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Culturally Sensitive Teaching in Finland's Basic Education: A Comparative Study of the 'Diversity Pedagogy' Model

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ABSTRACT:

The purpose of this thesis is to compare the practice of teachers in the Finnish classroom with a model of culturally sensitive teaching. By this comparison, the research examines the influence of culture in the teaching-learning process: how the cultural background of every student and every instructor cannot be detached from this everyday process.

Several researchers have studied the power of culture in education, and today the rising of a multicultural classroom is inevitable. According to a culturally sensitive teaching, the role of the educator is to be aware and try to identify cultural situations, and to create an equal environment of learning for every student. The need for a special teaching approach regarding culturally diverse students is the argument for this research. The performance of these students is conditioned by the equal accessibility they have to instruction. The focus of this research was Basic Education, and teachers working with immigrant students were approached. The method of analysis was based on the 'Diversity Pedagogy' model, proposed by educator Rosa Hernández Sheets. This model helped to approach different dimensions of instruction in the classroom, since it covered important areas in the development of the students.

The study aims to state the concepts of multicultural teaching and the adversities that minority students experience. The findings and conclusions were supportive of the need of specialized attention for those students who differ from the mainstream culture. Finnish education considers the presence of culturally diverse students in their classrooms and offers special education. However, this type of special instruction was perceived specifically in the classrooms teaching only immigrant children and it faded in the regular classes when those immigrant children were integrated with the Finnish pupils.

KEYWORDS: Diversity, Basic Education, Teaching-Learning, Culture, Immigrants

1. INTRODUCTION

The behavior of an individual is influenced by culture. This determines his/her personality and it is this cultural behavior and its diversity which has received great attention in the teaching-learning process in the past years. These varieties of cultural behavior affect the classroom environment in many ways: the academic's or the student's[1] attitudes could lead to contradictory readings. Lately, it is common to come across people that are different from us, physically and culturally. Representations of diverse cultures are portrayed in every sector of society and this does not exclude education. Classrooms have become a small scale of human relations in society where power relationships are exercised and the struggle to survive and succeed is latent.

The pursuit of equal opportunity has led to the quest for multicultural education. The search of educational systems to embrace a diverse world contradicts itself with the quest for a global educational system made to fit every student regardless of their location or cultural specificities. The supposition of Meyer's "World Culture Theory", which argues that modern nation-states will merge into a single global model of schooling as a consequence of a more general cultural model that also includes governments, health systems and different organizations (Meyer qtd. in Anderson-Levitt 2003: 2), is relevant when analyzing educational reforms applied around the world. However, this theory becomes less suitable when those reforms are exposed to specific settings in real classrooms and the adaptation of these reforms becomes ineffective for certain cultures.

The aim of this thesis is to state the importance of culture as the main component for achieving an effective education, and the awareness of educators[2] to acknowledge this and apply useful methods while teaching. Among the definitions of culture, Triandis in his *Culture and Social Behavior* (1994) gives a definition that is helpful for this research: he mentions that "One useful way to think about culture is to think of *unstated assumptions*, standard operating procedures, ways of doing things that have been

[1] This term is used in this thesis to refer specifically to school pupils.
[2] This term is used in this thesis to refer specifically to teachers.

internalized to such an extent that people do not argue about them" (1994: 16). This definition can be applied when all the participants involved belong to the same culture, the "mainstream culture". When people possess customs and beliefs that differ from the mainstream ones the opposite happens: their actions are questioned and their procedures do not match those unstated assumptions.

Interaction between the learner and the educator has a dual influence: their performance is affected by each other. From the position of the academic, it is partially guided by educational systems influenced by culture, nationalism, the political environment of the place, as well as his/her own culture, namely perceptions, prejudices and bias. Cultural values are implicit all around, in orders, textbooks or assignments reinforcing a national identity that differs from the identity of those culturally diverse students. From those students' perspectives, to assimilate and try to understand a new set of programming creates difficulties to achieve the goals commonly desired by the educational entity. They are forced to adopt specific behavior in contradiction to their beliefs in order to succeed.

The purpose of this investigation is to analyze the role of culture in the Finnish classroom by comparing teaching practices in basic education with a model proposed for culturally sensitive teaching. At the same time, this research will underline the importance of the development of a culturally safe classroom to be able to obtain a satisfactory learning from culturally diverse pupils. Thus, my hypothesis is that the learning process of culturally diverse children in Finnish basic education is influenced by culture and therefore culturally sensitive teaching needs to be applied in order to guarantee an effective education.

The relevance of this study can be appreciated by starting with the effort of government entities to integrate modern nation-states, and their attention to the increasing number of immigrants and their adaptation to the host society. One of these institutions is the Ministry of Education in countries receiving immigrants. Governments adapt policies to include minority students, giving them the right of education. However, are they obtaining the same level of education as the students belonging to the mainstream

culture? There is a gap between the performance of minority and mainstream students. In Johnston & Viadero's (2000) publication, researchers predicted the performance, how much money students in the United States will earn as adults, and other statistics, on the basis of race and ethnic background. These predictions were based on the assumption that these minority students would be having the lowest achievements.

Educators have an important and decisive task. They will be the ones making the difference in the early ages of these students. It is not an easy one. This task requires a lot of time, effort and dedication. The role of teachers is to transmit the knowledge and promote critical thinking in their learners, to assure that the goal is accomplished and provide equal opportunity in practice. Therefore, besides pedagogical skill, it is necessary to be sensitive to cultural differences and aware of different practices among the students. As Delpit (2006) describes it, people interpret behaviors through cultural lenses that work unconsciously, and in order to learn how to interpret behaviors across cultures it is necessary to consciously make those lenses apparent (2006: 151).

This research will be constructed under the aim of multicultural education, which is defined by Geneva Gay, a leading authority in this area, as an attempt to bring close together educational processes and human characteristics with effective pedagogical practices (1998: 9). Direct interest from the teacher is necessary and support from educational authorities is needed. The motivation for this study comes from the concern of inevitable encounters with different cultures, and from the cultural awareness that every person who claims to be part of a changing world has to possess to bring equality and benefit to society. The future and a tolerant civilization rely on today's children. Their achievements and benevolence depend in a large extent on the quality of education they receive. Therefore is a challenge for educators, as it has always been, to prepare pupils with useful and contemporary tools for their development. A culturally safe classroom is necessary to reach these goals and the preparation of the teachers is essential to create this environment. A humane education should be sought along with knowledge and academic quality. Delpit (2006: xix) in her introduction cites a letter from Haim Ginott's work that summarizes this claim. This letter is given by a principal to his teachers at the beginning of the school year:

> Dear Teacher:
> I am the survivor of a concentration camp. My eyes saw what no person should witness:
>
> Gas chambers built by learned engineers.
> Children poisoned by educated physicians.
> Infants killed by trained nurses.
> Women and babies shot and burned by high school and college graduates.
>
> So I am suspicious of education. My request is: Help your students become human. Your efforts must never produce learned monsters, skilled psychopaths, educated Eichmanns. Reading, writing and arithmetic are important only if they were to make our children more humane.

The questions approached by this investigation are the following: How should one teach different cultures? Are educational systems and teaching protocols influenced by cultural values? How do these educational models affect the achievement in minority students? What are the measures an educator has to adopt in order to bring equality and avoid conflict? What are the aims of a global education: are they to unify or segregate? What is the educators' perception of multicultural education? Is teacher education considering issues of diversity in the classrooms? How much distinctiveness in teaching is necessary when trying to accomplish a collective goal?

The material that will be used in the theoretical part of this thesis will comprise literature on minority students, diversity in the classroom, pedagogy, teacher education, educational systems and their global influence, inclusive classrooms, and research developed on the field of multicultural education. The guidance and main authority that I will be following is educator Rosa Hernández Sheets and her *Diversity Pedagogy: Examining the Role of Culture in the Teaching-Learning Process* (2005). Sheets is a PhD associate professor at Texas Tech University. Her 30 years of teaching experience with diverse students from pre-school to high school, and her numerous publications in the areas of multicultural education created the grounds for her new proposal.

Her latest work will be taken as model of culturally sensitive teaching in the analysis of this research. Considering that it covers in one model the theories of various authorities in the field, and specifically states the pedagogical behaviors needed in educators, as well as the main areas to be considered when working with diverse students. Her publication contemplates eight dimensions when teaching in a multicultural setting. In these dimensions there are specific teacher pedagogical behaviors that lead to specific student cultural displays. Meaning that, when teachers follow specific actions in the classroom they can produce a cultural response from the pupils, and together, they can create a combined set of new knowledge that help diverse pupils with their performance. In other words, it is an association of culture and cognition in order to facilitate the teaching-learning process linked to culturally diverse children.

Sheets (2006) definition of students' cultural displays is "Observable manifestations of the norms, values, and competences children learn in their homes and communities that provide valuable insights to who they are, how they act, and what they know." (2006: 216). While she defines the teachers' pedagogical behavior as "The classroom actions and attitudes teachers express related to the act of teaching." (Sheets 2006: 216). These eight dimensions will be the base for the comparative analysis in this thesis. They cover the following areas, diversity, identity, social interactions, a culturally safe context, language, a culturally inclusive content, instruction, and assessment.

The theoretical section will be supported by scholars such as Lisa Delpit, director of the Center for Urban Education and Innovation at Florida International University. Delpit's areas of research include: culturally relevant approaches to educate students, and cross-cultural communication. Geneva Gay, professor at the University of Washington, specializing in multicultural education, minorities and classroom instruction. Jim Cummings, professor at the University of Toronto, his main contributions in education are in the areas of language development, race and working with different cultures in a classroom setting. Moreover, a research conducted by several anthropologists on educational policy and reform across the world edited by Kathryn Anderson-Levitt in their collection *Local Meanings, Global Schooling: Anthropology and World Culture Theory* (2003) will be used in the second part of the theory section. This publication

argues the idea of adoption of a single model of schooling around the world, and will be helpful when defining educational models and teacher preparation.

Throughout the research on multicultural education, there are always case studies applied to the theory discussed. A combination of these examples will give this work a better understanding. I am planning on supporting the theoretical part with their work, gathering their experiences on the topic as examples. These experiences involve immigrants and cultural minorities, and their confrontation with the school system and a new set of values.

The composition of this study will comprise five chapters. Chapter one will be the Introduction. Here I present a brief induction to the research, describing what the subject of the thesis is and defining some of the concepts I will be using in the thesis. The relevance of the topic, the motivation, and the personal interest behind the work have been briefly mentioned earlier, along with the hypothesis guiding the overall investigation. An overview of the material primarily used and the main authorities followed through the theoretical background are given, and a description of the chapters planned.

In the second chapter, “Culturally Diverse Students and Education: The Power of Culture”, the theory on multicultural education, diversity in schools and minority students will be discussed. A crisis of identity is experienced by immigrant students, and it has been studied by several scholars. In this section I will include as a literary illustration the autobiography *Hunger of Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez* (1982), often required reading in some colleges in the US. Richard Rodriguez is the son of Mexican immigrants in the United States and he describes issues of schooling as a minority student, his experiences as a child and his Mexican identity transformed by education. When approaching diverse pupils in education, language has a great influence as part of their culture. Normally, these minority students are conducted in a second language that creates a new challenge to overcome and to adapt to. As an essential characteristic along with the rest of the arguments discussed before I will analyze how the price of education is in most cases the loss of the first language;

Rodriguez´ book also addresses this issue. Equality during the teaching-learning process is sought by multicultural education. However, these minority students are segregated, bias and prejudices are difficult to dismiss, and therefore, the performance of these students is at risk. Finally some approaches to learning and culture will be mentioned.

Chapter three, “Cultural Awareness in Education: The Power of Teaching” will focus on inclusive education, the role of the educator and his/her preparation. Along with multicultural classroom theories, education has been embracing global status, applying systems that were successful once in a setting that is different from the original, and because of the cultural context these reforms are not accomplishing the result desired. A field of anthropological studies approaches the classroom as a social system, being dynamic as culture. How instruction has been transformed along with social processes will be one of the focuses, as well as the path followed by different educational systems and policies. Furthermore, an overview of the Finnish educational system and of teacher education in Finland will be central to support the practical part of the research. This research was conducted in Finland, as a model for educational system, due to the accomplishments in the latest evaluations of the Program for International Assessment. Lastly, the cultural awareness fundamental to the teaching process will complement this theory.

The practical part will be covered by chapter four, where teachers from basic education in Vaasa, Finland, were interviewed on their perceptions of multicultural education, cultural confrontation, quality standards, inclusive education and their experience with culturally diverse children. These interviews had structured questions; however, they were open to any other related topic that might appear during the discussions. The results of these interviews were analyzed and treated as qualitative research; one of the most commonly used methods in social studies. As an introduction to the analysis, Sheets’ dimensions of *Diversity Pedagogy* (2005) were summarized since they structured the outline for the research questions. This method will lead to the inquiry of the investigation, guiding discussion on the extent of the influence of culture in the teaching process and the performance of the students involved.

The last chapter sums up the content of the investigation, the results of the research and the most important findings. A recapitulation of the objectives stated, their fulfillment and relevance are part of the conclusions. In addition, recommendations are suggested.

The limitations and challenges of the study are that, due to lack of fluency in the Finnish language, observational research in the classrooms cannot be performed as a secondary support of the teachers' interviews to determine the causes and resolution of conflict and pedagogical approaches that are used for these students. Moreover, a dialogue with the students as a third supporting analysis cannot be implemented for the same reason. Further studies could focus on these angles, and bring other suggestions to support this notion in a different manner. Nevertheless, qualitative research on the teachers' perspective will fulfill the aims of the study. My background as a researcher could have a double-sided effect. I was born in Sonora, Mexico. I am myself a foreigner to Finnish culture, so this could be positive as it is objective to the research. However, some signs could be missing from the analysis because of this unfamiliarity. On the other hand, I have had the opportunity to live, study and work in other cultures like the United States and Canada before coming to Finland. While in Mexico, working for the international office at an educative institution gave me the experience to help foreign students with the transition into my country. These are just some remarks which I consider relevant.

Even when multicultural education has been promoted, a full implementation of cultural awareness is still missing among students, professors and educational planners. In some societies, the idea of internationalization exists and is a permanent concern in the curricula. Despite this, life in the classroom does not consider its pluralism. The question is not whether these students want to adapt or not to their surroundings. Instead, it questions whether there is acceptance and understanding of the cultural implications affecting their performance.

The power of culture in most circumstances defines the settings that people, in this case the students, feel comfortable in; differences and strangeness equal disturbance and inquietude. The consciousness of being part of a minority can lead to unconscious results not favorable in some experiences. In the following chapter the conditions

affecting these culturally diverse students are presented. There are severe consequences to be paid if lack of correct guidance persists. Identity, self confidence, performance in school and losing of the first language could be at risk. Hence, it is important for the educator to work together with the organizations involved in the process to reach the aims of multicultural education.

2. CULTURALLY DIVERSE STUDENTS AND EDUCATION: THE POWER OF CULTURE

2.1 Diversity and Minority Students

In the present day, encountering diversity in society has become familiar. Originally, the term focused only in racial and ethnic diversity. However, it developed to include gender, age, religion, language, economic groups, ability and sexual orientation. This inclusion has given complexity to the essence of the term due to diversity even within these groups (Grant & Ladson-Billings 1997: 94). In education the term diversity covers all these divisions. Abilities are related to cognitive styles and all of them are met in the classroom. On a constructive approach of the term, diversity, when related to individuals, generates opportunity. This opportunity can at the same time forge either positive or negative results (Johnson & Johnson 1998b: 168). In schools, positive results do not derive just by placing diverse people together: the opposite outcome such as low achievement, rejection to new information, egocentrism, hostility, stereotyping and racism can arise from diversity. What determines the nature of the outcome is the way the structure of social interdependence is managed in the classroom, in other words, how the learning relationships are structured. The greater the diversity among students and faculty, the greater the positive interdependence would be. (Johnson & Johnson 1998a: 68.)

Among individuals culture guides behavior; this means that when there is people from several cultures placed together -e.g. in a classroom- their behavior may be different. These differences in behavior can create a tense atmosphere in this surrounding. The existence of ‘barriers in communication’, as Delpit calls them, are portrayed when people faced the simplest tasks, for example: how long to speak, the length of pauses between turns. Therefore, even timing and speech distribution are necessary aspects to consider when in a diverse environment (Delpit 2006: 146). This is where multicultural education takes place, not based only on communication barriers, but considering also acceptance, equity and tolerance. The term *multicultural* can be defined in different ways. First, it considers many cultures and second, denotes opportunities for people

(Teräs 2007: 28). According to James Banks (1995: 391), the concepts of multiculturalism and multicultural education need to be clarified and separated. He claims that multiculturalism is used by critics of diversity to describe norms they oppose and consider contradictory in a universal society. On the other hand, he claims that, as a concept, multicultural education

> […] maintains that all students should have equal opportunities to learn regardless of the racial, ethnic, social-class, or gender group to which they belong […] [it] is an educational reform movement that tries to reform schools in ways that will give all students an equal opportunity to learn. It describes teaching strategies that empower all students and give them voice. (Banks 1995: 391)

Furthermore, multicultural education embraces the terms of equity, equality and human dignity. Drawing attention to the fact that equal access does not necessarily mean fairness, it approaches social issues that affect diversity, in this case minorities (Grant & Ladson-Billings 1997: 171–172). Charles Taylor's argument about the acknowledgment of diversity claims that identity is formed through recognition, and that harm and oppression can be caused by the lack of it. Referring to minorities, he proposes recognition with separation. In this way multicultural demand is supported, and respect is given to sub-cultures by creating equality, admitting the difference. (1994: 25–36.) It is this multicultural education that contemplates the recognition, equal access, equity and diversity that is necessary to accomplish an improved performance in diverse schools. The opportunity of education is given to these students, yet the means to take advantage of this education are still in conflict.

Minority students are at the disposal of policy makers who belong to the dominant culture, the one in power dictating norms and protocols. The term 'minority' can be compared to 'diversity': they do not necessarily refer only to race, but as the Minority Rights Group International (2007) defines it, minorities are non-dominant ethnic, religious and linguistic communities, indigenous peoples, migrants and refugees who may face discrimination and abuses to their rights. In the same way, Megarry, Nisbet and Hoyle (1985) approach 'minority' not regarding numbers but from the position of being inferior and disadvantaged by language and cultural differences for not possessing

the customs from the dominant group and consequently, having less power and status in society (qtd in De Lacey & Fielding 1985: 274–275).

When these minority pupils enter the classroom the relationships of power in society are duplicated on the same scale. A clash of two worlds is experienced: the ideology brought from home and the one expected in school mismatch concepts and principles. This is evident for the minority students and needs to capture the attention of the educator. When cultures from home and school are different, the teacher can misread students' abilities and intentions, moreover, the educator can use instruction styles that are strange to the home culture, resulting in this clash of cultures (Delpit 2006: 167). Not just the respect and recognition that Taylor claims is necessary in educators, knowledge about other cultures is the beginning of their work. Lahdenperä claims that immigrant students are associated with administrative and pedagogical problems in the school setting (1998: 82). These negative connotations are apparent in today's schools and they are the first barrier to the success of multicultural education.

Jim Cummins claims that, to analyze relationships between the teacher and the culturally diverse students, it is necessary to take a look at the relationships between the dominant and subordinated communities in society, how these shape school and the way the educator defines his/her role (2000: 40). Lisa Delpit states that those groups with less power have been silenced. In her term 'Culture of Power' she affirms that power is executed in the classroom. There are rules to be part of this power: these rules of power are a reflection of the rules of the culture that has power. As a foreigner, being told about these rules makes acquiring power easier; finally, those with power are the least aware of its existence and those with less power are the most aware of it. (2006: 21–26.) Hence, to define the rules of those in power, meaning mainstream culture, and present them as clearly as possible, and for the educator to be aware of his/her position, will help culturally diverse students in their performance. The research by Patricia Gándara on low income Mexican-American students who obtained a Doctoral Degree from a well-known American university, concluded that these students accomplished their success because they learned the codes of power while still valuing their home culture (Moya 2002: 155). While success is possible, there are many obstacles to overcome

besides the individual effort of students that differ culturally from the majority. These obstacles start as soon as the individual is exposed to the culture in power.

One example of power relationships is when western Thrace became part of Greece in 1920. The Turkish-speaking became Greek citizens. At that time the treaty of Lausanne was signed and is the one that still rules the education of Muslim minorities there; giving them separate education, half in Greek and half in Turkish. It is a complex situation: Turkish textbooks are provided by the government but they need to be authorized by the Greek government, who rejects them. The same thing happens with the Greek textbooks, which are burned by the Turkish communities. Moreover, many of the Greek teachers are hostile to the culture, feeling that they are "teaching the enemy". These children are "caught in the crossfire of historical antagonism" and as a consequence the levels of literacy in both languages are relatively low, as are the expectations from them. (Cummins 2000: 8–11.) The conflict and opposition experienced in society, relationships of power and hostility, have influenced school policies and ways of teaching, as proved by this case.

Adapting for minorities can be experienced as acculturation or assimilation. The former occurs when the student acquires some of the norms, values and behaviors of the mainstream culture for specific purposes and is aware of the importance of his/her own. The latter imply that the minority students accept the values of the mainstream culture, and reject their own, separating themselves from their group. (Sheets 2005: 8.) Cultures in this case have an equal degree of content, but when they meet their level of power is not the same. The difference is that assimilation declares a change in people's identity and is more psychological than cultural oriented. In addition, acceptance from the majority group is needed. (Liebkind 1984: 32–33.). When children are developing, acceptance is fundamental to cultivating and nurturing their self esteem. When the mainstream culture refuses to recognize the value of the minorities' culture and fails to welcome them, issues of identity, language and performance are faced by these pupils. In particular, assimilation has a negative connotation: it is considered harmful for a person among the minority since in a way it lessens his/her culture. Consequently, their origins haunt them, most of the time creating a feeling of remorse and longing.

Adaptation plays a major part in today's classroom: students who are not able to adapt are not able to succeed in their endeavors.

2.2 Ethnic Identity of Minority Students

Richard Rodriguez' autobiography *Hunger of Memory* (1982) addresses the issue of being part of a minority and the encounters through education. While achieving recognition and becoming successful at the end, Rodriguez exposes himself to loneliness, alienation from his family, language and traditions. The clash of two cultures is evident, and in order to progress he assimilates North American culture, revealing the price of an education. Beginning with changing his name from Ricardo to Richard, Rodriguez differentiates from a public and private identity as a child. His private identity was the one shared at home, where Spanish was spoken, and the public one the one that started when he stepped outside his home, in school where English became his language. From not speaking the public language to losing his private one he states:

> For my part, I felt that I had somehow committed a sin of betrayal by learning English […] I knew my parents had encouraged me to learn English. I knew that I had turned to English only with angry reluctance. But once I spoke English with ease, I came to feel guilty. (This guilt defied logic.) I felt that I had shattered the intimate bond that had once held the family close. (Rodriguez 1982: 30)

Changed by education, he identifies himself with Richard Hoggart's description in *The Uses of Literacy* (1957) of a scholarship boy, accepting that the price for his academic success was the loss, the separation from his life before becoming a student. He cites Hoggart on how the scholarship boy moves between environments that are at cultural extremes opposed, eventually becoming alienated from his family. During his education, Rodriguez became self-aware of his appearance, the low value given by the mainstream culture to his origins. As a consequence, he adopted North American culture and resisted the Mexican. After this process he declares the consequences:

> Then nostalgia began. After years unwilling to admit its attractions, I gestured nostalgically towards the past. I yearned for that time when I had not been so alone […] One day I heard some Spanish academics whispering back and forth to each other, and their sounds seemed ghostly voices recalling my life. Yearning became a preoccupation then […] I turned to books by educational experts. I needed to learn how far I had moved from my past- to determine how fast I would be able to recover something of it once again […] (Rodriguez 1982: 76–77)

However, throughout the biography, he is conscious of the price to pay and never regrets or wishes to have done things differently. In contrast, he is against bilingual education and of bringing that private world of the culture from home into the classroom. Satisfied with is accomplishments he writes "If, because of my schooling I had grown culturally separated from my parents, my education finally had given me ways of speaking and caring about that fact" (Rodriguez 1982: 78) trying to reconcile his two worlds.

There are many different approaches to human development: psychoanalytical (Freud), behavioral (Skinner), humanistic (Maslow, Rogers) and cognitive (Piaget, Bandura). Educators are exposed to them in order to understand children's needs and emotions. This plays a role in identity that relates to self-esteem, defined as the emotional response to self. It is developed by the impact of people surrounding the children. In a classroom, children need to be acknowledged, nourished, challenged and safe to secure the beneficial development of their self-esteem. (Sheets 2005: 50–51.) Even though this was not entirely the case with Rodriguez, a more positive experience can be offered to minority children, who in most cases suffer all kinds of disadvantages.

Anthropological approaches deal with the relationship between identity and its encounter with schooling. They emphasize the relation of the meanings students attribute to their racial identity and their group historical position in the nation structure. Therefore, the role of schools should be furthering the formation of identity (Davidson 1996: 30–31.) Delpit writes about losing initial identity: she affirms, "To be disconnected from that identity means losing not only the ability to explain one's essence to others but also any potential for self-knowledge as well" (2006: 77) In

addition, she reproduces a letter from a parent from Laitaro Village in Papua New Guinea,

> […] because they have only learned other things, they reject their own […] They look down on these things […] And this is because they have gone to school and left the things that are ours […] It is important to teach our children to read and write, but it is more important to teach them to be proud of themselves, and of us. (Delpit 2006: 89)

Antti Javala (1988) writes about his experience of being part of a Finnish minority in Sweden, particularly about the negative impact he experienced in school. The conflict of identity became evident when he started school. He alleges, "To survive, I had to change my stripes […] A Swede was what I had to become, and that meant that I could not continue to be a Finn. Everything I had held dear and self-evident had to be destroyed. An inner struggle began, a state of crisis of long duration" (1988: 164). After becoming a proper Swede by having no accent and behaving like the rest of the students, he declares "[…] in order to live in harmony with my surroundings, I had to live in perpetual conflict with myself" (1988: 165).

In *Returning to Sami Identity* (1988), Johannes Marainen narrates a similar experience of denying origins and becoming absorbed by the mainstream culture. In his case, starting school was a cultural and linguistic shock. He was taught 'mother tongue' as a main subject: not knowing exactly what that meant he just related it to Swedish. Continuing his education, he moved to Sweden, where he adapted to being a Swede, trying hard not to deny his roots. It was easy for him to live there, to study and become a 'mother tongue' (Swedish) teacher. Later he realized that as a Sami he was considered exotic and drew people's attention. When he was asked to lecture about his origins he was not able to, knowing nothing about his culture, realizing that he had even lost his language. Ashamed, he felt the need to go back to his origins. On his final thoughts he declares:

> Today I am not ashamed anymore and I hope that other Samis do not feel shame that they have, through pressure from their peers, been forced to self-denial.
> Today I accuse not all those who voluntarily hurt me and made me choose "Swedish", but those who are responsible for the cultural development. I accuse

> those who taught us to dislike our language, our culture and even ourselves. We were given an inferiority complex in school. Our language was not good enough. We were given a new "mother tongue". Our history was not worth studying. (1988: 184–185)

Identity development is normally acquired during adolescence, when the student experiences identity diffusion means that he/she has failed during the crisis task (Erikson qtd in Liebkind 1984: 66). Most of the students coming from different backgrounds experience this in a larger or smaller way. Hence, it is part of the educator's duty to identify these crises and help nurture diverse identities.

2.3 Language Loss among Minority Children

Identity is linked to language. An individual can lose his/her identity and acquire a new one. Moreover, the acquisition of a new language while losing the native one comes hand in hand with this loss of identity, and it is a prevailing characteristic of educating minorities. Couser (1989) compares two bicultural autobiographies of minority writers: *Hunger of Memory* by Richard Rodriguez (1982) and Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* (1977): both struggled from assimilation to loyalty to their subcultures, and both write about the concern and confusion created by the acquisition of a new language. They considered their native language an obstacle to being fully assimilated. Eventually they overcame the language barrier and became 'exceptionally literate' in English, proved by their success as writers. Their works differ in how they approached assimilation. Rodriguez was encouraged by his parents, while Kingston's parents did not wish assimilation for their children. Both writers identify this process with loss, pain and confusion. (1989: 210–214.)

The bilingualism of minority students can be displayed in two ways: First, Additive Bilingualism, when the student reaches the expected level of proficiency in the first language and then adds a second one which rarely replaces the first. Secondly, there is Subtractive Bilingualism, when the student substitutes the first language and culture for a second one, resulting occasionally in low proficiency in both languages. (Carrasquillo

& Rodríguez 2002: 67–68.) Recalling identity once again, Marianne Alopeus writes in her article ‘Thank you for my Language’ (1988), “If we do not belong completely anywhere, at least we do in our mother tongue. That is where our identity is.” (qtd. in Kalasniemi 1988: 177) So, there is a force, the power of culture that links individuals to their origins and language.

Johann Herder’s ‘Cultural Relativism’ caused controversy in the eighteenth century, by questioning whether language was a natural instinct or a cultural development, the former being invariant, following patterns, and the latter being diverse, expressive of identity and mentality. This potential of diversity is what made language a distinctive human feature, he states. (Leerssen 2006: 99.) The number of languages registered in the world is between 4,000 and 5,000, depending on how language is defined (Skutnabb-Kangas 1988: 11) and among this diversity of languages there are relationships of power, where some languages become dominant and others, on an extremist perspective, become extinct.

There are more multilingual people than monolingual in the world. Those who are monolingual are part of a very powerful minority never forced to learn another language. Most of the multilingual people, in contrast, achieved this status because their mother tongue has no official rights; consequently, they are forced to learn another language. From a linguistic point of view all languages have equal worth; they are logical, complex and can express any thoughts. However, there are negative attitudes towards multilingualism: being bilingual in some countries, especially in the United States, is associated with being poor and uneducated. (Skutnabb-Kangas 1989: 11–12.) There is always a debate on bilingual education: as Cummins implies, the definition of it by the United States media “[…] is a cause of further impoverishment for the poor but a potential source of further enrichment for the rich.” (2000: 18). To be able to effectively communicate across cultures needs not only those language skills, but also the appreciation and recognition of cultures which differ from the mainstream culture

It used to take three generations in the past to lose the heritage language. Today it is in the second even the first generation when it is lost. When the home language differs

from the one in the classroom, for some students, it develops into a psychological trauma. Language loss could come directly from a decision by parents who believe the children will face discrimination by using their home language; from unconscious assimilative linguistic behavior, when children feel more comfortable speaking in the second language; from the children's rejection of the heritage language; and from second language immersion preschool programs, where the children, before they can dominate the heritage language, are exposed to a second language. (Sheets 2005: 117–120.) All these reasons lead to a faster loss of the first language. Children and parents are not aware of the benefits of bilingualism, and they want to adapt faster to the host culture, as Sheets suggest.

One example of language loss is Johannes Marainen's story discussed in *Returning to Sami Identity* earlier. About the imposition of a new language at school as his mother tongue, he states: "The term "mother tongue" did not mean anything to me, I just accepted it meant Swedish. *Eatnangiella*, my mother's language, it was definitely not." (1989: 180) He recognizes the lack of connection between his life and what he was learning at school, and throughout his education he abandoned his language and traditions. Delpit argues that a teacher: should recognize that the language these diverse students bring to the classroom is connected with family, loved ones and identity. If the teacher implies that is wrong, or not important to be considering, then the teacher is implying the same thing about the student's family. (2006: 53.)

2.4 Equity in Education

The terms "majority" and "minority" position the idea of a winner and a loser, hierarchy or status. Being part of the minority places the individual outside standards, and being part of the majority implies then to be the measure of all things. (Liebkind 1984: 73.)

When approaching different local contexts, equity in education is conditioned by local history and the notion of justice; therefore, to compare equity among countries is a complicated task (Moreno Herrera, Jones & Rantala 2006: 7). There is always debate

when addressing this ultimate goal of multicultural education. How much is too much, and when are the efforts not enough? Cummins claims this ultimate goal: when he states that “To educate the whole child in a culturally and linguistically diverse context it is necessary to nurture intellect and identity equally in ways that, of necessity, challenge coercive relations of power.” (2000: 6) He refers to ‘whole child’ meaning, to educate beyond the curriculum required by schools, and implies that educators reflect their orientation of equity from society into the classroom. (2000: 5).

Guadalupe Francia (2006) from Örebro University conducted a study of publicly founded independent schools in Sweden. Independent school refers to “fristående skolor”, which are schools that follow the Swedish standards of education, but educate mostly minority students. They were created as a response to the need for equivalent education. ‘Equivalent’ is used in Sweden instead of equitable education as it is the counterpart internationally. Equivalent education embraces social, and cultural differences and its goal is to reflect cultural justice. Francia defines equivalent education as a “[…] need of reconciling with a certain degree of equality for all citizens while respecting and evaluating their individual, social and cultural differences.” (2006: 134) The design of these schools was to achieve education and recognize diversity and differences. On the other hand, they were seen by Swedish society as a contributor to diversity within education. Instead of reaching cultural justice, they were segregating society and creating fundamentalism in the case of religious schools. This was the claim of those opposing these schools. Francia’s study shows that the creation of independent schools was indeed closing down public schools in Sweden due to governmental funding. Consequently, those opposing these schools blamed this national strategy for destroying common public spaces for Swedish society where people can relate and interact.

Delpit maintains that, for classroom equity, students need to be taught the codes of the mainstream culture. Furthermore, for an appropriate education of minority children it is necessary to consult adults who share that same culture to discuss what kind of instruction is the children’s best interest. (2006: 45.) The creation of special or

independent schools meets their goal: they bring equal and conscious education to culturally diverse students, but they are not itself promoting this diversity.

2.5 Race and Segregation

Inequality is related to race, and it means different treatment. With this assumption, race leads to racism and discrimination. Perceptions of race vary: they can be perceived as differences in nationality, color, religion or culture. So far, there is no neutral term to point out differences between people, and even when one is careful to use any of them there are always implications. The words ‘race’, ‘ethnicity’, ‘minority’ work and are exchanged as euphemisms when they are likely to offend. (Ratcliffe 2004: 15, 24, 25.)

Individuals are conditioned culturally, cognitively and socially to acknowledge diversity as strange. ‘Prejudice’ is a preformed opinion; ‘discrimination’ is acting on the basis of prejudice and ‘racism’ is prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory actions. (Sheets 2005: 38–39.) Different perceptions are experienced in school: for example, if a mainstream student presents a problem, he/she becomes an individual with a problem; when a culturally diverse student presents a problem, then he/she becomes a representative of their culture. (Delpit 2006: 38). This illustrates how prejudice takes over attitudes. These behaviors and perceptions are encountered in classrooms today, and one of the goals of multicultural education is to educate children in becoming familiar with diversity, so they can display a tolerant attitude and accept difference.

There are different group labels within minority groups according to Fenton. He identifies them as follows: urban minorities, who are the migrant worker population; proto-nation or ethno-nation, people who consider themselves a nation (Basques, Québécois); ethnic groups in plural societies, descendants of people who migrated and represent large minorities; indigenous minorities, aboriginal people from Australia, New Zealand, North, Central and South America; post-slavery minorities, the black African descendents of enslaved people (qtd. in Ratcliffe 2004: 32). These groups have limited power in society. In some cases they isolate themselves from the mainstream culture,

having encountered unwelcoming experiences. In some others, residential segregation leads to segregation in schooling, keeping these students all together in certain areas, separating them from relationships with the dominant culture. (Ratcliffe 2004: 76).

Even inside the same classroom there is exclusion. This exclusion leads to ethnocentrism, racism and discrimination. When culturally diverse students can not speak the mainstream language, they are seen as threat by the parents of local students, alleging that it is a setback from what the school should be teaching their children. A perspective shared by Stotsky (1999) alleges that educational goals have become social and political instead of civic and intellectual by embracing multicultural education. She affirms that children are deprived of a large and advanced vocabulary because those students who do not master the language are invading the classroom. In her strong position against multicultural education, she states:

> […] many educators and researchers today, overtly concerned with inculcating such worthy social values as tolerance and mutual respect, are seeking to do so through changes in curricular content and pedagogy that enhance group identity and "redistribute power." They are reshaping the entire curriculum in the process and subordinating intellectual goals to the demands of their self-chosen moral mission without any body of evidence to suggest that the pedagogy and curriculum content they are implementing develop the values they claim they seek to foster. (Stotsky 1999: xv)

Stotsky claims the need of critical thinking and intellectual development, but there is no need to undermine these goals and not having them as part of a multicultural education. In fact, the ideal setting is that of students to become critical learners, and for them to be able to develop their whole potential. Among students, even when all belong to the mainstream culture, they experience differences: in learning styles, and educational needs. Therefore, not all children progress at the same level, Stotsky's theory affects them as well. These students are also in need of curriculum reshaping. Social values, tolerance, and respect are not exclusive for culturally diverse children.

These kinds of approaches are dangerous among educators working with culturally diverse children. Most of the time there is no intention on the educators' part to

discriminate or demonstrate prejudice, and their actions are well intended, but the relationships between educators and students are guided by assumptions that reflect the values of the mainstream culture (Cummins 1988: 132). Therefore, special attention and sensitivity is fundamental from teachers handling diversity on an everyday basis. The counterpart is negative assumptions from educators about immigrant students in the case of Lahdenperä's research. He concludes that, from the staff perspective, school difficulties are related to the students' immigrant background, and this leads to negative and categorizing attitudes from the teachers. (1998: 87).

Another aspect of exclusion is low expectations from the teachers. Minority students are left out of main activities and subjects because of this. These low expectations figure in low achievement and there is even segregation and different expectations depending on the students' birthplace, generalizing, for instance, on the assumption that Asians equal good students, Africans equal underachievers.

In some cases, these minority groups are separating themselves and developing their own institutions to overcome the idea of underachievement, like the Saturday school movement in Britain pioneered by African-Caribbeans, and mosques and temples for South Asians as a strategy of educative support. (Ratcliffe 2004: 84.) There is also within-school segregation, called "second generation segregation" defined by students interacting with others from their same race. (Echenique, Fryer Jr. & Kaufman 2006: 265). A study of the field determined that, unlike segregations across schools which increase racial differences in achievement, this kind of segregation 'within-school' has no relationship with academic achievement. (et al 2006: 269). Therefore in this case, it is left to the development of the student and the kind of education he/she receives.

The effort of governments of desegregating schools and incorporating students with different cultural backgrounds, giving them equal opportunity of education, has been questioned. Experiences from people who lived these processes vary. There is the case of 'first nation' people from Canada who were forced into assimilation and experienced a traumatic episode while attending 'residential schools' that operated from 1870 to 1970. These schools were part of a governmental campaign to eradicate the aboriginal

culture, “to kill the Indian in the child.” On June 11th, 2008, Canada’s Prime Minister Stephen Harper delivered a formal apology to those 150,000 aboriginal children removed from their homes and forced to attend these schools. (CBC News Canada 2008.) Declaring “The government of Canada sincerely apologizes and asks the forgiveness of the aboriginal peoples of this country for failing them so profoundly. Nous le regrettons. We are sorry.” (Harper 2008) The same governmental strategy was taken with Native-Americans removed and placed in federal boarding schools, resulting in language loss and anger. These processes of assimilation in the past were firmly imposed by governmental authorities, without considering the principles of multicultural education.

Kalasniemi (1988) approaches the dilemma of segregating immigrant children by attending immigrant education schools or joining a mainstream classroom where students can easily become familiar with the dominant language and culture. As a Finn in Sweden, and by his personal experience, he alleges that it is a bad start in a child’s life to be sent to a school where you can barely understand a word. (1988: 177–178.) In addition, there is Francia’s (2006) questioning presented earlier on the importance of Sweden’s Independent schools. In favor of them, she states, “This plurality could be a positive measure to increase social justice and equity in groups traditionally left out of the unique public sphere.” (2006: 144). In contrast Rodriguez’s (1982) experience, where a desegregated education helped him to succeed and accomplish his goals. Kalasniemi and Rodriguez favor different positions; none of these personal experiences were guided by a conscious and structured multicultural education, and at the end they had different outcomes. The challenge is to make of education a positive experience for all students regardless of their background, along with those civic and intellectual goals.

2.6 Performance of Minority Students

In the 1970’s, theories of hierarchization suggested difference in intelligence between races. This was the case of the work of Eysenck (1971) in Britain and Jenson (1969) in the US. They claimed that in a school setting it is expected to have differences in

performance of students based on race. (Ratcliffe 2004: 73–74.) Although this has been researched and proved the opposite in relation to school settings, since the hypotheses are based in test scores, and not on genetic evidence, the results vary. At the beginning of the 1990's this theory was re-adopted. In response to that, the American Anthropological Association published a statement on race and intelligence:

> Earlier AAA resolutions against racism (1961, 1969, 1971, 1972) have spoken to this concern [difference in intelligence between races]. The AAA further resolves: WHEREAS all human beings are members of one species, *Homo sapiens*, and WHEREAS, differentiating species into biologically defined "races" has proven meaningless and unscientific as a way of explaining variation (whether in intelligence or other traits), THEREFORE, the American Anthropological Association urges the academy, our political leaders and our communities to affirm, without distraction by mistaken claims of racially determined intelligence, the common stake in assuring equal opportunity, in respecting diversity and in securing a harmonious quality of life for all people. (American Anthropological Association 1994).

Race cannot be seen as the cause of low achievement. Therefore, one should be aware of this prejudicial thinking in any educative setting.

Research in teacher education links failure with socio-economic status, failure with cultural difference, and failure with single-parent households. Consequently, it is difficult for educators to expect success from culturally diverse students. Teacher candidates are told that minority students are misplaced in school settings, and also that poor children develop slower. (Delpit 2006: 172, 178.) It is then that racial bias is presented in schools: for example, teaching about cultural diversity only at 'special events' like celebrations, placing minority students in low status courses, applying standardized tests to minorities, and using resources in classrooms avoiding controversial cultural issues. These kinds of practices just bring more challenges to culturally diverse students, since they cause injustice and inequality. (Gay 1998: 14–15.) School reforms and educational plans can advocate fair and equal treatment; however, a reform on the perceptions of those in direct contact with these students is more important.

In *When Race Matters* (2004), the publication of Downey & Pribesh notices the pattern of black students being evaluated better by black teachers. This research focused on finding patterns that defined whether this outcome was because of the white teachers' bias or the black students' misbehavior in opposing the different culture. They finally found more evidence of teachers' bias than students' opposing attitudes. (2004: 267). Furthermore, Brookover (1985) claims that one justification for maintaining the inferiority of minorities was the IQ scores that evidently measure the behavior valued by the dominant culture (1985: 259). The debate on the standardized test goes on claiming injustice and not only assessing minority children, but schools and teachers' abilities. The real debate should be on whether these students are receiving equal opportunity of education.

For immigrant students, there is a difference between the conversational and academic proficiency of the language. Immigrant children can acquire conversational skills by being exposed to the mainstream culture in school fairly quickly, but as it is studied by many scholars in North America, it takes around five years or more for them to catch up academically with native speakers. (Cummins 2000: 34). This situation definitely affects the academic results of students, placing them on the scale of low achievers. The experience of Antti Javala, after several years of schooling in Sweden and becoming fluent in Swedish illustrates this point, when he writes:

> In the upper grades, one had to apply oneself to one's studies in earnest and compete for the best marks. Others were way ahead of me in knowledge, so I had to study as hard as I possible could. But it was no use, no matter how hard I tried the meaning of words eluded me; I had to read lines over and over again and still could not understand. My examinations turned out badly; I always got the worst marks […] I had a feeling I had a head for books. But words mocked me, refused to open up for me […] I recognized words but failed to grasp their sense. The depth and diversity of language were lost: this matched the loss of my mother tongue, my Finnish. (Javala: 1988: 165).

Ratcliffe claims that the low performance in minority children is affected by the settings of poor urban schools. In contrast, the performance increased in 'better' schools. (2004: 82.) Moreover, low income schools tend to have teachers with less qualifications, fewer years of experience and weaker pedagogical skills and the conditions they are forced to

teach limit their effective teaching (Johnson 1998c: 182). Nevertheless, the study followed by Weiher (2000) claims that minority children tend to perform better when there is an increase of teachers with the same minority background in the schools (2000: 893). By recognizing and understanding the students' needs and cultural background, it is possible to achieve better results. This is the case of Jaime Escalante, a Bolivian Math teacher in California, whose story of success was filmed by Ramón Menéndez (1988) in *Stand and Deliver*. Escalante taught minority students enrolled in low key subjects, high level math (calculus) after struggling with opposition from the school that had low expectations of these students. He developed a program for these students to take the 'Advanced Placement" (AP) test earning credits for college while still in High School. All of the students passed the test and the 'Educational Testing Service' questioned the results. Victims of prejudice because of their race and economic status they were challenged to re-take the test, which they passed proving their achievement. "Students will rise to the level of expectations" Escalante proved with his work. In an interview, about being a teacher Escalante declares: "I do not make talents, I discover them. That is what my assignment is." (The Futures Channel 2006). This is an example of a teacher with a minority background who embraced his students' culture, in order to help them achieve, and surpass the goals established by school.

Interactions in school create conditions for success or failure. (Cummins 2000: 33). During the learning process, students who settle to learn from a teacher who does not respect their integrity, face a loss of self, and the only choice they are left with is to choose to not-learn (Kohl qtd. in Delpit 2006: 161). When threatened, students' behavior could be misinterpreted. To hold on to what they know and is familiar, can cause conflict in and outside the classroom. Delpit expresses her position on teachers' behavior by saying, "Until they appreciate the wonders of the cultures represented before them […] they cannot appreciate the potential of those who sit before them […]" (2006: 182). Her declaration is a call for teachers to accept, and understand diversity.

2.7 Learning and Culture

It is important to begin to understand the reasons why students succeed or fail in schools to acknowledge that “human relationships are the heart of schooling” (Cummins 2000: 40). The relationship teachers carry with their students is fundamental for engaging a positive path. It works both ways: when teachers help students they live a satisfactory experience. When students recognize that the teacher cares and believes in them, they try their best.

The construction of a third point of view when comparing one’s culture with another is what Charles Taylor (1985) claimed to avoid ethnocentrism: this way both cultures are open to learning (qtd. in Pitkänen 1998: 44). However, people need to focus special attention on what the social constructionism theory suggests, which is that objective knowledge does not exist outside people’s language and senses (Lahdenperä 1998: 83). In other words, people act only on their interpretations and knowledge of things: this way they assume when interacting that people share the same understanding. This kind of assumption is the one affecting culturally diverse children in the classroom.

It was stated earlier that relationships of power are developed inside the schools, and that it is necessary for students to learn the rules of power so that they can understand the structure of education. What the messages and orders are that the teachers want to get through, and how they will be able to decipher those messages. A representation of different perspectives comes with the display of power and authority by the teacher in the classroom when addressing multicultural children. Delpit cites an example of a verbal directive given by a middle-class teacher: “Is that where the scissors belong? In contrast to what many black teachers will say: “Put those scissors on that shelf.” (Heath qtd. in Delpit 2006: 34). Children are used to the directives used in their culture. To use other approaches means alternatives and confusion to them. Some students expect an authoritarian figure, meaning a clear representation of power, and since some teachers reduce this representation by addressing orders indirectly, this behavior can easily lead to disobedience from part of the students (Delpit 2006: 34–35).

Teaching goes together with learning. Effectiveness on the teaching process is measured by the learning obtained. Sheets affirms: “Teacher ability to deliver culturally inclusive instruction to diverse students is consequential to their opportunity to learn” (2005: 145). Culture represents the set of understanding for these students. This is Sheets’ claim: to adapt this understanding to the new knowledge acquired in the classroom.

Rosa Hernandez Sheets’ *Diversity Pedagogy* (2005) connects culture with cognition, claiming to be essential to bring elements of diversity into the teaching-learning process. Diverse students use their ‘cultural tools’ such as language, prior experiences and knowledge to acquire new understandings. Children look into these cultural tools to help them perform a new task. Also it is easier to learn when they link knowledge from home and school, when they receive multiple forms of assistance, and when teachers construct along with them new understandings. (Sheets 2005: 19–20.) A culturally sensitive work is suggested by Sheets to educators. When teachers acquire this sensitivity, it will also help them detect and understand the behavior of their diverse students, and provide them with a safe system that embraces multiculturalism and acceptance in their teaching.

3. CULTURAL AWARNESS IN EDUCATION: THE POWER OF TEACHING

3.1 Global Education and Educational Policies

The world culture theory approach projects a homogeneous world, where single models of schooling (economy, government and models running a nation) will acquire global status and eventually become uniform. Theorists argue that the movement started in Europe with the Enlightenment, and spread from there, connected to the idea of creating modern citizens (Reed-Danahay 2003: 202). In other words, the world culture theory is an interpretation of globalization, trying to explain the standardization of the world. Schools in different countries are adopting these global educational models, and their cultural differences require adapting them to their reality. This movement not only suggests conformity and isomorphism but also the gap between the policy adopted and real classroom practice is sometimes substantial. In the educational area, the World Bank has played an important role by implementing global/international educational policies around the world. (Anderson-Levitt 2003: 2, 10, 16.)

The relation between the universal and the local are the struggles of countries today. The existence of a world-culture is real to certain extent; however, the trend also seems to embrace national identity. One of the critiques of this movement is the imitation of models and policies that give no consideration to the local context. This happens because they are charged with cultural attributes from the countries they were taken from. However, this world-culture provides a point of reference and influences nations towards improvement. (Ramirez 2003: 249, 252.) In the following section, I will present different examples of the local response of countries facing the educational global initiatives suggested by the world culture theory. These case studies, conducted by different scholars, did not necessarily embrace the global demands in their totality, but they created a hybrid that emerged when the local and the global met.

The response of Thailand was adopting stronger local curricula:
Thai wisdom is defined as “the bodies of knowledge, abilities, and skills of Thai people accumulated through many years of experience, learning, development, and

transmission." (Kaewdang qtd. in Jungk & Kajornsin 2003: 33). After the economic crash of Thailand in 1997, a strategy of combining global and local elements was the country's response to this world culture. A need to rediscover values was felt, in order to embrace useful models coming from the outside. In the area of education, the National Educational Act of 1999 declared that 20% of the curricula could be established locally. This way schools could add Thai wisdom to their programs. Inside the classrooms, this meant the recognition of Thai people's own diversity, and also applies relevant curricula to the local reality. However, Thailand's policy makers were leaning towards a decentralized model of education and globalized forms of schooling which somehow contradicted this measure. There were only a few projects that added value to the local communities, and followed the National Educational Act declaration: e.g. students becoming apprentices of craftsmen, students learning different courses around dairy farming such as math, science, technology and then taking this local knowledge to develop the community was the goal of the projects. (Jungk & Kajornsin 2003: 27–46.)

Thailand used distinctive educational models from other countries, and then applied them to their context. This brings Hongladarom (2003) definition of global tendencies, arguing that "The global that is emerging from the (ideological, political, economic, culture, social) interaction among the world's societies and cultures is such that it eventually contains elements from everywhere, but belongs to nowhere." (qtd in Jungk & Kajornsin 2003: 35).

In the case of South Africa, unlike Thailand, global educational reforms were fully adopted without considering the context and teacher preparation:
There is a variety of cultures in South Africa, and because of the country's political and social segregation, there were four separate education systems before 1996: for whites, Coloureds, Indians/Asians, and Africans. In the country today, the way educational reform takes place is from global, to national, to provincial, to sub-provincial, and finally to school level. At each level these reforms are reinterpreted, and also each level selects what is useful and adaptable. Consequently, by the time the reform gets to the community, the transformation is considerable. Moreover, teachers influence the

penetration of policies. Therefore, a transformation takes place inside the classroom as well. (Napier 2003: 51–71.)

The global influences in South Africa were to adopt a non-segregated racial system, a Eurocentric curriculum, and a decentralized system. These were adopted from the United States, and based on the learning achievement of Britain, Canada, and New Zealand. According to the South African Schools Act of 1996, the four educational systems were united into one. Therefore, teachers had new responsibilities. In reality, teacher training and school support was not distributed evenly in South Africa. When these reforms were applied, some factors were not considered: the isolation of schools, the need for books, classes of 90 pupils, working with multiple cultures in the classroom, and the lacking of integration plans among these pupils. The policies changed at the top level in the chain of command, but they were hard to apply in real practice. On a small scale, by applying these reforms, South Africa started to move towards a globalized system of education, dealing with a more progressive and multiracial system. (Napier 2003: 51–71.)

In Guinea, the global demand suggested autonomy for teachers, when teachers needed guidance:

The policy of giving teachers more autonomy was confronted in Guinea. Around the world this issue is managed differently: in the US each district dictates goals and teachers are somehow free; in Micronesia teachers manage their classes according to their schedule; in Malawi and Sri Lanka teachers have a lot of autonomy and are rarely controlled; in Vietnam and Cuba there is no input from the teachers since everything is dictated and controlled by the ministry; in Japan and India standard lessons are produced leaving teachers with no autonomy. In Guinea, instruction takes place in French, and none of the students use French in their homes; therefore, students are conducted in a second language. The introduction of a new textbook in 1998 with guided lessons for first and second grade was made. In the classroom, teachers had limited autonomy on the material used, but no autonomy on what topics to teach. When the government ran out of textbooks to distribute, then teachers' autonomy became

somehow flexible. This policy was not well received among teachers, who demanded guidance through the process. (Anderson-Levitt & Dallo 2003: 75–93.)

The global tendency in education leans towards teacher autonomy, but in the case of Guinea, most of the teachers demanded specific guidance. According to their study, Anderson-Levitt and Dallo (2003), mentioned several hypotheses for this demand: the lack of official support, the lack of competence in French language, pressure by the community to teach according to the books, more work for teachers who manage classes of 60 to 110 students, and trouble for less-prepared teachers in rural areas. In the same way, policy makers in Guinea would like to maintain a limited teachers' autonomy. (Anderson-Levitt & Dallo 2003: 75–93.)

In Israel, the community response to the global educational standards was to apply a local program created by their immigrant community:
Israel's educational system adopted scientific education that existed in the former USSR in the 1990's. This movement was initiated by immigrants in Israel as complementary education to maintain their culture. Education was highly valuated in Soviet society, and education in Israel was not meeting the immigrants' demands. The complementary system was developed by an organization called Top, which reunited immigrant scientists and educators to teach children after school. Classes were held in Russian, and Russian culture courses were offered as well. Half of the immigrants coming from the former USSR that arrived in Israel in the 90s had high educational levels, so the Top organization focused on experts only to teach the subjects. The penetration into the system started when, by parental demand, these teachers started working in regular schools, and were allowed to use their approaches, culture, and methods. They created a hybrid, using elements of Israeli and Russian culture. Eventually, the afternoon complementary classes started to be taught in Hebrew and Russian, accepting Israeli students. From here, the cooperation expanded to high schools, elementary schools, kindergartens, and middle schools where the program started. (Segal-Levit 2003: 219–235.)

France responded to the European influence of belongingness; however, they had different practices in some schools:

Educational policies and reforms were adopted by the European Union to acquire a European Identity called the ‘European Dimension’ especially after it was stated in the Amsterdam Treaty of 1997. Students are encouraged to ‘think European’. Reed-Danahay’s (2003) research involved a project funded by subsides of the European Union in a marginalized region of Auvergne in France, a highly rural area. The European Union aims to reach these marginalized regions by giving special grants, because of their lack of development. In the first project, one school from each one of these countries participated: France, Germany, Italy and Norway. The project involved the comparison of folktales in each country. The aims were a sense of belonging and the forging of a European identity free of racism. They embraced the ‘unity in diversity’ approach in education. During the research in France, Reed-Danahay noticed marginalization within the school. Gypsy children were separated from the mainstream classrooms, due to language and cultural differences, and they were excluded from the folktale comparison project. Ironically, French students were creating bonds of identity with children from other countries while separating themselves from the ones in the same school. (Reed-Danahay 2003: 201–215.)

These examples are responses of adopting unifying standards demanded by one or several countries in the area of education. In each case, the concept of multicultural education could have been or was the essence of success. Rattclife (2004) defines this idea of multicultural education as the understanding about each other’s ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds, bringing two benefits: a productive learning environment and long-term benefits to society (2004: 76–77). Gay (1998) affirms that multicultural education contains all the elements of good pedagogy. It combines cultural diversity elements with quality of teaching “such as relevance, developmental and contextual appropriateness, validity, significance of instruction, and teaching the whole child” (1998: 12.) The ability to adopt these global demands successfully lies on the context of each country. The question whether or not the world-culture is unifying into a single system remains, since countries are adopting international models but at the same time, as observed earlier, they transform them to their local needs.

3.2 Immigration and Inclusive Education

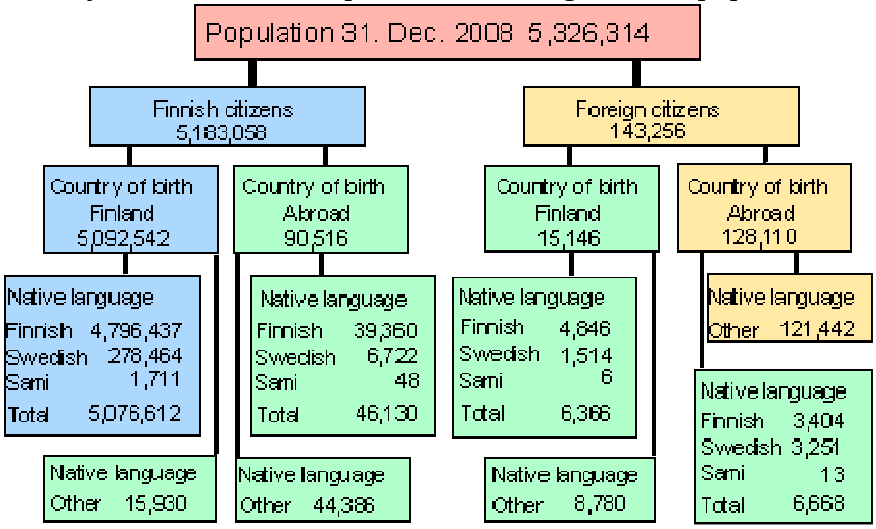
The reason for migration may vary, from countries with political divisions and conflict, to individual professional decisions such as the 'economic migrants'. Ratcliffe (2004) analyzes the three approaches that try to explain this phenomenon. Starting with the classical economic model, he states that people will migrate when there is a shortage of labor in some place, therefore, those places with a surplus of labor will respond to the demand. This approach does not merely embrace economic reasons, but also attributes migration to political factors such as conflict and instability. The second approach is the (neo-) Marxian model, which explains differences between economies in metropolitan areas and post-colonies. The latter is considered as a source of reserve, when the former is in need of labor force, often under exploitative working conditions. Finally, the subjectivist explanation, is based on individual stories of people and their reasons for leaving the country where their families lived for several generations. (2004: 45–47.)

Finland is a country that has moved from emigration to immigration. Before the Second World War, Finns migrated to North America, and during the 1960´s and 1970´s a large population of Finns moved to Sweden. The reason behind the emigration was unemployment in the country; therefore, it was mainly labor related. After the Second World War, Finland took the first refugees from Chile in 1973, followed by Vietnamese in 1979, adding the 'return migrants' from the former Soviet Union (those with Finnish lineage), refugees from Somalia and former Yugoslavia, and joining the European Union in 1995 brought what primarily shapes Finland's foreign population today. (Teräs 2007: 9–10.) During 2007, the number of immigrants living in Finland was 26,050 people, the highest number in the post-war period. Furthermore, during the last seven years, immigration from EU countries into Finland has been higher than emigration from Finland to other EU countries (Statistics Finland 2008.)

Finland's population at the end of 2008 was composed of 5,183,058 Finnish citizens, and 143,256 foreign citizens living in Finland (2.7% of the population). The largest groups of foreign citizens were Russians (26,909), Estonians (22,604), Swedish (8,439), and Somalis (4,919). Of the total population, 90.09% spoke Finnish, 5.4% Swedish,

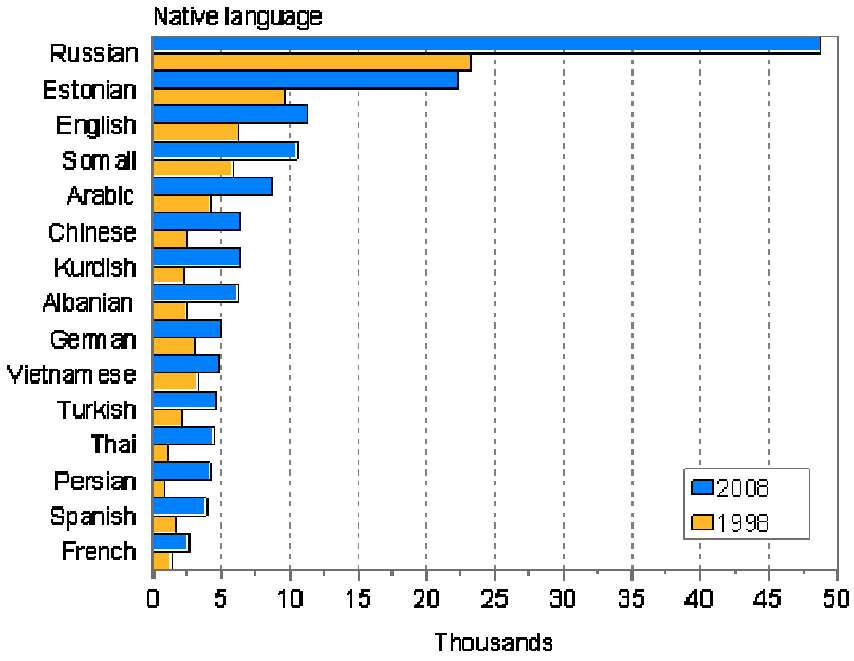
0.03% had Sami as their native language, and 3.6% had a foreign native language. The largest foreign language groups were Russian, Estonian, English, Somali, and Arabic. (Statistics Finland 2008.) More details are shown in figures 1 and 2:

Figure 1. Country of birth, citizenship and mother tongue of the population 31.12.2008:



Source: Population Structure 2008. Statistics Finland

Figure 2. The largest groups by native language 1998 and 2008:



Source: Population Structure 2008. Statistics Finland

Finnish immigration policies function according to the EU policy framework. Under these settings, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs published the 1997 Immigration and Refugee Policy Program's aim: the integration of immigrants and the maintenance of their cultures. The Integration Act of 1999 stated equal opportunity and integration for immigrants, and the preserving of their language and culture. The major obstacle for integration is considered to be Finland's languages. Therefore, providing education of Finnish/Swedish language is considered the main focus of the integration plan. (Ally 2002: 15.)

Teräs (2007) uses the 2002 analysis by Matinheikki-Kokko and Pitkänen of policies and education of immigrants in Finland. They created a timetable of development in this area, from the 1980's and 1990's, and then Teräs updated the chart to 2006. In Tables 1 and 2 this development is shown over 25 years at national, regional, and individual level. However, different instances in Finnish society, such as schools and workplaces, are not necessarily in the same phase regarding these policies. (2007: 17–20.)

The development in the area of language policies went in 1980 from identifying the need of language teaching for immigrants (see Table 1) to 1999 where a stronger focus on teaching Finnish/Swedish was made along with the teaching of the native language (see Table 2). On educational programs, at comprehensive level, the gradual development is clearly stated. In 1980 it started as a need-based preparatory schooling for immigrant pupils, and it transformed to a legislation offering training about equality, discrimination and racism at all levels of schooling for all children. Education and instruction during the preparatory course was not only for immigrant pupils, but also for their families (see Table 2). The overall evolution of these policies was from a separate individually oriented immigrant education to multicultural schooling.

Table 1. Immigrants and educational policy in Finland during the 1980's and 1990's.

Integration setting	1. 1980–1988	2. 1989–1993	3. 1994–1996	4. 1997–
A The immigrant policy programmes and their main ideology	*Report of the Refugee Committee (1980)* Individualistic care of refugees in terms of their individual needs	*Finnish Refugee Policy (1989)* Normalisation through localized, collective refugee reception actions	*Principles of Finnish Refugee and Migration Policy (1994)* Cultural Enrichment through challenging the 'normal' set of service systems to change	*Government Programme on Immigration and Refugee Policy (1997)* Path-based Integration policy strengthened by specific legislation
B Perceptions of equality	Formal equality through improving refugees' legal rights to services within a uniform system	Equal opportunities through establishing links between refugee reception actions and a mainstream welfare system	Cultural diversity and equal opportunities for all groups of immigrants, including refugees as a priority group	Equal membership through having a balance of rights and duties
C Orientation to culture	Individually oriented refugee education	Cross-cultural awakening by seeing refugees' language and culture as a resource in the Finnish education system	Cultural enrichment introduced through principles of: equality, bilingualism, multiculturalism.	Towards inclusive multicultural schooling
D Language Policy: Finnish as a Second Language (FSL)	Identification of the areas and actions for developing Finnish as a foreign language	A high priority for courses of Finnish as a Second language for adults	Instructional recommendations for FSL teaching and testing	
Teaching of the native language	Introduction of native-language teaching		Instructional recommendations for native-language testing	An option for an increase in native language teaching from two to four hours
E Educational programmes Comprehensive school	Need-based preparatory schooling	Time-based prepararoty schooling	Preparatory schooling as a cultural bridge to the mainstream	Strengthening of the status of immigrants within regular schooling through new school legislation
Vocational education		National recommendations on curricula for migrant training courses for migrant youth and adults	Short employment courses without educational status	Preparatory courses (20–40 cr.) within vocational education
Adult education	Pre-vocational training programmes			Flexible choices rather than flexible curricular arrangements

Source: Teräs 2007: 18

Table 2. Immigrants and educational policy development between 1999 and 2006.

Integration setting	1999	2001	1) 2004 2) 2006
A The immigrant policy programmes and their main ideology	*Integration Act* To promote integration and support the day-to-day living of immigrants, integration plan	*Towards ethnic equality and diversity* Monitoring and taking measures against discrimination and racism, actions to promote good ethnic relations	*1) Equality Act and* *2) Government Migration Policy Programme* 1) Fostering and safeguarding equality, equality plan, positive actions 2) Promoting work-related immigration and clarifying guidance systems, improving ethnic relations
B Perceptions of equality	Equal membership, rights and obligations	Ethnic equality, special needs of immigrants and ethnic minorities	1) Equality for all people (age, ethnicity, nationality, language, religion, beliefs, opinions, health, disability, sexual orientation, other personal characteristics) 2) Human rights and equality for all
C Orientation to culture	Dual culture: learning about Finnish culture and maintaining the native culture	Multiculturalism Multiethnicity	1) Multiculturalism, pluralism, non-discriminatory practices 2) Multiculturalism, pluralism, non-discriminatory practices
D Language Policy: Finnish as a Second Language (FSL) Teaching of the native language	Bilingualism: acquiring a command of Finnish (Swedish), maintaining the native language		1) – 2) Learning Finnish (Swedish) and supporting the native language and culture
E Educational programmes Comprehensive school Vocational education Adult education	 Preparatory vocational training Integration Training Language and integration training	Training at all levels about discrimination and racism	1) Training at all levels about equality 2) Information and training for all immigrants including family members, Improving opportunities for immigrant students to study on all levels and all forms of education

Source: Teräs 2007: 19

There are different minority groups in Finland, immigrants or foreigners, and also national minorities. In the country's law, the term 'national minority' is replaced by 'group'. These groups are the Sámi (Finland's only indigenous group), the Roma, the Swedish speakers, the Jews, and the Tatars. (Ally 2002: 8–10.) Students from all these groups permeate Finnish classrooms; it is required to educate them according to their

needs, and to create a culturally safe and sensitive school. Carrasquillo & Rodriguez (2002) argue that genuine respect for all cultures, races, and linguistic background is crucial in the classroom's environment (2002: 53). Changes in attitudes are easier to manage at an early age, when prejudices and stereotyping are not fully developed. One needs its own culture to have a point of reference to see the world. However, this understanding of culture alone can turn into a 'life-long prison' if it is never challenged or compared. (Räsänen 1998: 32.)

Ethnicity is being used by schools lately to categorize and identify students, but in most cases it is not used to design curricula or instruction. To be able to provide inclusive education, Sheets (2005) states that teachers must understand the role that culture, ethnicity, and identity play in the teaching-learning process. (2005: 62.) Bloom, Perlmutter & Burrell (2005) define inclusion as a "philosophy that brings diverse students, families, educators, and community members together to create schools and other social institutions based on acceptance, belonging, and community" (qtd. in Salend 2005: 6). Inclusive education is composed of several aspects: the right to education in general classrooms, access to general education, community collaboration, reflective instruction, and the fostering of the individual academic, social, and behavioral development of students. (Salend 2005: 11, 150). One of the advantages of inclusive schools is that all students benefit from it. They have sensitive education, and all of them can develop a sense of responsiveness. (Stainback, Stainback & Jackson 1992: 6–7.) Inclusive teaching embraces differences. Therefore, Sapon-Shevin (1992) states that it is important as an educator, first to be aware of racial, cultural, family, gender, religious, skill and ability differences, and also to be able to challenge stereotypes and discrimination in the classroom (1992: 21–32). All these authorities agree on the fact that it is not just the role of the teacher to give inclusive education, but a work of all the agents involved in the process, even the community as a whole is an important part of the operation.

To create an effective inclusion and assure the goals of an inclusive educational program, Salend (2005) insists that several contributors must participate in the decision making. These are family members, school administrators, general educators, special

educators, the school psychologist, social workers, school counselors, speech and language clinicians, vocational educators, school physicians and nurses, staff from community agencies, bilingual educators, and migrant educators (2005: 158–164). In some cases, parents who do not belong to the mainstream culture, demand from education to provide their children with the resources to be able to succeed in the mainstream society. However, they are part of the solution: appropriate education for their children is better developed when there is direct consultation with the members of the children's culture. (Delpit 2006: 29,45.)

In Finland the 'universalist principle' is applied in education. All members of society are provided with equal benefits and access to education. Schools must follow a universal curriculum dictated at a national level. The main component of equal education, when referring to minorities, is the right to receive education in their mother tongue. This includes all minorities: Sámi, Swedish speakers, Roma, and immigrants from different backgrounds. For newly-arrived immigrant children, a preparatory course is offered to help with the transition to the mainstream classroom (immigrant classroom–'maahanmuuttajaluokka'), focusing on the special needs of immigrants such as language. (Ally 2002: 21–24.) This course is now mandatory for all immigrants. Several schools carry out these immigrant classes, and later the pupils integrate to the mainstream Finnish educational system.

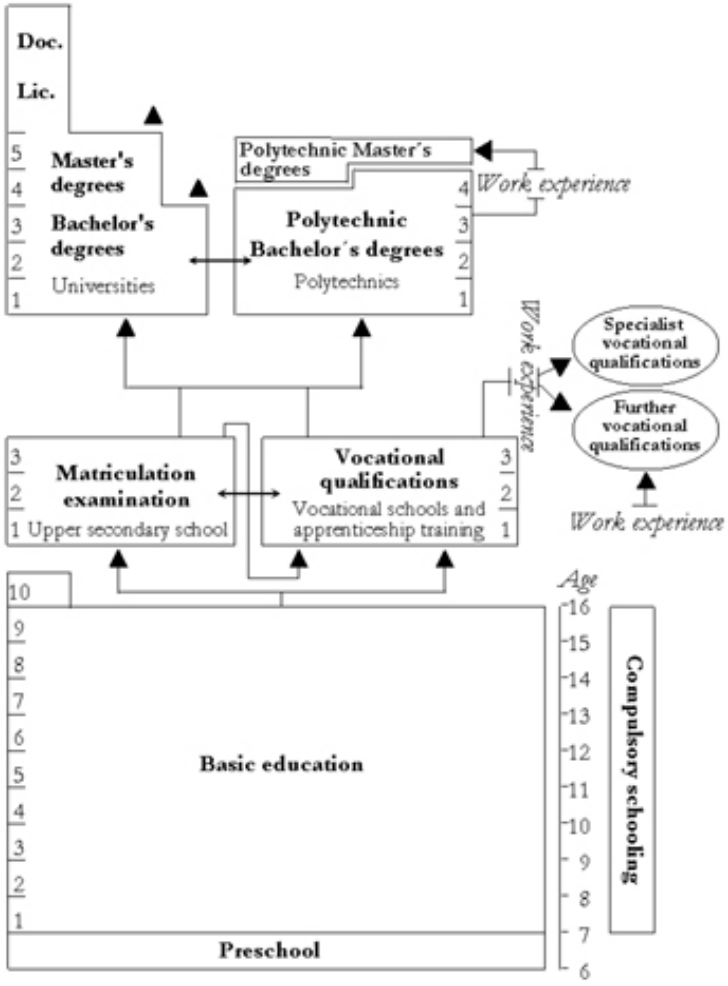
3.3 Educational System and Teacher Preparation in Finland

The aims of the Finnish education system are equal opportunity, quality, efficiency, and internationalization (Ministry of Education 2009a). One of the top priorities stated by the Finnish National Board of Education is to prevent exclusion among children and young adults. The success of Finland in education is portrayed in the PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) rankings in the last years. Finland attributes their success in education to the following reasons: 1) equal opportunity regardless of sex, economic or cultural background, where basic education is completely free of charge; 2) comprehensiveness of education, where schools do not select students and therefore,

students can attend the school in their own district: 3) competent teachers, they are required to have a Master's degree and have autonomy in the classroom; 4) student counseling and special needs education, including individual support for each student; 5) encouragement of assessment and evaluation. In Finland, national testing, school ranking, or inspection do not take place; 6) significance of education in society; a flexible system based on empowerment; municipalities are in charge of schools and teachers practice autonomy; 7) co-operation between all levels of administration, social agents and schools; 8) a student-oriented, active conception of learning, based on the student's relations with teachers, students and learning atmosphere. (Finnish National Board of Education 2009a.)

Education in Finland is composed of voluntary pre-School (*esikoulu*) for those students starting their compulsory basic education the next year; followed by nine years of basic education called comprehensive school (*peruskoulu*), where students range from 7 to 17 years old; upper secondary education takes two forms, general and vocational education, the former (*lukio*) prepare students for the National Matriculation Examination, a requirement for university, and takes from two to four years to complete; the latter (*ammattikoulu*) prepares students to be part of the workforce. It takes two or three years, and students are eligible for further education at universities after completion; higher education is provided by polytechnics and universities. The former (*ammattikorkeakoulu*) hosts students graduated from general and vocational upper secondary education, lasts from four to five years, and provides them with higher vocational education. The latter (*yliopisto*) is in charge of the lower, higher and postgraduate degrees; the Bachelor's (lower) can be fulfilled in four years, and the Master's (higher) in six; separate admission to the Master's is not required when the student is admitted to a Bachelor's. Moreover, adult education is available at all levels. (Ally 2002: 18–19, Ministry of Education 2009b.)

Figure 3. Education Structure in Finland:



Source: Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE) 2009b

For primary and secondary education the qualifications of teachers are a three-year Bachelor's degree, and a two years Master's program of teacher education. Teacher education has adopted a research-based approach that gives teachers knowledge, skills, and methods to develop teaching, along with other sources such as parents and stakeholders. The research-based approach states the need of knowledge of recent research in teaching, how teacher education should be a case of research itself, and teachers' attitudes towards research during their practice. Throughout their education, teachers have guided practical studies where they encounter children from different background. Therefore, they have to adapt their teaching. Finnish teachers' preparation is aligned to national goals and purposes, where teachers' competences should include

cultural knowledge and intercultural understanding to play an integration role in society. (Niemi & Jakku-Sihvonen 2006: 36–44.)

As part of teacher education, students can choose for their major practice classroom teaching in grades 1–6, basic teaching in grades 1–9, or wide-ranging practice, teaching special education, immigrant education, high school or adult education (Jyrhämä 2006: 60). One of the emphases in teacher education is the need to understand the diversity of the students' needs, with the help of parents, other teachers, and other professionals (Vauras 2006: 179). The Teacher Education Development Program (2001), states: "Teaching is a human relations profession, in which encounters and interaction are at the very core of daily work. The teacher needs an ability to cope with the growing diversity of learners, multiculturalism…" and also that "[…] Expertise in special pedagogy and development psychology play an important part in all teachers' work. Every teacher must have a basic knowledge and skills are needed to identify and prevent learners' social problems, learning difficulties and exclusion. […]" (qtd in Vauras 2006: 179–180.)

According to the policy in Finland, teachers must be capable of making judgments, and to interpret and apply the Finnish national core curriculum to their classes. Therefore, an understanding of the nature of the curriculum is essential. The teacher has to integrate every subject into a whole theme. They select the concepts taught, and can adapt the teaching to their students' different needs. (Korkeamäki 2006: 156.) In 1994, the Teacher Education Department of the University of Jyväskylä, Finland, established the Teacher Researcher Net as a network of teachers, student teachers, and teacher educators. The network develops teacher education, and their aims are to develop teaching and curriculum, to create cooperative relations between researchers and teachers, to serve as a channel of research publications, and to support teachers' projects, among others. (JyväskyläänYliopisto 2007.)

In Finland, research about intercultural learning and teaching in the area of teacher education started with Räsänen in the 1990's. However, in 2005 Pelkonen, drew attention to the level of intercultural education inside teachers' education, claiming that

it was limited only to the introduction of other cultures, approaching only their food, clothing, and customs. Her research claims that intercultural learning should be more than that, and it has to develop competences and sensitivity to help teachers with the tools necessary to engage dialogue and adaptation from one culture to another. Furthermore, she suggests the inclusion of intercultural competence as a requisite of teaching competence. (Teräs 2006: 30.) These are some of the claims considered by the Ministry of Education in Finland, legislating and applying methods of special education for diverse children. However, new graduates from teacher education can relate better to the real practice once they recognize the importance of multicultural understanding.

Korkeamäki (2006) states two challenges faced by prospective teachers in Finland. First, teachers need to avoid the same type of instruction for every child without considering their background and the knowledge they already possess. She emphasizes that educators should take into account the child's life and experiences. The second challenge, according to Korkeamäki, is the teachers' cultural knowledge, their personal experiences and history. Thus, she claims teacher education must make students compare and contrast their beliefs with theory and practice. (2006: 157–158.) Students do not only have to make connections with their own past, but they also have to look at them with a multicultural perspective, this way they are broadening their understanding of diversity (Delpit 2006: 126). The focus is on helping children connect with their culture to be able to have a better understanding. At the same time, children have the need to understand and connect with the mainstream culture in order to succeed.

3.4 The Role of the Educator

As the educator Lisa Delpit (2006) claims:

> […] we must recognize and overcome the power differential, the stereotypes, and barriers which prevent us from seeing each other. Those efforts must drive our teacher education, our curriculum development, our instructional strategies, and every aspect of the educational enterprise […] (2006: 134)

According to Sheets (2005), a competent teacher should link knowledge between home and school, should provide multiple forms of assistance to his/her students, and has to participate in an active manner in constructing together with the students new understandings (2005: 20). Change will take place to the extent that the educator defines or redefines his/her role towards minority students and minority communities as well. To analyze the educators' roles when working with these minority students, Cummins (2000) gives a framework of four dimensions: the incorporation of language and culture, community participation, orientation to pedagogy, and assessment. This should determine the implementation of teaching methods and policies within the schools. (1988: 128.) Teachers should be aware of the values of multicultural education, be acquainted with its methods and material, and acknowledge that is not a technique but a philosophy that should be present in the whole school (Räsänen 1998: 38). The moment this philosophy is integrated into schools, the easier the work for teachers and students will become according to these authors.

One of the reasons for the success or failure of students is the negotiation of identity between them and the educators. Cummins (2000) states that this relationship is shaped by the image educators have of themselves, an image of the identity educators give to their students, and the image of society that educators think their students will form, meaning that there is negotiation of identities in the classroom, and the interactions between teachers and minority students are never neutral (2000: 48). It is important for educators to acquire cultural competence and intercultural communication skills, in order to assist culturally diverse students and work together with communities and families (Salend 2005: 121).

Carrasquillo & Rodríguez assert that teachers must embrace other cultures and ease the path of transition of their students. They add that teachers are a link to a successful adjustment into school, and must give positive connotations to students' cultural differences, in this way they will nurture their self-esteem. Another task for teachers, they continue, is to make students aware of the ethnic background of their classmates, embracing informed diversity. (2002: 52–55.) Supporting their claim, Sheets maintains that those educators who are aware and recognize their students' cultural displays are

the ones who can respond better to their students needs (Sheets 2005: 17). When teachers take the time to truly assess a child, they will support him/her in every area, including that cultural connection.

Jim Cummins (2000) emphasizes that in order for minority students to respond to the academic challenges, is necessary to reverse the pattern of subordination. He alleges that educators must encourage students to develop their language and culture, challenging in this way the inferior perception that society gives to minorities. Educators and parents must become partners in the education process, eliminating the idea of minority parents' lack of interest in their child's education. Furthermore, instruction in the classroom should promote critical discussion of social themes around diverse students, challenging the society's development. This change will take place when teachers are willing to confront the power relationships in the larger society and then, the change will be reflected inside schools. (2000: 246–247, 252.)

Teachers have to identify their students' strengths, and the only way of assuring this is to know the children's lives outside the classroom. When teachers are not aware of these strengths, there are deficits in the teaching delivered (Delpit 2006: 173). Regarding teacher profession, Niemi & Jakku-Sihvonen (2006) give a list of the abilities needed by educators:

- ability to support different learners (age, gender, cultural background…);
- ability to co-operate with other teachers;
- ability to promote co-operation with stakeholders;
- ability to develop and improve curriculum and learning environments;
- ability to solve problems in school life; and
- ability to reflect on one's own professional identity.

(2006: 44–45)

Sheets asserts that a positive experience in the multicultural classroom, most of the time, depends on the teacher's ability to perceive diversity. These perceptions are the ones shaping the teaching-learning process. Therefore, it is essential for the teacher to be aware of his/her teaching responsibilities when dealing with different cultures, in this

way, he/she will understand the role of culture and will make culturally inclusive decisions. (2005: xxi.) The abilities enlisted by Niemi & Jakku-Sihvonen, as well as Sheets approach, have always been demands for teachers; however, sensitivity towards other cultures is now becoming one of them.

3.5 Cultural Awareness in Teaching

The search for professional competence in education has embraced internationalization and multiculturalism. Originally, international schools had an elitist background that followed the curricula of one or two countries, and even when students represented a multicultural setting, they were relatively homogeneous (e.g. in social status). In contrast, there are many schools that are not consider international, but they represent different cultures and deal with multiculturalism every day, for instance the UNESCO schools, regular schools that follow the objectives of the United Nations. In Finland, during the 1970's and 1980's, internationalism was approached in the curricula, and the core element was for citizens to acquire a global concern. Later, in 1994 the curricula changed to cultural knowledge and multiculturalism, where schools were responsible for redirecting the change of focus in society. (Räsänen 1998: 33–34.)

A research by Miettinen (1998) approached the pedagogical and cultural thinking of North Karelian class teachers in Finland. The study interviewed teachers who worked with pupils from different cultures. As a result, four types of behavior were found: the assimilative educator, who sees cultures as romantic and exotic, and therefore has many stereotypes; the routine-oriented educators, focusing on discipline and rules, where cultural issues are left on the side; the humanistic multicultural educator, where tolerance is the core value, and cultural matters are important even when working only with Finnish students; and the critical multicultural educator, the one working towards strengthening the pupils' own cultural identity, and sees the concept of culture as critical. These outcomes were based on the teachers' values, attitudes, and knowledge. The research claimed that it only represented these particular teachers interviewed at this particular setting. (Miettinen 1998: 66–79.)

When addressing models of instruction and cultural diversity, Cummins (2000) criticizes traditional and progressive pedagogy. In the former, he states that the teacher is in control, gives the information and it is arranged in a hierarchical way. This devalues the identities of minority students who cannot share their experiences, and closes the possibility for meaningful communication. In the latter, students must learn by doing, since education is reached through practical experience. In this model, tolerance and cultural differences are implied. However, reflection on students' social realities is missing. Cummins favors transformative pedagogy that embraces the concepts of progressive pedagogy, but uses critical inquiry that includes the social reality of the students. (2000: 255–262.) A system that takes into account the surroundings and social reality of the students, including culture, helps them connect what is familiar with the new set of information acquired at school, making the process more effective.

When teaching students with a linguistically diverse background, it is necessary for educators to differentiate cultural differences from learning difficulties. To be able to do this, Salend (2005) states that teachers must diversify the planning team, compare performances in both languages, consider the processes and factors with the acquisition of a second language, employ alternatives for testing, identify home experiences that affect learning, and develop an appropriate education plan (2005: 122–128). Language is critical to culture: it should be considered carefully by educators when teaching. However, being aware of linguistic differences does not mean the work is done. There are also cultural differences to be considered when in a multicultural classroom. Culturally diverse students not only have the learning demand when instructed; in addition, they experience the demand of processing the information in a different language. (Carrasquillo & Rodríguez 2002: 3,50,51.)

One of the paradigms of pedagogical action in multicultural education is that of systemic infusion, which suggests more than curriculum integration and responsive teaching: it reaches to the mandatory practice of cultural diversity at all levels of the school: administration, students, teachers, institutions, and the educational system (Gay

1998: 19). Every action and attitude in teachers inside the classroom reflects the quality of the relationship with students: the emotional tone in the class, the approach of teaching, the resources selected, and the way assessment is conducted (Sheets 2005: 17). It is not an easy task to acquire multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills. On some occasions, multiculturalism cannot be taught directly; it requires a personal and direct experience. Therefore, Pedersen (2004) affirms that educators must choose carefully and organize situations where students can take part of this experience. (2004: 303). Teachers and students, who have been part of a multicultural experience, tend to be more aware of its demands.

According to Sheets (2005), the challenge when teaching culturally diverse children is not necessarily to design a program that fits each culture, but to identify whenever there is a problem with a particular student. Culture is only one of the tools the educator must use in his/her approach to teaching when working with diverse students. (2005: 167.) Today's educators are required to have pedagogical skills, knowledge about field, and now, living in a multicultural society, the need of cultural awareness is essential to their abilities.

4. ANALYSIS

4.1 Methodology

The analysis in this thesis will be based on and supported by the dimensions for multicultural education and culturally safe teaching proposed by Rosa Hernández Sheets, PhD associate professor at Texas Tech University. Her academic fields include bilingual education, culture and cognition, ethnic identity, teacher preparation, and the examination of the role of culture in the educative process. Sheets presents a new theory, called *Diversity Pedagogy* (2005), the first publication in its field to demonstrate the interconnectedness of culture and cognition in the teaching-learning process. (Sheets 2008.)

In the following section I will explain the eight dimensions that Sheets suggests in her diversity pedagogy. Sheets' definition states

> "Diversity pedagogy has eight dimensional elements. Each dimension represents a teacher pedagogical behavior and its complementary student cultural displays […] Diversity pedagogy is conceptualized with two paired, tightly interconnected dimensional elements in eight dimensions guiding teacher and student behaviors." (2005: 14–15).

The practical part of my analysis will be developed with these dimensions, as a model for culturally sensitive teaching. Every dimension is based on the research of several other authorities in the field: Sheets embraces their theories to support her research proposal. The research for this thesis can be described as an interview-based qualitative study. I covered case studies with two sets of teachers, in the context of education in Finland. Six interviews were held, which consisted of two teachers working in the regular classroom (where pupils are Finnish integrated with pupils with an immigrant background); three more teachers that work in the immigrant classroom (where all children come from a country different than Finland); and a final interview with a student about to graduate from teacher education.

All the interviews were held in the city of Vaasa, Finland and were conducted in the context of the lower (grades one to six) and upper (grades from seven to nine) level of basic education. This analysis does not try to portray Finland's educators: it will compare a model recently proposed (Diverse Pedagogy) in the two different areas of education in Finland discussed earlier: the regular and the immigrant classroom. The teachers' perspectives were analyzed and compared through the practical part. Even when the model suggests students' cultural displays (manifestations of norms/values that children learn at home), they can be taken as a response, after the educator practices culture-sensitive teaching. Those students' displays should be considered for further study. The analysis does not try to determine if the teachers had a good or bad performance: their approach and perspectives are only compared with Sheets' model. The findings were gathered and represent two specific schools in one specific city in Finland, and do not reflect the general perspective of the country.

4.1.1 The Dimensions of Diversity Pedagogy

These dimensions approach eight different 'teachers' pedagogical behaviors' (relationships, tone in the classroom, teaching strategies, resources, assessment), that lead to certain 'students' cultural displays' (manifestations that children learn at home). These dimensions should be combined. They suggest the construction of new knowledge, by students and teachers, when both cultures meet. The following concepts in the rest of section 4.1 are taken from Sheets' *Diversity Pedagogy: Examining the Role of Culture in the Teaching-Learning Process* (2005).

4.1.1.1 Diversity / Consciousness of Differences

This dimension analyses how diversity affects classroom practices. Sheets (2005) advices that the teacher's pedagogical behavior, in order to obtain certain student cultural manifestations, in this dimension should:

- Provide opportunities for students to develop such skills as justice, honesty, impartiality and integrity;
- Create an environment that acknowledges and respects differences;
- Encourage inclusive relationships;

- Assume accountability for personal practices that could be discriminatory.

The displays on the student part will most likely:

- Acquire and portray self-control in balancing needs and wishes with those of others;
- Develop awareness to diverse issues dealing with differences between individuals;
- Accept those who differ from him/her;
- Understand their role and responsibility when confronting discriminatory incidents.

To perceive diversity requires self-evaluation of how one thinks. Students belong to different groups and among them there is diversity. Children are related to a family; they can share with them kinship, affection, cultural knowledge, and resources. These families can have different structures, and socioeconomic status can be associated with race. It is a teacher's responsibility to acknowledge everyone and discourage prejudice. Issues of sexual orientation, gender, and ability difference have to be confronted and discussed explicitly, by encouraging inclusion. Teachers can use the diversity presented inside the classroom to incorporate these elements into their teaching. They can make students feel welcome, and have to react when a climate of exclusion is perceived. By discussing the differences and similarities between students' cultures, the teacher promotes acceptance and respect to self and others. Moreover, there is a need for continuous reminders on how differences contribute to the richness of the class, by providing social and cognitive growth. (Sheets 2005: 27–47.)

4.1.1.2 Identity / Ethnic Identity Development

Under this dimension the effect of ethnicity is brought out as influential in students' development. It approaches the way teachers can adapt their instruction to meet the ethnic needs of students, in other words, how they adapt the process so that students feel comfortable in the mainstream culture while at the same time maintaining their ethnic identity. Sheets (2005) emphasizes that when teachers:

- Create conditions through instruction and relationships where students can express their ethnic identity.

Pupils will:

- Develop a psychological, social and cultural self as part of an ethnic group.

Teacher education includes human developmental theories (psychoanalytic, behavioral, humanistic, and cognitive) mostly focused on individual characteristics (differences), which do not cover the ethnic group field (group-based inequalities). Ethnicity is more specific than culture; in the classroom different ethnic patterns can be used to communicate and apply certain types of learning. Ethnicity can be observed in the way people react to joy, anger, grief, gender, etc. and even when the reactions are the same, the purpose might be different. (Sheets 2005: 50–51.)

As there is diversity inside one culture, there are differences among members of the same ethnic group, due to socioeconomic status, level of acculturation, gender, etc. In this dimension, the focus is on those students who share similarities rather than differences among the ethnic group. Children construct their perceptions through the messages of others. It is important that teachers promote their students' ethnicity by: appreciating physical differences, discussing negative stereotypes related to ethnic groups, give an opportunity to learn the benefits of being ethnically different like cultural traditions, and the ability to speak two languages. Furthermore, teachers have to encourage cross-ethnic relations during the children's work. In the classroom, decisions made by teachers are affected by the ethnicity of the pupils, as well as by other aspects of identity, like sexual orientation, gender, ability, etc. (Sheets 2005: 48–66.)

4.1.1.3 Social Interactions / Interpersonal Relationships

The third dimension uses the classroom as a space for developing acceptance, and to have a social life at the level of the academic life. It emphasizes how students can display their social skills regardless of their culture in the classroom. Sheets (2005) maintains that when teachers:

- Create an environment that lets children interact socially, such as classroom activities to help students develop relationships;
- Focus on the actions students need to be part of social groups.

Consequently, pupils will:

- Show cultural and social behaviors in every school activity, will develop friendships and experience and initiate acceptance;
- Relate to other students socially and will contribute to the benefit of the group.

These kinds of social relationships support students emotionally and cognitively. Friendships help dealing with stress; they provide help with academic issues, and work together as in a cooperative society. The teacher, class environment, gender, and race influence the selection of friends. However, there is a difference among students who do not possess social skills and those who are the target of discrimination. Another influential element is physical proximity in the classroom. This also determines how friends are chosen. Moreover, gender is normally more influential than race when selecting friends. (Sheets 2005: 67–76.)

When pupils attend an integrated school with different races, this does not necessarily mean that diverse children will instantly become friends. What defines this, is the climate in the classroom and in the school. To help with social interactions, Sheets (2005) advises that teachers should approach the roles of friends and discuss rejection and friendship (2005: 80). Special attention to those students without friends and isolated should be given, and opportunities for friendships among students who differ in race, gender, and socioeconomic status. (Sheets 2005: 80–82.)

4.1.1.4 Culturally Safe Classroom Context / Self-Regulated Learning

One of the supporting aspects for learning is the teachers' awareness of the invisible culture, the culture that states the unwritten norms and rules. This dimension encloses the use of those codes by teachers in order to help students to accomplish their goals. According to Sheets (2005), teachers need to:

- Promote an environment that includes all children, and make them feel safe and accepted;
- Be aware of the students' cultural displays of knowledge, initiative, and perseverance.

In this way, students will:

- Learn to control their academic and cultural behavior while participating in a shared environment.
- Be able to make monitored decisions in order to succeed academically.

Academic achievement is not diminished by the creation of a safe environment in the classroom. The approach given to rules will set the tone in the classroom. When the students are involved in the rule development, they will show more interest in following them. The tone and environment of the classroom can be considered safe when the teacher has a positive relationship with the students, when he/she possesses knowledge about different cultures and knows how the students interpret rules, and treat all students equally. The communication that takes place in the classroom (tone, volume, style. etc.), is culturally influenced, and normally, is the one responsible for diverse students' problems. (Sheets 2005: 83–90.)

While promoting these behaviors, Sheets insists that the teacher must encourage self-discipline in the students, avoiding approaches that will modify students' behaviors, for example, giving stars, prizes, points. Moreover, teachers should create experiences that help students to self-regulate their actions. The classroom itself should reflect this safe environment by displaying different cultures in posters, boards, and decoration in general. (Sheets 2005: 103–105.)

4.1.1.5 Language / Language Learning

This dimension covers the conditions of how language is learned. In the same way, it covers the loss of the first language in culturally diverse students. The conception of language from teachers and the importance they give to it, is what normally shapes the classroom. Sheets claims that if teachers:

- Adapt the content of language learning to culturally inclusive strategies;
- Promote literacy and prevalence of the first language and the development of the language in used in school.

Then students will:

- Show skills of learning the language;
- Develop both languages, recognizing the value of bilingualism.

Language connects students with their culture. It has to be considered that language issues also affect those students who speak the language but come from a different linguistic background. Students may experience psychological stress when dealing with two languages. Language loss, with diverse students is mostly due to the painful and demoralizing experiences they encounter when they use their first language. (Sheets 2005: 106–108.)

Culturally diverse students often experience a silence period when learning another language. To avoid this, Sheets (2005) insists that teachers should encourage the strengths of diversity, and balance the learning goals for these students in different ways. At the same time, they can plan lessons to develop new vocabulary, and include the diverse students' culture and language in the lessons when possible. A close relationship with parents is needed to collaborate, by using the first language at home, and the encouragement to learn the new one. (Sheets 2005: 120–122.)

4.1.1.6 Culturally Inclusive Content / Knowledge Acquisition

The selection of the material in class is crucial for the interest of the students. Therefore, Sheets (2005) asserts that it is one of the most important tasks for teachers to adapt the material to meet the needs of cultural diverse students. To be able to do this, teachers have to commit to their mission since it requires a lot of work, time, and dedication. In this dimension Sheets adds that if teachers:

- Use material helpful to bring the diverse students' culture in the lesson and expand their knowledge, creating this way understanding about new topics;
- Revise academic curricula for ideological content, if it is including or excluding students.

As a result, pupils will show:

- The use of previous knowledge to construct new knowledge;
- Analytical skills when they evaluate differences in the content of curricula.

Educators have to consider that the availability of the material is one of the things to consider. Although this material might fit the purpose, it is important for teachers to be aware of the cultural influence it contains, even with subjects such as science, mathematics, and technology which one might think are not culturally influenced. To review these materials: the message, authenticity, language, and illustrations need to be analyzed to provide with a better judgment. It is necessary for teachers to know the characteristics of the children they are teaching in order to adapt any kind of material. New knowledge will take place effectively when it is related to previous knowledge. Furthermore, achievement is related to the student interest in the knowledge taught. (Sheets 2005: 123–136.)

One of the educators' challenges is the acquisition of knowledge of other cultures. To succeed in adapting inclusive content to the material used in class, they have to take part in seminars, conferences, courses, etc to increase their knowledge. Furthermore, a relationship with people who share the cultural knowledge of the students, such as parents, is valuable. Nevertheless, teachers have also to analyze their own culture, practices and attitudes in order to be conscious about their own perceptions. (Sheets 2005: 142–144.)

4.1.1.7 Instruction / Reasoning Skills

"Teacher ability to deliver culturally inclusive instruction to diverse students is consequential to their opportunity to learn" (Sheets 2005: 145). There are different types of instruction for different types of students; these students may reason differently according to their cultural background. Sheets (2005) asserts that when teachers show:

- Knowledge about the subject and methods necessary to teach their content;
- Application of diverse instructional approaches when presenting new concepts;
- The promotion of thinking and its development.

The students will:

- Understand new concepts and will show use of previous knowledge related to their culture;
- Show strengths in specific learning styles;
- Acquire thinking skills to control learning.

The capacity of students to understand and analyze the knowledge presented before them resides in the capacity of adaptation of the instruction from the teacher, and the cultural approach in teaching. This does not mean that all children from the same ethnic background learn the same way. However, they may share patterns. Furthermore, the response to teachers' enquiries may vary from student to student. Therefore, teachers have to be aware of the students' reasoning and thinking process before disregarding their answers. (Sheets 2005:145–161.)

Learning style refers to how the student prefers to learn, not how much knowledge the student already possesses. There are also different types of intelligence influenced by the students' cultural experiences. Students can adopt several of these aspects of intelligence: linguistic, logical mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily kinesthetic, interpersonal and intrapersonal. Sheets insists that teachers have to be familiar with these types of intelligence and learning styles to be able to adapt their teaching when needed. (Sheets 2005: 163–166.)

4.1.1.8 Assessment / Self-Evaluation

The goal of every teacher is to teach all students; assessment is a monitoring tool for teachers to evaluate their work. In this dimension, Sheets claims that when teachers:

- Apply different types of assessment and try to adapt instruction to students' needs, while minimizing competition;
- Encourage self-evaluation explaining metacognitive strategies;
- Communicate with the parents regarding every academic, and social aspect of the student.

Pupils will:

- Apply metacognitive skills understanding strengths and weaknesses in knowledge;
- Be responsible and conscious about their learning;
- Value cultural knowledge learned at home.

In the classroom, the term equity will not be defined by the tools used in the assessment of students. Equity will be implemented with better outcomes when teachers adapt the conditions of learning to every pupil in an equitable manner. To evaluate the learning of culturally diverse children requires a lot of attention and observational skills on the students' cognitive preferences. Likewise, students need to be aware and conscious of how attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors affect their learning. (Sheets 2005: 167–169.)

Using multiple resources, like other students or parents, to evaluate students' growth will help teachers get a better understanding of the children's development, claims Sheets (2005). Furthermore, a combination of different methods will show a wider outcome on the assessment. Students need to be aware of the goals set by the class and how they will be evaluated. Consequently, students will be able to practice self-evaluation and acknowledge progress. (Sheets 2005: 175–179.)

4.2 Findings

4.2.1 The regular classroom

This research took place in the area of basic education with teachers from Vaasa, Finland. These teachers were interviewed on their perceptions of inclusive education and their experiences with culturally diverse children. Two different sets of classrooms were considered, the immigrant and regular classroom. The regular classroom consisted mostly of Finnish students, and there were also a few integrated students, who had a cultural background different than Finnish. In Table 3, an analysis of the interviews is gathered in relation to the eight dimensions of Diversity Pedagogy described earlier in this chapter. In order to compare Sheets' proposal of a culturally safe classroom, the interview questions were structured to bring elements of diversity, teaching styles and cultural awareness. The same questions were asked on every interview, and in most cases the information was expanded by the teachers.

The table is divided into two parts: lower level in basic education, meaning grades from one to six, and upper level basic education, consisting of grades seven to nine. One of the differences between these two levels, besides the age of the students, is the fact that in the lower level, educators are denominated class teachers; therefore, the students stay with one teacher throughout the year. In the upper level, there are subject teachers, where the pupils acquire more responsibility by taking care of their schedules, going from class to class, and dealing with several teachers throughout the school year.

The answers from the interviews held in the regular classrooms are from teachers who have had five or less years of experience teaching, have groups from 16 to 24 students, with one to four foreign pupils integrated in the classes. In other words, around 10% to 30% of the class has a cultural background different from Finnish in these particular regular classrooms.

Table 3 shows an analysis of the answers given by the two teachers interviewed in the regular classroom. Teacher 1 taught in the lower level of basic education and Teacher 2 in the upper level.

Table 3. The Regular Classroom

Dimensions	**Lower Level Basic Education**	**Upper Level Basic Education**
Diversity/ Consciousness of Diversity	– Teacher concern in bringing up differences and qualities among children. – Cultural experiences with current immigrant students are explained to all children for understanding.	– Unfamiliar with students' background. – Perception that Finnish students are used to deal with other cultures and do not find it uncomfortable.
Identity/Ethnic Identity Development	– Teacher appreciation of physical differences.	– No identity remarks were made.
Social Interactions/ Interpersonal Relationships	– Work together with immigrant students who are not integrated into the regular classroom, in classes such as crafts and physical education. – It is not perceived as a challenge if the child starts his/her education from the beginning of the year.	– Depends on the students' social skills, if they are shy, they do not get involved.

Culturally Safe Classroom Context/Self-Regulated Learning	– Permission from parents to join religious education. If denied, a special program on ethics is structured for these children. – Students are asked to share information about their culture/language by the teacher. – Teacher concern in decoding students' cultural reactions.	– The initiative to share about their culture comes from the immigrant students, and it is very subtle, by making only small remarks. – Concern from the teacher about acting adequately with all students. – Encouragement to immigrant students regarding their performance. – Concern about delivering instruction correctly to these immigrant students. – Interested in having more information on immigrant students' educational background.
Language/ Language Learning	– Students are offered one lesson a week of Finnish language during their class period. – Aware of the importance of maintaining the first language and encourage students to do so. – School gives 'mother tongue' lessons to diverse students in order to maintain their first language.	– Aware of language difficulties among these students in subjects that require specialized words. – Students must be fluent in Finnish when going to the regular classrooms.
Culturally Inclusive Content/ Knowledge Acquisition	– There is no special material for children coming from other countries. All books are directed at Finnish children. – Conscious about not incorporating other cultures' content in the classroom very often, but trying to do it. – Willing to learn about new material, specialized for immigrant students. – Aware of the need of special material in the immigrant classrooms.	– There is no relation or link between teaching the regular lessons and the students' culture.
Instruction/ Reasoning Skills	– Support of a special teacher for all students who are behind. – Research is not performed regarding approaches to other cultures. Finnish system is applied. – If the student does not understand the lesson, extra classes are held by the special teacher.	– Students must be prepared to follow the lessons, have sufficient school background and language skills. – Immigrant students can repeat the year in the Finnish classroom. – Teacher can slow down the explanation during class for the immigrant students to have a better

	– 'Mother tongue' teachers are supportive staff for instruction. They can go over subjects in the children's first language.	understanding. – Instruction does not differ for immigrant students. – If one method does not work with the students the teacher then adopts a different one.
Assessment/Self-Evaluation	– In the final evaluation report is written and considered when Finnish is not the students' first language. – Exams might be conducted in the child's mother tongue. – Assistants can go with the student into a separate room and explain questions. On occasion, discuss the exam verbally. – All students with special education or in different levels on certain subjects may have special exams. Previously discussed with the school psychologist.	– Immigrant students are allowed to have the exam with the book in certain instances and make the evaluation alone so that the teacher can explain. – If necessary, assessment can be individualized, having a test with less information for instance.

Table 3 presents differences among the teachers interviewed, especially in the Diversity and Identity dimensions: in the lower level there is a positive acknowledgment of cultural differences, at the upper level there is unfamiliarity with the students' background. A similar approach to the Language and Assessment dimensions was stated, in a way that both levels considered and gave special education and assessment to culturally diverse children.

In the following sections 4.2.1.1 and 4.2.1.2 the findings and perceptions of Teacher 1 and 2 are discussed separately, deepening the information shown in Table 3. Then section 4.2.1.3 compares Teacher 1 and 2 within the regular classroom and explains the differences that appear in Table 3 and those perceived during the interviews.

4.2.1.1 Lower Level Basic Education in the Regular Classroom

Teacher 1 (interview, Mar. 30, 2009)

Teacher 1 was a female teacher who taught second grade at a regular classroom. She had Swedish as a mother tongue and had been teaching for five years first and second grade, as well as English on the lower level of basic education.

The findings in the lower level of basic education portrayed all students as equal. When asked about difficulties, low performance, relationships with other students, or religion, the Finnish students were frequently mentioned as sharing these differences as well. Those differences or difficulties were not exclusive of immigrant pupils.

The teacher's position in the class towards culturally diverse pupils is that of acceptance, with a romantic view of different cultures and the exoticism coming from them: "[…] We have a lot to learn from them. It is very good that we have all different people in the classroom, of course!" When the teaching style was approached, the answer involved being in Finland and teaching how it is supposed to be taught in Finland, trying to help foreign students in certain tasks, but always having a majority of Finnish students.

As shown in Table 3, social interaction is not perceived as a challenge for immigrant students at the lower level. Teacher 1 stated that students normally do not share information about their culture because they want to fit in. However, they are proud of their home country whenever it is brought up in class. The importance of the maintenance of the pupils' 'mother tongue' is disseminated from the higher levels of power in Finland. It is stated as mandatory by federal law, and supported by the bilingualism of the country. 'Mother tongue' education is offered to every foreign pupil within the school system, and teachers' awareness and support is perceived in this area. Fluency in the Finnish language was one of the biggest obstacles for immigrant students to be able to adapt to class when in higher grades.

The school in this case had as minority teachers those Finnish teachers with Swedish as their mother tongue, along with the language teachers for the immigrant students hired for some lessons weekly. Furthermore, the relationship with immigrant parents did not differ from that with the Finnish parents, having two meetings a year. Teacher

education, in this specific teacher, did not focus on working with immigrant pupils. Moreover, the experience during teacher education was different from the real classroom, where the material and pupils were not ‘perfect’ as in the ‘*Normaalikoulu*’ (Normal School).

A strong sense of equality among students was perceived by the teacher. This equality regarded grades, performance, and the participation of students. Her final thought about educating immigrant pupils was “It is part of our job, to explain and work with these students.” The position was approached with a cooperative and professional attitude.

4.2.1.2 Upper Level Basic Education in the Regular Classroom

Teacher 2 (interview, Apr. 27, 2009)
Teacher 2 was a female teacher with Finnish as a mother tongue. She had been teaching for one year at the upper level of basic education and had a degree in Chemistry and was studying a master’s degree in teacher education.

The school system differs, as mentioned earlier, in the upper grades of basic education: the classes are bigger, there is only one teacher in front of the class, and they have no assistants as in the lower levels. The subjects taught by teacher 2 were mathematics, chemistry, and physics for all three grades in the upper level. The goals in the class were the same for every student, and the difficulties perceived by the teacher, when focusing on the immigrant students, were those of vocabulary in specialized courses such as chemistry and physics.

All foreign students attended the preparatory course for immigrants offered in the school, and they were later integrated into the regular classrooms. The performance of these students was average, compared to the Finnish students in the same class. Culturally diverse students had no major difficulties and had a positive attitude; according to teacher 2, they wanted to learn what was taught.

On social interactions, immigrant students were considered shy and would talk to others only when necessary. Furthermore, encouragement from the teacher was perceived as necessary for the immigrant pupils' performance. There was no relationship with the parents other than the one established by the school yearly. However, teachers wrote a report every day on the students' highlights, and parents could access those reports and contact the teachers if desired.

Overall, immigrant pupils were not fully integrated in the classroom, and there was no information about their backgrounds. In the regular class, there were not many immigrant students. In section 4.2.2, I will present the system used by the upper level basic education in Vaasa, which brings the immigrant students into one model created especially for them.

4.2.1.3 Lower and Upper Level Basic Education in the Regular Classroom

Due to organizational differences between the lower and upper level of basic education, most of the perceptions, connections, and attitudes differed greatly in the two levels. At the lower level, the connection with the students was closer, for many reasons: Age is an important variable in the students to feel more attached to their teachers in the lower level. During adolescence, students try to become more independent and want less interaction with authority figures, such as teachers or parents. In the upper level, students had relationships with several teachers a day, while on the lower level one teacher is in charge of the whole class during the day.

According to the study of North Karelian teachers by Miettinen (1988), the approach of Teacher 1 can be described as the "assimilative educator", the one who sees culture as romantic and exotic, and a pupil from certain culture is an example of his/her culture. Teacher 2 could be placed in the category of "routine-oriented educator" in Miettinen's findings, where cultural issues are not important, and the goal is to get the job done. Experience appeared to be an important factor in dealing with cultural matters, adapting their teaching style to be understood by these culturally diverse students. However, the remarks on adaptation into Finnish culture by Teacher 1, and the unfamiliarity with the

immigrant system of Teacher 2, separate the teaching approaches of the two levels of basic education.

Regarding the performance of the immigrant students, none of the teachers were concerned about differences between them and the rest of the students. They did not consider that immigrant students equal low performance or failure. They stressed some conditions regarding language; however, the assessment was adapted to the pupils. The relationship with parents and the families was not frequent in both cases, only when major problems appeared parents were contacted.

4.2.2 The Immigrant Classroom

The immigrant classroom consists only of students with a cultural background different from Finnish, and it is also called the ‘preparatory course’. This preparatory course allows immigrant children to learn the Finnish language, to get acquainted with Finnish culture, and prepares the students to go into the Finnish regular classrooms. The immigrant classroom takes all immigrant students from the city, providing them with transportation to and from the school. Once they have attended the preparatory course, pupils can attend the schools in the area of their residence, this time integrated into the regular classrooms. The preparatory course is mandatory for all new immigrants to Finland.

Most of these students came from families taken as political refugees. There were also students who had moved to Finland when one of the parents was Finnish, or those whose parents had moved for financial circumstances, ‘economic migrants’ mentioned by Ratcliffe (2004). The largest groups among these particular immigrant classrooms visited were Somalis, Russians, Afghans, Iranians, and Kurdish.

In Table 4, an analysis of the interviews is gathered in relation to the eight dimensions of Diversity Pedagogy described earlier in this chapter. In order to compare Sheets’ proposal of a culturally safe classroom, the interview questions were structured to bring out the elements of diversity, teaching styles and cultural awareness. The same

questions were asked at every interview, and in some cases, the information was expanded by the teachers.

The table is divided into the lower level and the upper level in basic education. The structure is the same as that followed in the previous table; the school system and class distribution is basically the same as in the regular classrooms.

The answers from the interviews held in the immigrant classrooms were from teachers who had from 25 to 30 years experience of teaching. Part of that time, they were teaching in the regular classrooms, and the rest and longest time (20 years) spent teaching immigrant students. These educators started working with the first immigrants in Vaasa, and had experienced the changes in the system, the different approaches on culturally diverse students, and they worked daily in a multicultural environment.

Table 4 shows the analysis of the answers given by three teachers interviewed in the immigrant classroom. Teacher 3 taught in the lower level of basic education and Teacher 4 and 5 in the upper level.

Table 4. The Immigrant Classroom

Dimensions	**Lower Level Basic Education**	**Upper Level Basic Education**
Diversity/ Consciousness of Diversity	– The classroom consists of immigrant children that differ in cultural background. – Recruitment of culturally diverse staff, such as assistants and language teachers.	– The classroom consists of immigrant children that differ in cultural background. – Recruitment of culturally diverse staff, such assistants and language teachers. – Booklets and school information translated into every language for parents.
Identity/Ethnic Identity Development	– Inclusion of children's home culture when he/she is willing to share. – Appreciation of children's awareness of what is happening in their home countries.	– Cultural practices are shared among the pupils in class.
Social Interactions/	– Children perceived as equal; no	– Constant promotion of hobbies for

Interpersonal Relationships	problem coping in new surroundings when they are this age. – School promotes programs of cooperation between the immigrant class and the regular class such as sports, crafts.	students. – Culturally diverse children make friends with Finnish students with lower social status and social problems. – Not enough activities that promote cooperation between diverse students and Finnish students.
Culturally Safe Classroom Context/Self-Regulated Learning	– No religious education is given during the first year in the preparatory course. – Consciousness about children's background, skills developed and those that are not. – Support from the whole school for the program, starting with the headmaster and the importance given by redirecting funds to the maintenance of the program.	– Safety is the most important premise in the class, because of the child's background. They work in an atmosphere of trust. – Get to know the parents and for the parents to get to know the staff for cooperation. – Human relationship with students that evolve into friendships. – Permission from parents to join religious activities at school. Students not joining these activities have a special program arranged for them. – Teachers' dedication in studying different cultures privately in order to get to know the pupils.
Language/ Language Learning	– Main subject of instruction is 'Finnish language'. – Once the student has certain language knowledge he/she can continue to the Finnish classroom at any time of the year. – Aware of the importance of having a specialized language teacher. – The need for more hours of instruction of the child's first language. (Two are offered weekly).	– Main subject is Finnish language and all the vocabulary basics for other subjects. – After the pupil has enough knowledge of Finnish language he/she can join the Finnish classrooms. – Pupil's first language classes are offered, but not mandatory. – Educate the child on the importance of literacy in the first language. – At the end of every year every child is evaluated on their language proficiency level for future schooling purposes.
Culturally Inclusive Content/	– There is an initiative among teachers to develop multicultural	– Special material for teaching Finnish children with learning

Knowledge Acquisition	work in the schools. – Inclusion of children's culture in class supported by the mother tongue teachers. – Textbooks used are directed to Finnish pupils, influenced by Finnish culture unfamiliar for immigrant children. – Constant free training and education for teachers offered by the government on multicultural issues.	problems is used to teach immigrants. – Discussion about different religions in class with a cultural perspective. – Ministry of education offers courses for teachers on working with culturally diverse students. – Comparison of the different languages during class, and sharing cultural practices from Finland and students' cultures.
Instruction/ Reasoning Skills	– The classes are divided by age, because of learning patterns. – Groups have 10 pupils and individual study plans. They can progress at their own pace. – Importance on individual education, giving as much support as needed. – Use of support material to develop the children's motor and space skills. – The system was of great benefit for Finnish students, because of the individualized instruction.	– Individual study plan according to the pupil's needs. – Special instruction in mother tongue is offered if needed. – Emphasis on pupils' personal instruction through the whole program, where their background is considered for any kind of course. – More integration is needed with Finnish classes. – Patience as the key to work with culturally diverse students. Taking time to repeat as long as it is necessary.
Assessment/Self-Evaluation	– Evaluation does not depend on performing a test, but on the teachers' perception of the pupil's progress throughout the year. – Certain goals are set for the class; however, it varies depending on where the children started their education.	– Same educational content is not evaluated in the immigrant classes. There is less information, and they just focus on the main things in every subject.

In table 4 the lower and the upper level in the immigrant classrooms are fairly homogeneous in most of the dimensions. Individual instruction was used in both levels, a culturally safe classroom was promoted, the maintenance of the children's first language and individualized assessment. In the social interactions dimension, children in the lower level had more interactions with Finnish pupils than those in the upper level.

In the following sections 4.2.2.1 and 4.2.2.2 the findings and perceptions of Teacher 3, and 4-5 are discussed separately, deepening the information shown in Table 4. Then section 4.2.2.3 compares Teacher 3 with 4 and 5 within the immigrant classroom and explains the differences that appear in Table 4 and those perceived during the interviews.

4.2.2.1 Lower Level Basic Education in the Immigrant Classroom

Teacher 3 (interview, Apr. 28, 2009)

Teacher 3 is a male teacher who had been teaching for 30 years. He had Finnish as mother tongue and started teaching problematic pupils giving them special education at schools. For the last 20 years he has taught at the immigrant classroom at lower level basic education.

The immigrant classroom can take new students throughout the year. Classes are very small, composed of 10 pupils. Most of the students arrive illiterate. However, the sense of equality was perceived by the teacher, constantly mentioning the different circumstances, and context of these children, and the progress obtained during their education.

Time in the immigrant classroom varies in every pupil; individual study plans are used so that children can progress at their own level. The stay in the immigrant classroom on the lower level of basic education can be from six months to one year and a half as maximum; it depends on the school background of every child. The average stay is of one year, because interaction with Finnish pupils is necessary to develop the language, and also integration is seen as fundamental.

Language skills should not be a major obstacle when evaluating these pupils. However, it is extremely important for an immigrant teacher to be able to differentiate when a pupil has language problems or learning deficiencies. Furthermore, some students come from refugee camps and they suffer from a difficult background. In the beginning, it

might be challenging for a teacher to determine an accurate evaluation, considering these psychological traits. For these reasons, special attention is directed towards developing the pupil's motor and visual skills. Parents' relationship with the immigrant's teachers, on the lower level of basic education, does not differ from the one that the regular classroom teacher has.

The teacher's educational background comes from the interest in different cultures, and constant and personal actualization in multicultural issues offered by the government and supported by the school. Teacher education, at the time of his studies, did not include any work with pupils from other cultures. Yet the actual multicultural work in the school was strongly promoted by the headmaster first, and permeated through the rest of the staff that worked actively and side by side with immigrant teachers, developing multicultural activities. The community played an important role in the development of immigrant pupils; they provided half of the funds for their preparatory course and 'mother tongue' lessons.

As one of the pioneering teachers in immigrant education in Finland, Teacher 3 affirmed: "[…] it has been really a revolution, a slow revolution in all this school system during these 20 years […] it is a revolution, but there are not very many teachers who have noticed it," reflecting on the fact that it has been of great help for Finnish pupils as well. In this way they can offer individualized education to everyone when needed. Closer attention to differences when learning became more important after teachers had to focus on a system for children with cultural differences, helping in this way all children with special needs.

4.2.2.2 Upper Level Basic Education in the Immigrant Classroom

Teachers 4 and 5 (interview, Apr. 3, 2009)

Teachers 4 and 5 were both female teachers with Finnish as a mother tongue. They had 30 and 25 years of experience respectively and had been pioneers in immigrant education in Finland. They were both subject teachers on the upper level of basic education, in the regular classroom, before starting to work with immigrant pupils.

Immigrant students in the upper level, most of the time had no educational background. Classes were also of 10 pupils, and teachers had assistants to work with the pupils.

Teachers 4 and 5 explained that a special program was developed in the city of Vaasa in the upper level of basic education, ten years ago. This program was called the Vaasa model, where immigrant students went through one year preparatory course, and had the option to stay in what has been denominated 'joint classes'. These joint classes followed the model of the preparatory course of 10 pupils per lesson. They focus individually on the students and educated them until they were ready to go to vocational or high school (*lukio*). Different levels of joint classes were offered by immigrant students that varied in their educational progress. This initiative was conceived on the basis that one year of preparatory course was not enough in the upper level for immigrant students that had no educational background. When these students were integrated into the Finnish classroom, they had trouble following the courses, and teachers were not able to give them individual education. Teachers currently working with immigrant students (including Teachers 4 and 5) created the model and negotiated the funds for the classes. Teacher 4 states about starting the project: "[…] it was very hard work to start […] and make the bosses understand why we need so much money and having small groups. There are more differences than just brown eyes […]". They wanted to help students by focusing individually.

The relationship with the parents was regular. Teachers in the upper level, in this Vaasa program, educated parents on the Finnish school system, the importance of maintaining their first language and adaptation to the country. Meetings were held by groups of parents sharing the same cultural background and with the help of a translator.

The transition of immigrant pupils into the regular classroom could happen, but only after a conscious decision. Those pupils who were preparing to go to high school may attend a few courses in the regular classroom. In Finland, it is very competitive to get into *lukio* (high school). Only those students with the better grades are able to attend.

During the last year, the first two immigrant students graduating from joint classes succeeded in passing into *lukio*. This year two more are preparing to achieve that.

On social relations with Finnish students, the teachers stated: “They [Finnish pupils] don’t see our pupils [immigrant students] they are like air. They can play sports but after that it is the same. Teenagers are shy and Finns are shy; because of this lack of interaction they don’t share their culture and teachers do not encourage them; they don’t care […]”.

According to these teachers, safety was the most important principle. Cultural awareness plays an important role when working with immigrant students. Private study and reading about different cultures is necessary in this environment. On teachers needs, both teachers agreed:

> “Every day is a challenge.” They are aware of their instruction being influenced by their own Finnish culture “[…] but it has also changed, to adapt, that is a must! We cannot only be Finnish teachers speaking Finnish; it is impossible. If we say there is a fish in the water, so the fish will never say that the water is wet […] we have started to see Finnish culture as never thought before […] with new eyes, we go away from our culture and we see with other eyes […]”

That statement compares with Delpit’s (1996:151) remark of being able to see through our own cultural lenses in order to perceive those differences.

The teachers’ relationship with the students was closer than any they previously had. They recognized the changes in their actions and how working with this type of student had not only changed their attitudes but also the perceptions of the people around them. “We don’t have the role anymore [of a teacher]; we are just human beings with the pupils.” Their approach of bringing out the human side of education as the ultimate goal when working with different cultures was also Delpit’s (1996) goal in *Other People’s Children.* It is equivalent to the views of sensitive teaching in these immigrant teachers.

The teachers explained that there is cooperation with other schools conducting immigrant programs, supported by the government. In addition, they are part of a

national educational program, consisting of a network of educators, social workers, health department, etc. to develop immigrant education. Moreover, they received funds to support immigrant education. This governmental approach included the contributors that Salend (2005: 158–164) suggests should participate in the decision making process when educating culturally diverse children.

4.2.2.3 Lower and Upper Level Basic Education in the Immigrant Classroom

The major differences between these two levels were regarding the readiness of the pupils to enter the regular classroom. While on the lower level one year is sufficient, in the preparatory course on the upper level, one year is not enough. The relationship and the support of the teachers in the immigrant classroom was not the same at both levels, nor were the activities carried out by the school.

Knowledge of Finnish required more from the students on the upper level, while on the lower level only basic proficiency was required and the pupil could advance in this area while integrated into the regular classroom. The relationship with Finnish pupils differed on the two levels: immigrant children were better accepted when they were younger. Interestingly, the relationships with parents also differed between the two levels. The upper level seemed to have a closer and more frequent relation with parents and family than the lower level.

Both levels of basic education experienced resistance from the school and teachers in the beginning of the programs. This resistance was based on the lack of experience from the Finnish educators dealing with pupils from other cultures. Over the years, the perception has been changing slightly. There is now a larger number of foreign pupils in the classrooms.

4.2.3 Teacher Training

In the city of Vaasa teacher education is offered at the Swedish university. Therefore there is a Vaasa teacher training school that has among its curricula an English

immersion program in basic education. All new researches are conducted and tested in this school, and once they succeed they are carried to the rest of the schools. Teacher students conduct most of their practical studies here. However, two out of six of these practical periods can be performed in regular Finnish schools.

In Table 5, an analysis of the interview with one student in the last phase of studies of teacher education has been carried out in relation to the eight dimensions of Diversity Pedagogy described earlier in this chapter. The same method and questions were used to find out the student's perception of teacher training, and the connection with culturally diverse pupils.

Table 5. Teacher Training School

Dimensions	**Teacher Training**
Diversity/ Consciousness of Diversity	– Strong consciousness of diversity, especially in English/Swedish Immersion programs.
Identity /Ethnic Identity Development	– Innovative methods to make the pupils participate in sharing their culture, being experts in the subject.
Social Interactions/ Interpersonal Relationships	– In the immersion program everyone comes from different backgrounds and feels identified. – In the regular classrooms immigrant pupils are distant from Finnish pupils and find friends in lower grades.
Culturally Safe Classroom Context/ Self-Regulated Learning	– Emphasis on equity and special assistance for those students who need it. – Awareness of culturally diverse students' background and the adaptation of instruction.
Language/ Language Learning	– Focus on bilingual/multilingual pupils as a minor. – Training with culturally diverse children whose language is other than Finnish/Swedish.
Culturally Inclusive Content/ Knowledge Acquisition	– As part of the teachers' role to incorporate such elements.
Instruction/ Reasoning Skills	– Five or six instructional periods throughout teachers' education. – Freedom in preparing lessons that fit every student.
Assessment/ Self-Evaluation	– According to the pupils' needs and progress.

Table 5 shows a strong focus on diversity by teacher education. Although instruction depends on the students' preparation an emphasis was given on innovative methods and culturally conscious education.

Student 1 (interview, May 5, 2009)
Student 1 was a female student in her last semester of teacher education with Swedish as a mother tongue. She had participated in five out of six practical teaching periods from which two were in regular classrooms outside the teacher training school.

In the teacher training school, classes were smaller than in the regular classroom. There is a higher number of pupils with different cultural background than in the regular classrooms, those pupils who are staying for two or three years, since their parents are employees of multinational companies, are registered in this school.

Student 1 explained that this was the first year that the minor "Bilingualism and Multicultural Pedagogy" was offered in teacher education. This minor focused more specifically on culturally diverse children. There was only one course offered to those not choosing that minor, called 'International Pedagogy' that included work with other cultures. According to Student 1, there should be more courses offered in the area, since one cannot choose to have or not have pupils from other cultures in their classes.

Student 1 stated that according to her experience the difference working with immersion programs, especially in the teacher training school, is that pupils are always sharing their culture with others. The majority are from different countries so that sharing becomes a natural process. In the regular classrooms, the biggest challenge perceived is the extra work for teachers when incorporating different cultures into the lessons, even when this is encouraged by the teacher training.

A final remark of Student 1 on how to develop professionally, considering the increasing number of immigrant pupils in the classrooms, and the educational system in Finland, referred to the possibility to be a good teacher if one wanted, because of the freedom one has in planning and developing lessons. This is unlike teacher autonomy in

other countries discussed earlier, such as the case of Guinea studied by Anderson-Levitt & Dallo (2003). Student 1 stated: “If you want to be a good teacher you can because of the freedom you have here in Finland”. The commitment and special interest from this particular student focused on multicultural education, which is not necessarily the case of every teacher student. However, a stress on diversity in education and its approach is highlighted by current teacher education.

4.2.4 Discussion

There are several details that stand out with the comparison between Sheets’ model of culturally sensitive teaching in the regular and in the immigrant classrooms. Most of the immigrant students were pupils coming to the country as refugees. This means that besides the adaptation process to a new environment, they usually have psychological repercussions that need to be considered by the teacher besides the cultural background. A strong sense of equality among pupils is given by the teachers: this reflects Cummins (2000) claim about the orientation of equity lived in society (2000:5. 40) discussed in section 2.1 Diversity and Minority Students. Nevertheless, the principle of equity in bringing elements from different cultures into the teaching process is still one of the areas of improvement in the regular classroom.

For a clear comparison between the two classrooms I will now go through every dimension and briefly state the differences and similarities:

Diversity/ Consciousness of Diversity. The immigrant classroom is constituted only by students that are foreigners to the mainstream culture. Their diversity awareness is larger than in a classroom with less foreign pupils. To have culturally diverse staff in the schools reflects the support and importance given to this dimension.

Identity/ Ethnic Identity Development. For the same reason as in the first dimension, I was able to find more emphasis on identity inside the immigrant classroom. Aspects of ethnic identity were mostly shared when the majority of the children belonged to

diverse cultures, and also the representation was stronger when the pupils were younger, as in the lower level of the regular classroom.

Social Interactions/ Interpersonal Relationships. The promotion of activities that involved all students was frequent on the lower level of basic education. Unlike the upper level, immigrant pupils were teamed up to work with students in the regular classes in special projects. In the upper grades, when the immigrant pupils were older, they had greater difficulties adapting and making friends from the mainstream culture. This is a major area of opportunity, especially on the upper level.

Culturally Safe Classroom Context/ Self-Regulated Learning. In both classrooms, there is concern and practice of safety and awareness from the teacher. Relationships with teachers may vary; they are stronger in the immigrant classes. However, the environment set in the classrooms is that of acceptance in both classrooms.

Language/ Language Learning. The importance of maintaining the first language and education in the pupils' mother tongue is stated by law in Finland. Although is not mandatory in basic education, it is encouraged by teachers. This connects the pupils with their cultures. The Finnish language was mainly taught in the immigrant classes; however, language is not a barrier to examining and teaching pupils in the regular classrooms, where teachers try to adapt the content to those who are behind because of language issues.

Culturally Inclusive Content/ Knowledge Acquisition. It was created by the teachers in the immigrant classes and rarely or not used in the regular classes. All teachers agreed about the need for specialized material to work with immigrant children, and the lack of it.

Instruction/ Reasoning Skills. In the regular classes instruction was given to all students, while in the immigrant classroom individual attention and assessment was developed focusing on the pupils' needs. When a pupil in the regular classroom was in need of specialized attention, this was given to him/her. The difference in the upper level was

the organization of the instruction given by several teachers on each subject. Therefore, integrated pupils had to be fluent in the language and possess a certain level of knowledge.

Assessment/ Self-Evaluation. In the immigrant classes, assessment was judged by the accomplishment of the pupils, it was based on the teacher's criteria. Special assessment was conducted for immigrant children and also for those Finnish pupils with special needs. The freedom to adapt the teaching and to focus on the pupils' progress instead of a specific test was the method followed.

A sum up of the findings and conclusions will be given in the next chapter covering the questions initially asked in the introduction of this thesis.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this thesis was to investigate the need for culturally sensitive teaching when working with diverse children in order to guarantee an effective education in the Finnish classroom. This study was conducted by comparing a model proposed for culturally sensitive teaching with the teachers' practice and perceptions. Two different classrooms were considered: the regular classroom and the immigrant classroom, and the study was restricted to Basic Education.

I will now present the answers to the questions approached by this investigation earlier in the introduction, based on the findings from the interviews held in Finnish classes in the city of Vaasa in 2009. These research questions were:

1) How should one teach different cultures? The approach given by these Finnish educators was individualized attention. One should focus on the specific needs of students and provide them with the time, knowledge, and specific approach for them to process the new information. This method was possible in the immigrant classes, where children belong to different cultures. When the immigrant child was integrated in the regular classroom, among the children in the mainstream culture, then more general instruction took place.

2) Are educational systems and teaching protocols influenced by cultural values? All the teachers agreed that their teaching was highly influenced by their culture: the more they were exposed to diverse children, the more aware they were about their culturally influenced practices. This helped them understand the need to adopt different approaches to education, especially in the immigrant class.

3) How do these educational models affect the achievement of minority students? In the case of Finland, the cultural background should not affect the assessment given to the students. In all classes, special attention is given to the maintenance of the immigrant's mother tongue, and several types of assessment are suited for every child.

4) What are the measures an educator has to adopt in order to bring equality and avoid conflict? A reflect of society is portrayed in the Finnish classrooms. All students are entitled to the benefits of schooling, and the school approach to multiculturalism is the one that embraces these diverse students. Teachers in Finland follow the guidelines

given first by the Ministry of Education and then, the support given specifically by the school. The teachers' awareness of differences and their acceptance is what is transmitted to the rest of the students, in this way avoiding any type of conflict.

5) What are the aims of a global education: are they to unify or segregate? Integration is considered important for immigrant students. However, in the upper level of basic education, special attention is needed for immigrant students in order to provide them with education according to their needs; therefore, pupils are kept away from the regular classrooms. Finland's position has benefited, regarding its experience with immigrants, from the experience of other countries such as Sweden, which has been helpful in adopting successful measures for immigrant education. Nevertheless, Finland's educational approach remains as an asset for effective education.

6) What is the educators' perception of multicultural education? In this research, the teachers' acceptance and the benefits of a multicultural education were mostly perceived in both classrooms. The exception was in those classes that did not have many foreign students among them, and those where the school did not promote many activities between the immigrant classrooms and the regular classrooms.

7) Is teacher education considering issues of diversity in the classrooms? At the present time, important input is given to multicultural education, diversity, and bilingualism in the curricula of teacher education. Finland's encounters with different cultures in multiple settings are becoming a constant reminder of the need to approach diverse education.

8) How much distinctiveness in teaching is necessary when trying to accomplish a collective goal? As reflected by these educators, in order to give successful instruction, it is necessary to apply individual education. This way, distinctiveness is the approach that has successfully helped in teaching diverse children.

In conclusion, the regular and the immigrant classrooms applied different approaches in education. They differed in teaching methods, in the assessment given, in promoting cultural activities and in their content. The closest classroom promoting the pedagogical behaviors stated by Sheets in her eight dimensions was the immigrant classroom. This could be demonstrated with several affirmations. Firstly, it was a class where all the pupils came from diverse cultural backgrounds: awareness of diversity and cultural

practices was the foundation of this class. The goal was to give them the necessary tools to adapt to the mainstream culture, and be able to succeed in the regular classes. Secondly, the teachers' profile in the immigrant class was that of a culturally sensitive teacher. They worked only with pupils coming from other cultures, and they had the experience to start working with the first immigrants ever coming into the country.

Finland started receiving immigrants in the late 1970's. This is when the government started implementing actions regarding the education of these newcomers (Teräs 2007:18–19). It was 20 years ago when these particular immigrant teachers started their culturally sensitive work. One of the important aspects was the difference in the teaching experience of these two groups of educators. The immigrant teachers had long experience in both teaching and working with immigrant children. This was a great asset to the research, since it provided with the insight of the pioneers in the field of immigrant teaching. The regular class teachers had only five years or less experience on teaching, and even less experience in dealing with cultural material and immigrant pupils in the classroom. Even when the teachers in the regular classroom were young professionals, they did not have any education regarding the implementation of cultural sensitive material in their lessons. When interviewing the teacher student, the focus on multicultural material in teacher education seemed to be a new important approach and an asset given to the new professionals on the field.

Regular classroom teachers in Finland have not had long experience in having culturally diverse children in their classes. The integration of immigrant pupils in the classrooms is becoming more common, and teachers are acquiring the necessary tools to deliver successful instruction. Finland's educational model has been successful, as shown in the PISA results discussed in section 3.3, Educational Systems and Teacher Preparation in Finland. Today it is an advantage that, due to the late experience with immigrants, the country has been able to apply models of education already tested from other countries with more experience in educating immigrants. The support from the government in developing new programs and directing funds for educating diverse children is creating consciousness in the community and the path to improve this area in education.

The evolution of Finnish education regarding multiculturalism was particularly mentioned by the immigrant teachers. On one side, they are aware because they had witnessed those changes throughout their teaching experience, and on the other, because they were closer to those happenings that especially involved them. As mentioned by Teacher 3 (interview, Apr. 28, 2009) “it is a slow revolution”.

The importance of the pupil’s first language, in the school system, at all levels is reinforced by the fact that Finland has two official languages, Finnish and Swedish. The right of having an education in one’s mother tongue, and to preserve this first language in order to succeed academically, is supported by the notions of Sheets (2005), Delpit (2006), Cummins (2000) and Marainen (1989). Teachers were aware of the students’ background, especially in the immigrant class, and the language was not a barrier to evaluating the performance of a student.

Assessments, in all cases, considered the pupil’s progress and adaptation. A specialized assessment was delivered for every pupil, not only if they have a different cultural background, but also to pupils from the mainstream culture in need of this kind of assistance. This analysis proved the opposite to that stated by Ratcliffe (2004), Delpit (2006) and Lahdenperä (1998) when they claimed that teachers expect low achievement from culturally diverse children and associate conflict with these particular pupils. The attitudes found in this specific research demonstrate the opposite. According to this study, teachers had a strong belief in the pupils’ capacity, their experience with immigrant students proved that they performed average or above average. The theory presented by Stotsky (1999) of depriving mainstream pupils of an advanced intellectual development because of embracing multicultural education, when these diverse students are integrated into the classroom, was not in any way supported by these teachers, who strongly believe to the contrary. When they explain and use several methods of instruction, they are helping even more mainstream pupils than just the immigrant students.

The areas of opportunity detected in both classrooms were those regarding the social interaction of the pupils, and the need for specific material directed at the immigrant

students. Most of the areas suggested by Sheets' model are covered and are being improved with practice and new projects by the Finnish Ministry of Education, which focuses strongly in teacher education. Finland is still developing in the area of immigrant education. In the future, it will be more common to encounter culturally diverse pupils in the regular classrooms, and not only those who have just arrived in the country, but also those who will belong to a second and third generation of immigrants who, regardless of speaking the language, differ in cultural practices. When that time comes, the experience from other countries, as well as Finland's own, will be of benefit to develop and deliver a culturally sensitive education.

The recognition given to diverse students cannot settle for just acknowledgement but has to go further to the implementation of standards in everyday education, since the surrounding context for these students is one more condition for successful achievement. With the immigration rate rising, it is inevitable that classrooms will become diverse, so it is an obligation for policy-makers to include and recognize this fact in all aspects of society, including education. Awareness and training is fundamental for educators to develop a healthy environment and a positive experience for the students, helping also those in the cultural majority to become tolerant and embrace differences. The influence of culture can be perceived in their strongest manner when diverse children are exposed to cultural activities that differ from the ones they normally practice. Confusion may arise and mixed signals may appear in the classroom: it is then part of the educator's role to soften this transition and being able to help these students to adapt to the new surroundings.

The professional educator needs to have a wide range of cultural understanding and competence in order to fulfill the demand of this multicultural inclusion and way of teaching. Moreover, the educator has to bring quality to the educational process. The elimination of prejudice and an atmosphere of equality have to prevail, as well as the consideration of external factors influencing the students in their goals, such as society and family. The demand for education can be challenging for teachers and policy-makers, but the need for an open and defined approach to a culturally heterogeneous system is out there.

In a school setting, to reach the goal of education, the environment needs to be safe and equal. The term “equality” is a buzzword in multicultural education; in addition, “equity” is mentioned, and this means that there should be access and opportunity for all students, regardless of their social and racial background (regarded by Grant & Ladson-Billings 1997: 171–172 in section 2.1 of this thesis). To provide every student with the same opportunities, it is necessary for educators to change their educational approaches and make them culturally and socially sensitive. Accordingly, equity is required in educational policies; they need to bring education to all students through governmental initiatives. In the same way, this equity is required inside the classroom, where teachers need to apply fair decisions that are not influenced by stereotypes or any bias of their own. The aim is an inclusive classroom that celebrates diversity and makes students conscious of the differences among them in a positive way.

Educators need to develop the new knowledge on top of all children’s knowledge, meaning that they need to use what they already have and build on that. Governmental policies will have to play their part. However, in the classroom is where the real experience takes place. Educators must create those conditions and they need to be supported by school policies. Moreover, teachers must know and become familiar with their students in order to challenge them in the correct way. A whole educational process needs to take place, starting with educating families and society, followed by the recognition of the culture’s value from part of its bearers, and finally a supportive attitude and guidance from educators. Thus, teachers have a great responsibility. They will influence the class perceptions and will be part of the construction of the children’s identities. Therefore, they must be conscious about their influence.

To meet the needs of culturally diverse children, and to try to create a safe and equal classroom requires a lot of extra work from educators. The key is commitment and patience. “Low-performing students are often a result of a series of low-performing teachers” (Sheets 2005: 179). The challenge is for those who are willing to analyze their own culture and be aware of their students’ needs. In the case of Finland, a culturally safe classroom was perceived in the immigrant class, while in the regular class there are

still areas of improvement. This research was conducted in specific schools having immigrant programs. Therefore, it does not reflect the country's reality as a whole. The contact and education of immigrants varies across the country. Nevertheless, it requires recognition by authorities, access to funds, and the willingness of teachers to keep these programs running and improving.

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Appendix 1

Interview

Place and Date	Name
School	Grade

School and Students

1. How long have you been teaching?
2. How long have you worked with minority students?
3. What is the composition of your classroom at the moment regarding these minority students?
4. What do you think are the challenges facing students who are part of a minority in the classroom?
5. Does your school have a special program for minority students? How does it handle religious and multicultural education?
6. How do you think the 'instruction preparing' for basic education (*valmistava opetus*) helped the students? Immigrant classroom (*maahanmuuttajaluokka*).
7. On the 'instruction preparing for basic education' would you add anything or emphasize a particular area?
8. How do you think the performance of these minority students affects the class in general?
9. What do you think are the main causes holding minority students back on their performance?
10. What is the relationship of minority students with their classmates?
11. Do minority students share their culture with their classmates and teachers?
12. Could you mention any misunderstandings and clashes (in behavior, learning styles, etc.) arising as a result of cultural differences? How were these conflicts resolved?
13. What do you think are the minority students' main needs?

School and Teaching

1. Is there a relationship between the parents of these minority students and the school? How are they involved?
2. What do you think are the challenges of teachers when working with minority students?
3. How do you incorporate minority students' culture and language into the classroom? Do you think that is the teachers' role?
4. Are there any minority background teachers in the school?
5. Does your teaching method differ with minority students? What is your approach?
6. Do you perceive your teaching to be culturally influenced (by Finnish culture)?
7. How did the teacher education you received prepare you to work with culturally diverse students? Did it help you in the actual classroom situation?
8. In teacher education, were you taught anything you thought was wrong?
9. What do you think has influenced your teaching? Do you have any role models?
10. What is the type of assessment given to minority students? Does it differ from the standard assessment?
11. What do you think are the teachers' needs?
12. Do you think school policies support culturally diverse students?
13. Are you aware of policies being developed now or improvements regarding this subject?