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Finland: A Learning Society with Limited Understanding of Ethnicity in the Everyday Life at School

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Introduction

The aim of this article is to analytically describe and categorize the research conducted in Finland on educational inequalities faced by students of ethnic minority backgrounds. The focus is mainly on secondary education examinations between 1990 and 2010. Because in Finland scientific attention to ethnic inequalities has been paid on only recently, the data for this analysis remained rare, and most of our critics are directed towards the absence of sociological perception in understanding this phenomenon.

After presenting shortly the educational system of Finland we describe the general atmosphere towards ethnic diversity in the country, which impacts also on educational paths and possibilities of minority youth. Our analyses has been divided in three parts according to the discursive approaches of the studies under review, where we examine the existing research on ethnic minority students' positions and possibilities in the Finnish secondary education: (1) ethnic diversity as a "problem" for educational policies and patterns, (2) minority background as a risk for educational exclusion, and (3) ethnic discrimination.

The increasing discussion around multiculturalism in Finland has also stimulated academic debate and polemical political discourse about racism. In

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P. A. J. Stevens, A. G. Dworkin (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Race and Ethnic Inequalities in Education*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-94724-2_12

the Finnish context the term racism has been broadened beyond 'race' to describe also cases where the basis of discrimination is ethnic or cultural background of people. In this article we follow this pattern and call for more profound analyses in order to understand different forms and levels of the manifold and statistically proved ethnic inequality in a learning society. Sociology of cultural racism is committed to social theories that emphasize social hierarchies and positions as discursive and given conditions: e.g. educational exclusion is not an individual process and choice but based on marginalizing patterns of societies and their communities. The article tries to outline this aspect through the rare data at hand.

National Context

The Educational System of Finland

Finland is a Nordic welfare society, which covers social and educational services. The state's welfare policies lean on universalistic ideals: educational services are, in principle, available for all native citizens, naturalized citizens and denizens living in the country. At the very heart of the whole Finnish educational system there is a formal principle and law concerning equality of participation opportunities (Act of Basic Education 1998). Furthermore, the newest *Developmental Plan for Education* launched by the Ministry of Education and Culture (2017–2021) emphasizes practices that aim at decreasing inequalities in learning outcomes that are a reflection and consequence of students' social, ethnic, or sexual backgrounds.

The figure below presents the educational system of formal schooling in Finland. Compulsory education extends to youth under seventeen, and the voluntary secondary education is offered nation-wide in high and vocational schools, and it is tuition free. In Finland students can be forced to retake a year if their success is not good enough but this is quite rare as all other ways of supporting (e.g. special education means) are used at first if their progression is not going well. Both high schools and vocational schools offer paths to tertiary education that is organized in universities and polytechnics. High school students complete their studies in a national matriculation examination, but this is not a case in the fields of vocational education.

Most schools for young people in Finland are owned, regulated and administered by municipalities, under a finance and guidance of the state. Teacher education is ordered in universities, and the teachers are relatively highly educated with competencies regulated by an Act. There are also possibilities to

establish private schools with public financial support, and it seems that especially private primary schools carry a reputation as elite schools and choices for “enlightened” families. In practice, private schools are still quite rare, leaning on some alternative pedagogy (e.g. Steiner pedagogy, Montessori pedagogy), religion (e.g. Jewish, Christianity), or language (e.g. Swedish, French, Russian, German). It is noteworthy that also private schools should get their mandate and legitimation from the Finnish Educational Board (Fig. 12.1).

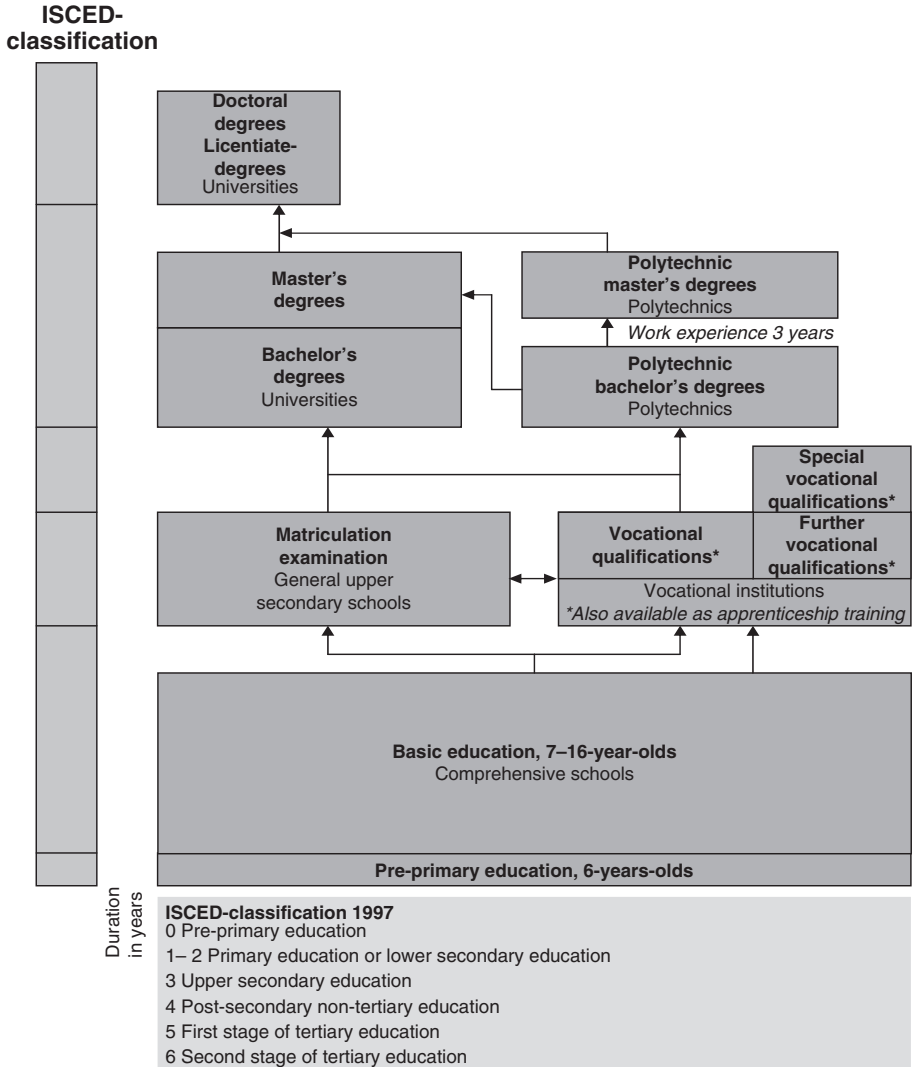


Fig. 12.1 The educational system of Finland. Ministry of Education and Culture

In spite of the equality principle of schools and schooling, in Finland there can be recognised a tendency to compare schools according to some measurements – according to the grades of the students, for example. Also students' socio-economic or ethnic backgrounds are used as indicators of the hierarchies of valuation. Local educational markets are somewhat segregated as well: some high schools, for example, are more popular than others and can thus make tight entrance selections where they get the “best” students. There is a difference in the general cultural valuation of high school education and vocational education as well, as an advantage for the former one. In principle, both branches of secondary education should qualify their pupils for university studies but in practice is more challenging for students of vocational schools in passing university entrance exams or conducting university studies, as only high school curricula consist of an explicit academic qualification orientation.

In general, however, students' knowledge is relatively good. This quality has been evaluated as excellent in international comparisons (e.g. in the PISA measurements). This outcome have been explained, among other factors, by the cultural and linguistic homogeneity of classrooms, and thus also by the absence of immigrant pupils and students from classrooms. For teachers, culturally homogenous classrooms seem to be pedagogically and didactically less challenging than those with multicultural compositions (Räsänen et al. 2002). Curriculum planning and teaching practices in educational institutions have often been based on the idea that all pupils have same kinds of resources and needs, in spite of their very different life conditions and cultural backgrounds. Lately, however, in national educational strategies immigrant pupils have been recognized as learners, who need special attention and treatment in schools – but this has mainly been justified by pedagogical and cognitive explanations, not with immigrant students' disadvantageous positions in their social context within the landscapes of a learning society.

Main Migration Patterns and Composition

As mentioned above Finland is a society where the issue of multiculturalism has been publicly noted and discussed only very recently. This rise of interest has a clear link with the relatively rapidly increasing number of immigrant people in the country that during its short independence history (from 1917) has been generally quite closed and inward-oriented. This is why the discussion – both the public and the scientific one – around ethnic minorities or multiculturalism in Finland is very tightly connected with the concept of immigration.

The building of Finland as a nation-state has been loaded with strong emphasis on nationalism and patriotism. As the country has no colonial history, the ethnic composition of its population has been quite homogeneous. Now the situation is changing: Whereas the number of the foreign born population in Finland was 64,922 in 1990 (1.3 percent of the population), it was 248,135 in 2016 (6.6 percent of the population) (Statistics Finland 2016; Ahponen et al. 2011.) Children, youth, or young adults under thirty form almost half of the immigrant population in Finland (Statistic Finland 2016). At their age, school is one of the most important spheres of life, both in terms of formal learning and informal peer relationships. Even though the amount of immigrants is increasing continuously, also resistance towards the change in the ethnic composition of citizens can be recognized widely.

Finland has, of course, had small migrants and ethnic minorities (e.g. Tatars, Roma and the indigenous Sami) even before this new wave of migration, but their absence from formal education has been almost ignored in patterns and strategies of the national social and educational policies until late 1970's. This invisibility has also been connected to the independent nation-state building, where the principle of "one nation, one language, and one culture" has been a focal device. This has led to a situation where Finnish educational institutions have been tainted by a sort of culturally ethnocentric and nationalistic sentiment that enhances national assimilation policies – aiming at the cohesion of a relatively young nation state. This has been noticed, for example, in different analyses of curricula and text books.

The 1990s was the turning point decade towards a slightly more international orientation: commitments to the European Union, as well as to other transnational coalitions, forced Finland to introduce some changes to its national policies. The waves of migration turned upside down as immigration began to be wider in numbers than emigration. The biggest groups of immigrants came from Russia, Estonia, Somalia and the former Yugoslavia (Statistics Finland 2011). Dual (or multiple) citizenship became legal in 2003, and "active immigration policy" appeared as a new concept in governmental declarations. Racism and ethnic discrimination were defined as crimes in the national legislation. (Pitkänen et al. 2005.) This, however, did not lead to any new and sustainable, multiculturally open atmosphere: in the 1990s many neo-nationalistic movements and attitudes were recognized in Finland, as was the case also in other European countries (Sabour 1999). Today, no mitigation in this sense can be seen. There are several Neo-Nazi movements in Finland causing local conflicts between natives and immigrants, and

neo-nationalistic politics got a wide parliamentary support when the Finns Party¹ rose among the biggest parties of the National Parliament.

In the middle of the hardening attitudes towards immigration and multiculturalism we should, however, note that not all immigrants in Finland face intolerance and discrimination. There seems to be a clear “hierarchy of differences” (Suurpää 2002): the native population classifies those, who are defined as culturally different, into divergent positions in “a continuum of acceptance and non-acceptance” (Harinen et al. 2009). It seems that for a high percentage of Finns it is much easier to cope, associate and coexist with people of Western (American or European) origin than with other ones. This preference is manifested as a form of ethnic penalty (Khattab 2009; Reyneri and Fullin 2011) in the reluctance of Finnish employers of hiring immigrants and subsequently from the employment statistics that show the large proportion of Africans in immigrants’ unemployment or educational dropout figures (THL 2018; see Table 12.1 above). These hierarchies of differences seem also cause tension among various groups of immigrants, also in the everyday life at school (Souto 2011). However, Table 12.1 above shows also a progress towards more equal conditions, as the second generation immigrants seem to find relatively their places in the educational system more easily than before.

As we are dealing with education in this article, it is important to note that most of immigrants in the country live in large, crowded cities of Western and Southern Finland (Ministry of the Interior 2013). In these educational localities competitions for the most popular student positions and learning subjects are harder than average, which put subsequently immigrant applicants often in a difficult and disadvantageous situation. In addition, today there are some vocational schools that refuse to enroll students from immigrant background; a fact that clearly breaks the national policy concerning equality of educational participation opportunities (Helsingin Sanomat 2012). A new trend seems to be on the rise: A large number of Finnish parents refuse to send their children to schools, where immigrants form a sizeable proportion of students (YLE 2012).

Developments in Terms of Relevant Educational and Social Policies

In Finland the formal policies have paid a considerable attention to the growing immigrant population in the country. At the strategic level the Finnish

¹“The Finns” are politicians and their supporters, who actively resist immigration (especially immigration based on humanitarian issues) and multiculturalism. One of their slogans is: “Return Finland to Finns!”

Table 12.1 Ethnic inequality in Finnish education shown by statistics

Ethnic origin	N	% in population	In general schools	In vocational schools	Out of education
Russian/Estonian 2nd gen.	525	0.4	55.5	35.7	8.9
Russian/Estonian 1st gen.	1254	0.8	44.4	45.7	10.0
Ex-Yugoslavia	271	0.2	23.6	61.6	14.8
West Asian/North African 2nd gen.	117	0.1	49.3	32.9	17.9
West Asian/North African 1st gen.	290	0.2	45.5	36.2	18.3
East Asian 2nd gen.	148	0.1	57.7	32.1	10.2
East Asian 1st gen.	96	0.1	45.8	34.4	19.8
Sub-Saharan African 2nd gen.	108	0.1	63	18.5	18.5
Sub-Saharan African 1st gen.	249	0.2	29.7	41.0	29.3
Other 2nd gen.	112	0.1	55.5	28.7	15.9
Other 1st gen.	138	0.1	32.7	48.3	19.0
Mixed origin (one Finnish parent)	588	1.5	65.1	29.0	5.9
Other-language Finn	172	0.1	57.0	28.5	14.5
Swedish language Finn	4779	5.1	57.6	37.8	4.7
Finnish-language Finn	14,311	91.9	54.5	39.9	5.6
Total	23,158	100	54.6	39.7	5.8

Source: Kilpi-Jakonen (2011, 84)

society invests significantly in immigrants' educational possibilities, especially in the fields of secondary vocational education. Courses of Finnish language are arranged systematically, and a system named training education is developed for facilitating access of immigrants to secondary education. Training education aims at developing immigrants' learning capabilities within the Finnish educational system (language skills, general understanding of society and social policy etc.). Still, it seems that something important remains unnoticed as the strategies and recommendations do not reach minority youth's educational paths in a successful way, as we can deduce when analyzing figures of national statistics and comparisons presented in Table 12.1.

However, recent educational policies have paid attention to the risk of immigrant students' educational drop out, which is three times larger than that of the native students (The Finnish National Board of Education 2010). The National Board of Education has financed several developmental projects in order to prevent immigrant students from dropping out, especially during

secondary education. In addition, special study counseling practices for minority pupils have been formed, and in tertiary education an intensive aim to make both the curricula and student population much more international.

The current increase of especially youth with immigrant background in Finland has inspired researchers to turn their attention and interest towards issues of multicultural education, intercultural learning and cultural diversity in everyday encounters in schools (e.g. Räsänen et al. 2002; Teräs et al. 2010; Souto 2011). However, research in this area has been interested mainly in institutions and practices of primary education. Racism has, to a certain extent, been a topic in sociological research of primary education (in terms of pupil interaction, Souto 2011), and in didactic analyses of cultural conflicts in classrooms, as well as pupils of immigrant background with “learning difficulties” as problems for teachers’ work (e.g. Räsänen et al. 2002). Overall, in Finland any scientific empirical research and evaluations concerning the field of secondary education has been carried out just recently. Even though studies concerning young people’s attitudes in Finland endorse and confirm the result that native pupils of secondary vocational education have the most negative attitudes towards immigrants (e.g. The National Youth Barometer 2005), youth researchers/ethnographers have not decided to step into vocational schools until recently. The concepts of racism or anti-racism are explicitly mentioned as research topics only casually.

In spite of many renewals, we also have to emphasize that at the turn of the third millennium the rationale of economic policy began to have predominance and hegemony over other social policies (Jauhiainen et al. 2001). “Requirements of labor markets” as a dominating, discursive reference conditioned also educational strategies and visions. Now this discourse has found its way to the latest *Developmental Plan for Education (2017–2021)* and turned into recommendations to speed up individual students learning paths and graduations. Education *an sich* is not valuable anymore, while its economic, instrumental function begins to dominate. This means that, for example, vocational studies that formerly took three years to achieve are expected to last now only two. For a student, who can have incomplete Finnish language skills, this hastening trend may cause consequential and prejudicial difficulties.

Methodology

We started to seek literature for our review from the national information database of libraries by using key words inequality, racism, anti-racism, discrimination, ethnicity, minorities, immigration, and secondary education.

The very first notion in this search was that in Finland there seems to be a systematic tendency to avoid the use of term “racism” when education or educational policy is under scrutiny – probably because of the negative connotation of the concept (Souto 2011). Hence we had subsequently to loosen our searching criteria and include in our data studies and reports that somehow deal with ethnic minority students who have completed primary education and then check if some notes concerning discrimination have been presented. We also had to give up the idea of seeking just sociological research because attention to secondary education has been mainly paid to in the fields of pedagogical sciences. In this way, we ended up to one dissertation (concerning Finland though made in Oxford), four research articles, four descriptive and summary reports or memos of different ministries or municipalities, and one sociological statement against ethnic discrimination. Below there is a list of these texts, one of which has been published in English and the rest in Finnish.

A dissertation of sociology:

- *The Education of Children of Immigrants in Finland* (2010)

Research articles:

- *Vähemmistö, kieli ja rasismi* [Minority, language and racism] (1988)
- *Kahden opetuskulttuurin kohtaaminen: Venäjänkieliset opiskelijat toisen asteen opinnoissa* [Encounters in-between two teaching cultures: Russian speaking students in secondary education] (2001)
- *Elämää Suomessa: Venäjänkielisten nuorten naisten kokemuksia ja tulevaisuudennäkymiä* [Life in Finland: Russian speaking young women’s experiences and future plans] (2007)
- *Maahanmuuttajien lasten siirtymät koulutukseen ja työelämään* [Immigrant children’s transitions to education and working life] (2010)

National or municipal reports or memos:

- *Maahanmuuttajanuoret toisen asteen koulutuksessa* [Immigrant students in secondary education] (1999)
- *Romaniasioiden hallintotyöryhmän muistio* [A memo of an administrative working group for Roma issues] (2001)
- *Romanien pitkä matka työn markkinoille* [Roma people’s long journey to labor market] (2008)
- *Maahanmuuttajaoppilaat ja koulutus* [Immigrant students and education] (2008)

A critical statement, discussion:

- *Toisen sukupolven koulumenestyksen ymmärtäminen ja tutkiminen Suomessa* [Understanding and studying educational achievements of the second generation immigrants in Finland] (2010)

It is noteworthy to outline that in most of the studies we found immigrant youth and young people representing ethnic minorities (e.g. Roma people, Sami people) are mainly seen as “student at risk *an sich*” (because of their non-Finnish backgrounds), and their educational exclusion has been made visible in a statistical sense (numbers of drop outs, educational failure). Thus the way how racism and discrimination are treated, if they are treated at all, had to be found implicitly almost between the lines. For this analysis, the main approaching lines of the research or discussion we found are categorized in the following way:

- Studies based on an idea of cultural conflicts (that “automatically” cause learning and teaching problems) – it has been supposed that living between two cultures and two languages cause problems for immigrant youth who are victims of unhappy circumstances *per se*.
- Studies figuring life-courses of “excluded or self-excluded immigrants”.
- Statements concentrating on everyday interaction and everyday racism in schools – this is just a new trend with only slight addressing which has risen along with the general notions of emerging racism towards immigrants.

In the following chapter we make a critical assessment into this rare research concerning ethnic plurality and discrimination in the fields of secondary education. It is noteworthy that this research has been conducted almost exclusively among vocational education students. Behind this trend there might be an assumption that minority students automatically “must go” to vocational education, which is the culturally less valued choice in Finland (Käyhkö 2006). This can be seen as a serious shortcoming as many studies have shown that immigrant youth usually have a very positive attitude towards schooling in general and high schooling especially (e.g. Ministry of Education and Culture 2016).

Ethnicity and Educational Inequality in Finland

Non-Finnish Backgrounds of Students as a Pedagogical and Didactic Problem?

The main research questions behind the analyses read for this section can be condensed as following: What kinds of problems do students' of minority backgrounds cause to the Finnish educational system and its institutions – and how should the system react to solve these problems? In multicultural conditions uniform services and practices become insufficient, and cultural diversity is easily manifested as a challenge, obstacle or problem (Ålund 1991; Heywood 2007; Ahponen et al. 2011). This discursive tendency can clearly be seen in, for example, the ways of research funding in Finland: as immigration is something to be governed by different social policies, research money is allocated to those who are promising practical 'problem-solving'. The approach stressing "multi-ethnicity as challenge" thus creates the mainstream research of immigration and cultural minorities in Finland, as well as the research concerning multi-ethnicity in education.

The perspective of problem solving, and ethnic minority students as challenges for teaching, is a frame for five studies analyzed for this article: (1) *Encounters in-between two teaching cultures: Russian speaking students in secondary education* (Iskanius 2001), (2) *Immigrant students in secondary education* (Romakkaniemi 1999), (3) *A memo of an administrative working group for Roma issues* (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2001), (4) *Immigrant students and education* (Ministry of Education 2008), and (5) *The Education of Children of Immigrants in Finland* (Kilpi 2010). The first one is based on a questionnaire filled in by teachers (n = 30), the others have used large national quantitative datasets as bases for analyses. Besides, quantitative reasoning is supplemented by qualitative interview data in these studies, except the one of Iskanius (2001). Answers have been sought by inviting some teachers from secondary education to reflect their teaching experiences, by collecting nationwide information concerning immigrant or Roma students' educational achievements (diploma numbers), their educational choices and progress, their drop-out proportions, as well as their school experiences as students in Finland (Kilpi-Jakonen 2011).

A lack of sufficient language skills seems to be one main theme in these studies that aim at proving the challenging nature of minority youth in sec-

ondary education. One conclusion presented is that reliable language skill tests for young non-Finns could work as a guarantee for teachers to get students, who would be capable enough to study in Finnish – and would thus not cause any extra burden on the everyday arrangements of teaching. In addition, the concept of learning culture raises questions for pedagogues concerning students' adaptation. From their point of view minority youth are located in-between two different learning cultures and thus have difficulties in adapting to the Finnish way to be at school. These difficulties are explained with cultural differences in growing up to self-discipline, punctuality, and personal autonomy; it is seen that even though education is valued in immigrant families, their youth lack the needed degree of autonomy, in order to take independent care of their studies. It is assumed then that this leads to immigrants' low educational outcomes, as described in national statistics.

The question of language is crucial also in studies focusing on Roma and Sami students at school (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2001). Here, however, the arguments are the opposite: the fundamental rights of Roma and Sami students to study in their own native languages and the lack of competent teachers, as well as proper learning material, are emphasized. From this perspective, the linguistic inequalities are treated as a human right problem and defined as a strategy of structural discrimination, where ethnicity as Finns is denied or passed, in particular in relationship to the Roma. In addition, these analyses also call for recognition of ethnic equality at the school. This surely is an important notion as the educational exclusion of Roma youth in Finland has a long history (e.g. Markkanen 2003).

The city of Helsinki is managing educational services to the biggest group of immigrant students in Finland. Helsinki is also one of the rare municipalities, who have invested in covering, local follow-up research concerning immigrant youth's educational progress and problems (Romakkaniemi 1999). From this research we can see, for example, that even 30 percent of immigrant youth fall off from educational services and do not finish the compulsory period between 7 and 16 years (the same number among native Finnish youth is less than 10 percent). The biggest ethnic group among these drop-outs is formed by Somali immigrants, whose position in Finland, anyway, is precarious and who are socially rejected – the statistics show how difficult for them is to become employed and how the attitudes towards them among Finns are much more negative than towards other groups of immigrants (Sabour 1999). However, when teachers and administrative staff of education were interviewed, they did not talk about rejection – or group-based inequality – but more about “wrong educational choices” of immigrant youth, about a lack of

proper student counseling, and about a need for more intensive individual support that should be offered to immigrant students.

The Ministry of Education (now the Ministry of Education and Culture), being an operator of the state level, has presented a system level investigation concerning immigrant students' educational achievements, their educational choices, and their possibilities in labor market after secondary education (2008). The analysis has its basis in the welfare state principle of educational equality. The scrutiny is leaning on the idea that the educational system should be improved so that it could answer to very different needs of very different students. It also pays attention to many prevailing grievances noted in the system that lead students to unequal outcomes and positions. This inequality is demonstrated clearly also by Kilpi's (2010) results that show a plain difference in native and immigrant students' diploma numbers – which, then, have a fateful significance when student places of tertiary education are contested and applied for. The national statistics show that in every school subject native students reach significantly higher grades than they immigrant fellows. Even though these numbers show a clear structural tendency of inequality, the researchers of the Ministry end up to recommendations where individual immigrants and their counselors are put in charge and no glance are turned to the fateful, discriminative practices of educational everyday life – as was the case also in the Helsinki-report mentioned above.

To sum up: This branch of researches has a strong didactic tone with a focus on multicultural encounters between teachers and pupils. The ideas of difference and misunderstanding are guiding the definitions of problems and efforts to solve them. Answers are sought from individual guidance and support given to individual students. However, this kind of reasoning becomes relatively slight when it concentrates much attention on individual students and disregards structural, everyday discrimination which could marginalize certain and same minorities in a systematic way.

Educational Pathways of Marginalized Life-Courses

The main research questions behind the analyses read for this section can be condensed as following: What kinds of challenges minority students encounter during their educational careers and how could they be supported in facing these challenges? The theme of risky life-circumstances of immigrants can be recognized as a research focus behind at least three of the studies we found for this article: (1) *Immigrant students and education* (Ministry of Education 2008, mentioned also in the previous sub-chapter), (2) *Roma people's long*

journey to labor market (Ministry of Labor 2008), and (3) *Immigrant children's transitions to education and working life* (Teräs et al. 2010). The gravid concern behind these analyses is that because it is expected that the cultural difference of minority students will create educational, pedagogic, and didactic problems that remain unsolved, this causes the minority youth's marginalized positions in the different "markets" of society. Thus, this branch of research is based on the idea that careful tracing of the experiences of those considered as vulnerable would help in preventing educational marginalization that is quite fateful in a society that appreciates educational diplomas above all. These analyses have been conducted by using national follow-up statistics and some complementary, qualitative interviews.

When examining life-courses, the theoretical concept of transition is important. Transitions are phases where many far-reaching choices are made – and where the young ones are the most vulnerable. Transition phases between different educational stages are defined as the most important phases of choice in youth's lives (Herranen and Harinen 2007). The studies analyzed for this article examine transitions from primary school to secondary school, and transitions from vocational education to labor market. The scrutiny leans on statistical information concerning individual life-courses, and also shows the marginalizing educational "choices" of ethnic minorities. Here, again, Roma and Somali youth seem to be posed in the most vulnerable social positions as their educational paths become closed much more systematically than those of the others. Thus these studies, again, lead to think about systematic excluding patterns of school-going – but the solutions presented in reports we analyzed are pedagogic and didactic. They, however, do not just put the blame on immigrants or other minorities (or on their culture) and do not oblige only them but also challenge the system to react and take care that there are enough supporting institutional structures and services to support the "vulnerable ones" in their important life-course transitions (as was the case within almost all of the reports we read).

In spite of the recommended supporting arrangements, especially the transition where the compulsory (primary) education ends seems to be prone to educational drop-outs. Negative and bitter experience from school life can cumulate towards a decision not to continue school-going after the compulsory phase. This cumulative effect of bitterness can be recognized also in studies analyzed for this article. But it is, however, noteworthy that in spite of qualitative interviews where, for example, immigrant students report experiences of becoming targets of bullying at school, some of the researchers eagerly tend to seek explanations to minorities' educational (and later to their labor market) exclusion from their ethnic backgrounds, or from the supposed

conflict between their cultural attitudes and the Finnish educational system (Teräs et al. 2010). These explanations seem to have weight: immigrant students' positive attitudes towards school-going reported in research data are not enough to open up the "sociological eyes". It seems that it would be analytically more adequate to avoid overemphasizing cultural reasoning and seek explanations also from feelings of alienation and exclusive relationships from everyday life at school (cf. Souto 2011).

It is the most noteworthy that, again, the themes of bullying and rejecting in these life-course studies are almost only discussed (or actually slightly referred to) when the analysis focuses on Roma students. This rarity seems to reveal one Finnish national unfortunate policy in dealing with minorities: There is a historical echo from the era when the main and explicit aim of education was to hide all ethnic differences and make all children "decent Finns". This happened especially with Roma and Sami people (Rahikainen 1994, 41–49). The studies where Roma students are concerned contain references to bullying, discrimination and even racism exercised by teachers that other reports do not mention.

To sum up: By using statistical information this branch of researches draws images of educational pathways of minority youth. Attention is paid to transitions (e.g. from primary education to secondary education) where especially immigrant and Roma youth more systematically than the others tend to drop out schooling. This is an important notion as in the Finnish learning society failure in secondary education seems to be the strongest predictor of future problems in individual life courses.

Ethnic Discrimination in Secondary Education

The main research questions behind the analyses read for this section can be condensed as following: How does discrimination impact on minority students' school going? In spite of some slight referring to discriminative treatment towards Roma students, the lack of empirical research concerning direct exclusion in secondary education in Finland is very obvious. Furthermore, nation-wide analyses that show ethnic minority youth's vulnerable positions in national educational and labor market lead to conclude and call for a necessity of new kinds of methodological approaches in research of educational equality. The term ethnic discrimination was mentioned or reflected only in four texts analyzed for this article: (1) *Minority, language and racism* (Skutnabb-Kangas et al. 1988), (2) *Life in Finland: Russian speaking young women's experiences and future plans* (Juutilainen 2007), (3) *Roma people's long journey to*

labor market (Ministry of Labor 2008, mentioned also, and presented, in the previous sub-chapter), and (4) *Understanding and studying educational achievements of the second generation immigrants in Finland* (Markkanen 2010).

The first examination mentioned above does not concentrate on secondary education and not just on the Finnish society but it can be noted as one of the earliest texts discussing minority children's education in Finland. This scrutiny does not contain any systematic empirical analysis (Skutnabb-Kangas et al. 1988) but was done before the "immigration decade" of Finland (the 1990s), and that is why it is very interesting to note that racism is mentioned explicitly even in the title of the writing that concentrates on the question how to grow up as a bilingual person. Here, however, discrimination is examined loosely in the wider context; within the ethnocentrically-oriented Nordic tradition that seems to grant low credit and consideration to all what is culturally, linguistically and racially 'strange'.

The second study mentioned above (Juutilainen 2007) is not actually focusing on education but the informants of the analysis (young Russian immigrant women), when describing their future plans and dreams, also reported many negative school memories. In the research interviews where young immigrants' future visions were collected, the interviewees told how experiences at school where they had been victims and targets of bullying, teasing, naming, framing and violence, had affected their school-going and lowered their educational motivation which during the first school years had been intensive and high. Also these notions from Juutilainen's research data imply a need for data collection that would open up everyday relations of the educational reality.

An important question to be formulated is: Why researchers in Finland do not underline openly the possible existence racism even though their data would carry many clues towards these kinds of interpretations? This can be explained maybe by a policy level choice – to be passive is to fade out the problem? (Harinen et al. 2009.) However, the last text presented in this chapter seems to be an incitation for opening up of a discussion, where reality even when is "bold" and "ugly" it can be pronounced aloud (Markkanen 2010). *Understanding and studying educational achievements of the second generation immigrants in Finland* is a critical statement, where the idea that minority youth's educational outcomes are always seen as reflections of their ethnic backgrounds is strongly questioned. Markkanen makes no empirical analysis but suggests to researchers of education and educational equality to revise their culturalistic assumptions where ethnic background is posed as the most explaining variable when analyzing differences of educational experiences, choices, and outcomes. This incitation has both conceptual (approach related)

and methodological implications when stating that in statistical analyses strongly preconceived variables begin to dominate the process and produce results that are in line with the hypothetic categories set beforehand – even though we may ask whether these kinds of results tell much more about the possible discriminative and selective attitudes which may exist amongst some spheres in the host society than minorities' cultures or ethnicities *an sich*.

To sum up: This branch of researches pays special attention to educational inequality as a socially produced and maintained process both in the macro and micro levels of communities. The everyday school life analyses show that minority youth are easily stigmatized with a stamp of difference and deviance. Statistical information, on its part, denotes that minority youth are facing much more educational risks (e.g. drop outs) than others. However, a slight change seems to happen in case of the so called second generation immigrants, who manage at school better than their predecessors.

Conclusion

The goal of this paper has been to describe and categorize the contemporary research concerning ethnic relations and inequality in the fields of Finnish secondary education. Minority youth has been absent from Finnish schools until the recent decades, and we are only now witnessing a wake-up of sociologists to pay scientific attention to ethnic and cultural diversity of schools and their actors. This indicates why it was hard to find data for our analysis and this notion is also the content of our main critics: the Finnish learning society obviously needs a more intensive assessment of its schools and to their ethnic diversification, from the perspective of critical sociology of education.

As the amount of data remained so thin, no special paradigms of research could be classified for this article. We have categorized the research according to three branches. The first one looks at the phenomenon pedagogically and didactically, from the point of view of encounters and confrontations of “different ones” (Finnish teachers and minority students). It is assumed that multi-ethnicity in schools provides challenges in both parties, and the educational system needs to seek for solutions towards equal possibilities of learning. The second branch is showing us statistics of minority youth's educational risks that seem to be more numerous than those of native students. The third branch of research, finally, has a more sociological perspective while paying attention to cultural processes of everyday relations in school life. Still, it is notable that secondary education itself has been the frame of scrutiny only in a couple of analyses.

Finnish educational system emphasizes the values and ideals of educational equalities in a learning society. However, when comparing the national research results with the educational policy strategies campaigning for educational equality, it is noticeable that the noble principles do not always meet educational practices and outcomes. This notion indicates a lack of understanding that would enhance the required changes in both policies and practices of education and school-going. Especially we can recognize a lack of research concerning everyday life relationships in secondary education. In reaching this understanding, teachers' teaching experiences do not seem to be sufficient: multicultural classes are not just didactic spaces, as for young people school means much more than just a place for formal learning. School is a place where peer group memberships and friendships are created and tested, and where the feelings of social belonging or isolation are born (Ziehe 1991; Antikainen et al. 2011, 132–133). These issues have already been studied in Finnish primary education institutions, also from the perspective of multiculturalism and multi-ethnicity (e.g. Tolonen 2001; Souto 2011), but not yet in high and vocational schools.

Furthermore, when we are discussing educational marginalization in a learning society, attention needs to be paid not only to confrontations in everyday life at school but also to the indirect and structural discrimination that is enhanced by comparative research which tends to explain ethnic minorities' low educational outcomes with their ethnic backgrounds. As Bourdieu (1986) and Bernstein (1996) have prompted, educational institutions in Western societies are ideological institutions that favor middle class "mainstream" population. Thus, critical sociological approach is needed where attention would be paid to ethnic minorities' manifold social inequality, which becomes culminated in their descendants' educational outcomes.

Still, in the Finnish sociology of education, an important share of academic discussion that has been taking place is mainly concerned with the question of whether educational choices are individual choices at all – or is it actually the societal system that chooses people to proper places in society, and using the educational system when doing this structural, selective work (see Antikainen et al. 2011). In this regard the classical theories of Bourdieu (1977) and Bernstein (1975) can provide an appropriate approach for illuminating this structural selection, where students' socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds become factors for hierarchical selections, which have their roots in the class structure of society. Although the critical sociology of education has a long tradition also in Finland, researches tackling ethnic inequalities are still reluctant to appropriate this kind of scrutiny where ethnic discrimination is seen as a means to maintain the unequal hierarchies of class society (Himanen and Könönen 2010).

It goes without saying that the Finnish educational policy has not given up its aims of equality in front of quite frustrating results. Aspirations to develop the system and its institutions, as well as its practices to offer individual support for individual students in various difficulties have been continuous and purposeful. Now, however, it seems that the contemporary neo-liberal educational policy is changing the systemic vocation and course: especially the shortened graduation times in secondary education mean extra difficulties for students with foreign mother languages. They can easily become stigmatized as special cases (with “learning difficulties”), who need special treatment, and who will face enormous obstacles in competing for studying places in tertiary education through selective entrance exam. Because. The Finnish language is crucial in this regard. Applicants from immigration background can find themselves in a disadvantaged situation in achieving success and entry to university. The evaluation of “learning difficulties” tends to predict increasing drop-out numbers – unhappy fates in a society that classifies its members according their educational successes. Thus, an extra question could be asked: How much today’s educational policies themselves are producing and maintaining, consciously or unconsciously, indirect ethnic discrimination and generate something that can be called “ethnic punishments” (Teräs et al. 2010, 88)?

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2008) share this concern while criticizing the contemporary sociological mainstream for its commitments to nation-state frames and for the hidden nationalistic aspirations of its methodological solutions. They take a questioning stand towards this approach called methodological nationalism. This is the basic adjustment recognized also in Sanna Markkanen’s statement we found for this analysis. Markkanen argues for the opening of a new path for new kinds of questions in research of educational equality (no more plain ethnic comparisons) and challenges researchers to participate in an inevitable ethnographic work in the middle of the everyday encounters of secondary education (cf. Souto 2011). The same possibilities to participate do not mean same possibilities to success. Statistics have already shown that something has gone wrong.

The researches we have analyzed for this chapter contains many references to the fact that especially immigrants’ attitudes towards schooling are very positive and they express high expectations from their education – so this is not the problem. Further, the structural nature of discrimination can be seen in statistics that report, for example, Roma and Somali people’s regular educational marginalization in Finland. In the light of this it is expected that future policy will tackle how everyday patterns, on their part, produce, maintain, and support this systematic exclusion.

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