the kids laughing that ooh he looks funny or stuff like

so that its addressed right away so that the child makes that connection in their minds that okay he just looks a little bit different and there is nothing wrong with that and that they should not if they see a different looking person that they should not start laughing that okay he looks different (IN).

5.2 Cross Comparison: Thematic Analysis

The main themes and concepts that arose during the interviewing process are described below. The idea behind these themes is to highlight the main suggestions and topics that interviewees deemed to be important in their experiences as parents of immigrant children in day-care facilities in Finland.

5.2.1 Bilingualism and Culture

Bilingualism refers to the fluency in and use of two languages (Oxford Dictionary, 2018). On cultural dimension, bilingualism fosters multicultural acceptance in each society since culture and language are almost inseparable (Baker, 2011). In the interviews conducted, several the participants noted the importance of bilingualism in the wake of having the children integrate (Portes & Rumbaut, 2011). Interviewee N, a day-care teacher in Espoo, suggests that being multilingual is an added advantage while teaching children from different backgrounds:

Some of the children that we have had here spoke very little Finnish, but of course spoke English or at least understood it. Being a multilingual teacher is an advantage (IN).

Also, interviewee K explains that she encourages her children to mingle with other children in her neighbourhood and “encourages them to be with other children from other cultures and takes her children with along when she visits her friends so that they can play with the children they find there” (IK). Interviewee K insists that she does encourage bilingualism as a form of integration because her own mother tongue is important for the children, same as the host country’s language. She stresses that she does not view integration in Finland as a language graveyard, whereby one is forced to forget their native language for the host country’s language (Shin, 2018).

5.2.2 Cultural Differences

Culture is a dynamic that changes with time and place. For many immigrants, getting used to a new culture might be a hurdle in the beginning as it brings its own challenges. Interviewee H notes that she had noticed she was being left behind by the cultural changes when her child started to attend day-care, and in some instances, conflicts arose. She explains that in her own culture, “children have a duty to listen to what the parents decide on their behalf but in the Finnish culture parents and children decide together and reach a compromise, which then means that the children have a chance to express their views and feelings freely”:

To me, I felt as if the children had started to rebel at such a tender age, and I had begun to blame the day-care teachers for this (IH).

Interviewee F expresses dissatisfaction with the current state where they “are living in such a world where integration is also difficult for with other immigrants”, adding that “at the day-care, her child has a biracial friend” but no Finnish friends outside the day-care surrounding (IF). She faults the lack

of cooperation due to lack of cooperation different ethnic groups in the greater Helsinki region:

We need to start it with ourselves so that we create an East African community that serves and strengthens the culture of East Africa (IF).

5.2.3 Cooperation between Teachers and Parents

Day-care teachers and parents of immigrant children alike stress the need for better communication and cooperation to help the immigrant children integrate in the new surroundings. Interviewee M stresses the point of regular communication as a backbone for efficient teaching because “parents know more about the children than the teachers” and that the parents “act as a good reference” concerning the children” (IM). As a teacher, interviewee M ascribes to the fact that “the child gets moral support and courage to familiarize with the new surroundings together with their parents” which she considers as a “sure way to make the children at ease and helps the teachers a lot” (IM).

As parents of immigrant children, interviewee A and interviewee K stress the importance of regular communication with day-care teachers:

Teachers invite us to talk when they realize there is a problem with my children. I appreciate this because it shows that they are ready to help the children get along with the day-care system (IE).

The teachers communicate well with the parents ...we are well informed on the progress of our children at day care. The teachers usually ask about the child’s culture because they ask beforehand and do some research on it (IK).

However, interviewee D claims that communication is a two-way street, hence the need for the teachers at the day-care centres to be eager in learning

other cultures and being interested in teaching the same to enhance diversity in the learning environment:

The teachers must be active with learning other cultures. It's essential for all parties for integration to work, but patience from both sides is paramount for integration to work (ID).

Interviewee G explains that the day-care teachers keep her “well informed” about the ongoing at the day-care concerning her child. She “appreciates the feedback” she gets from the teachers and considers the collaboration an “important step in fostering growth and development” of her son” (IG). The same point is repeated by interviewee L, who claims that “cooperation with teachers at the day-care is essential since her children spend most of their time there” (IL).

Interviewee E claims that she supports the teaching methodologies at the day-care centre though she has not encountered any cultural conflict with the day-care teachers “but when something does not feel right with the culture, she must discuss the same with the teachers and clear the air” (IE). She suggests this as a subtle way of communication whereby the need to address conflict immediately is necessary because it enables trust and transparency between the parents and the day-care staff (LeBaron, 2003: 115).

5.2.4 Integration

Integration has been an important policy in the Finnish legislation. It is loosely based on the European Union's initiatives that aspire to have human rights and borderless states within the bloc (Psychogiopoulou, 2008). As such, interviewee J understands the need to be positive and open minded

about it because she must think about the future of her children in addition to hers. She accepts the fact that she is in a foreign land and must work her part to fit in:

I support it by taking her to the playground where there are different immigrants, Spanish, Roma people, Russians etc. (IJ).

Interviewee C considers the fact that although he is in a foreign country, his duty is to put his children's affairs as a priority and "encourage the child to be active because as a parent, one must remember that their role is to better the child's future, no matter the background or hardships that have been there before" (IC).

As a teacher, interviewee N suggests that children are easily integrated into new environments because "children do not see colour or ethnic or social backgrounds" because children minds are "not yet able to figure out such complex things", therefore they easily break the barriers of non-communication and "association is faster as compared to adults" (IN).

Integrating the children in the day-care systems means that the children have a stability in the new environment (Dryden-Peterson, 2016). Interviewee N adds that "children are usually quite open to new ideas and suggestions, and if they have a common language, it is another advantage because playing becomes easier" (IN). Interviewee F concurs with the idea that the children need to be integrated into the Finnish society at an early age:

They've [day-care teachers] done it quite right. The teachers should have room for adjustment because the children need some time to cope with the change. Children must synchronize these cultures and it's not easy in the beginning (IF).

Interviewee K continues by suggesting that integration needs time, that is, it is cultivated over a period for it to be being effective and thus "... it might take a long time for the child to adjust to the new environment" (IK).

6 CONCLUSION

The thesis work was set to find out the experiences of parents of East African immigrant children in the day-care setting in Finland, and to explore their perceptions in regard to their lives in Finland. Therefore, to achieve this, a qualitative research was done. The important topics regarding immigration, integration and culture were examined. Thirteen semi structured interviews were conducted.

Eleven of these were conducted by interviewing parents of East African immigrant children while the rest were conducted on two day-care teachers in the Greater Helsinki region. Both holistic and thematic methods of analysis were involved to decipher the main ideas from the interviews. All interviewees had a basic command of English and hence all the interviews were done in English.

From the findings, all the interviewees viewed integration as a positive step to inclusion in Finland. The interviewees also acknowledged the importance of constant communication between the teachers and the parents of immigrant children to foster cooperation and trust. Several interviewees viewed cultural differences as a setback to integration since in some instances, their children easily learn new ways while the parents are rigidly stuck to their home country's cultures. All the interviewees agree that children learn to do things together when they are playing and stress the need to have the children together even after day-care.

The current study focused on the experiences of parents of East African immigrant children and day-care teachers. The number conducted was thirteen, and due to the narrative nature and qualitative character, relevant findings were reached. However, in order to gain more information and findings, a larger sample for further research should be conducted, preferably from children of East African origin, their parents and former

day-care teachers. The research scope could also be expanded to include other municipalities to get a balanced scope from other areas around Finland.

As the results from the research presented, variations exist in the backgrounds of the parents of immigrant children from the host country, but the social constructs in the host country shape up the children's attitudes and behaviours because they learn the same at the day-care centres. Cultural conflicts exist since two different sets of cultures come together, but the processes installed for integration in Finland work to support both cultures and provide alternatives for both the parents from of East Africa and their children.

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APPENDIX

Interview Questions for Parents of East African Immigrant Children

My name is a Stephen Onginjo, a master's degree Student at the university of Vaasa. I am carrying out a study to determine the experiences and challenges of integration of East African immigrant children in the Finnish day-cares. The study is being carried out independently, anonymous and only to be utilized for research purposes only. The objective of the study is to identify the experiences and challenges faced by East African immigrant children in the integration into Finnish day-cares by interviewing their parents and day-care teachers.

General definition and effect of culture on integration

What do you understand by the term integration?

How does immigrant culture affect integration?

Role of the teachers at day-cares in the integration process

What is the role of the teachers at the day-cares on integration?

How do the teachers at the learning institutions assist the children in the day-cares?

What the challenges do the children undergo when they get into the day-cares?

Role of the immigrant parents in the integration process

What challenges do you as parents face in assisting the child in integration?

How does the child react when he or she is being taken to the day-care?

How does the child react when he or she being picked at the day-care by you as a parent?

Does your child have any other friends at home, for example, Finnish friends?

Does your child can mingle with other children and play when he or she is free?

Do you encourage integration of the child with other multi-cultural children?

Do you take the child to communal playgrounds outdoors where the child would integrate with other children from other backgrounds?

Does your child visit other children at home, for example, family friends and vice versa?

How do you support integration processes on your child inside and outside your home?

How do you as a parent together with the teacher collaborate on assisting the child in integration?