



NRT FINLAND 2019

Report

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European Union**





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Context

The Finnish National Agency for Education guides schools all around Finland on the processes of recognising or evaluating the competences or qualifications of migrants. Since municipalities are autonomous bodies, every municipality needs to be concerned in monitoring how schools operate competence recognition processes or whether school authorities follow the guidelines of the Finnish National Agency for Education. The responsibility for the competence recognition processes lies mostly on the shoulders of the classroom teachers themselves, and because many migrants have no Finnish skills, evaluating their abilities is an ongoing task. However, the first interest of teachers is to assess the students' writing skills (whether they can write and what letter system they use) and other language or communication skills. Although a qualified interpreter is a part of this phase, there is always the possibility of misunderstanding. Therefore, this whole process usually demands many working hours from classroom teachers, whilst schools are running on a budget deficit.

The most important criteria for determining the students' grade level and educational pathway are based on their age. The teachers also need to develop such knowledge to gain a thorough understanding of the students' qualifications by assessing their previous achievements from documents such as certificates and diplomas. However, in many situations, immigrant students cannot provide their previous documents. Additionally, teachers must apply extra time and effort to assess their students' academic and social skills.

This initial assessment demands every school or individual teacher do the complete evaluation of previously gained qualifications. Although the Finnish teacher education system gives adequate expertise to understand diversity among students and to work with the special needs that ethnic minorities can have, many everyday activities of school work demand the majority of the efforts and attention of both schools and teachers. The culturally sensitive perspective is always taken into consideration but its realisation depends on an individual teacher's skills.

Therefore, the validation of non-formal education does not receive the necessary resources and attention when compared with mainstream education. All teachers have their own individual style of documenting the assessment and recognising the skills of students.

When the implementation of policies rests on the shoulders of individuals, there is a risk of misinterpreting the policies as well. However, recognising previous skills and diplomas takes time and attention, mostly for reforming policies.

In 2015, MoEC set up a steering group to coordinate different short-term and long-term measures to produce an interim report arising from the situation of growing numbers of asylum seekers and immigrants. In 2016, MoEC published their first report and the second report accordingly published in 2017 which included new reforms and measures. In 2018, minister for Education appointed a follow-up committee to monitor the progress of the previous reforms mentioned in those reports in 2016 and 2017. This national follow-up group on "immigrant education and integration" has been initiated by the MoEC 2018 for the period of April-December 2018 and the report published in spring, 2019. This follow up committee sought to assess the capacity and ability of the education system to respond to the rapidly growing number of asylum seekers and refugees and also proposed some action plans. This working group has been formed by the selected representatives of distinctive organizations from different regions who represent a range of viewpoints on this subject matter. This working



group highlights some new issues that have not yet been addressed in previous reports that also published earlier. These reform proposals of the policies include questions related to teacher availability and qualifications to find out the challenges related to Finnish language skills. New measures are proposed to support both the educational and employment pathways of immigrants. These reforms indeed include consolidating policies and emphasizing local action in youth work (MOEC, 2018). The NRT contributes to these discussions.

National Round Table

We organised the NRT on Monday 2 September from 9:15-15:00. The venue was Monde Hall in Rovaniemi. The number of participants was about 80.

We heard thoughts from both experts and young people themselves about the pros and cons of social media through a panel discussion. The particular emphasis of the discussion was to meet all potential partners along with policy makers, schools, municipalities, youth, local governing bodies, civil society organisations, and migrant led-organisations by using the NRT platform.

As experts, we invited Hussein al-Tae, a Finnish Member of Parliament, researcher Ria-Maria Adams, Secretary General of the National Ethnic Advisory Board Peter Kariuki, Leading National Media Editor-in-Chief Matti Posio, Sanna Hiltunen, Co-ordinator of the 'Home in Finland' project, Leovan Alakörk, Chairman of the Rovaniemi Youth Council (Nuva), high school student Saika Hasnat, journalist Mari Molkoselkä, and Local youth parliamentarian Evilla Lumme, who acted as youth panellist at the Youth expert session.

After Lunch, we held a workshop on the same topic as we discussed in the 2018 NRT, and the objective was to find effective ways to recognise and validate the non-formal learning skills of adolescents at the formal institutional level. The workshop was facilitated by dialogue facilitators. We also used dialogue facilitation as a method for conducting the workshop.

The Integration of Migrant Youth Through Social Media: Opportunities and Threats

This year, our target is to find synergies between existing policies and their implementation according to the integration plan so that immigrant youth can acquire formal and informal skills through increasing external activities such as community engagement, voluntary settings, after-school activities, etc. Our objective is that the soft skills they acquire in informal learning platforms should somehow be acknowledged by the formal sectors, e.g., knowledge sharing, which is also possible through social media. For example, social media skills have been used for demonstrating and uniting young Europeans as a response to climate change. We can harness these skills to demonstrate various activities to acquire knowledge at school and we can also acknowledge social media users in formal institutions. The focus of our NRT discussion is:



- 1) to analyse how knowledge and skills acquired in non-formal settings can be validated by the formal system and, moreover, how knowledge and skills acquired in the informal setting and specifically by using social media, can be validated by the formal system.

The other main topic is an aim to create concrete ways to meet the needs of migrant youth and children through discussions. We wish to create a full package of practical and useful strategies that can be used to support migrant youth and children.

It is potentially important that we, along with policy makers, schools, municipalities, local governing bodies, civil society organisations, and migrant led-organisations, can be involved in this process towards better integration, not only for immigrant youth but also for local youth who are at risk of marginalisation.

Inputs and debate points

All sectors in Finland are facing a great budget deficit, and schools and migrant organisations are additionally lacking resources. Recognising and validating non-formal education in schools is obviously a great opportunity for pupils, and Finland has permanent systems and national policies for validating informal and non-formal learning. However, it demands many hours from school staff for the evaluation of the skills learned in informal learning environments. Teachers and schools lack resources for extra counselling. Identifying non-formal activities requires a lot of affordances from schools. Therefore, the process needs clear co-ordination and guidance from the ministerial level. School teachers need clear guidance about how to recognise non-formal education and a clear interpretation of existing policies along with concrete measures and clear instruction for the recognition of competences. The right kind of support needs a clear strategy where all relevant stakeholders can participate in and facilitate the evaluation process and also support school staff to evaluate the non-formal learning skills of all pupils accordingly. All participants also agreed that the similar provision of validation of non-formal learning skills can be assumed to be similar for all pupils, since both immigrant and Finnish children are at risk of marginalisation, and they need a similar, equal system to be integrated into schools properly. It is the classroom teacher or the subject teacher who has the final authority for its implementation in practice. Therefore, pupils have to inform the teacher about their non-formal educational activities with their own interests. To some extent it is challenging for the teacher to identify exactly what pupils are learning outside schools; in that case, it would be easier to inform the teacher about their non-formal activities and provide certificates issued by non-formal educational institutes in order to gain recognition of the certificates from the school. The discussion led to another argument around how children learn something on their own by practising (such as social media skills that children usually develop by practising themselves or with the help of peers). In such cases, the students will evaluate their own skills first and the teacher can then validate the pupils' evaluation.

According to the OECD report published on 5, 2018 on the success of the integration policies of Finland, immigrant children's educational attainment is poorer than natives'. This statistic was also discussed in some groups in the



workshops. Participants agreed that the ministry could form a permanent working group not only ad-hoc basis, to explore the reasons, and also that developing concrete measures to support the situation is necessary.

The ministerial follow-up committee which was established in ad-hoc basis to reform new measures on the integration paths of immigrants and to detect pain points along with some special measures. Lapland University was also a part of the committee. The Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) proposed some action plans to form a working group, further including school staff and teachers who take care of the early childhood education of pupils with (im)migrant backgrounds, to be created tentatively between 2019-2020. Specific proposals will be made by the group to increase the number of staff members with an immigrant background in early childhood education. This proposal was praised by the participants and sparked a debate of increasing the capacity and abilities of school teachers by providing proper knowledge on intercultural education and skill development in order to work with immigrant children.

Conclusions and way forward

The exploratory workshop successfully engaged all participants to identify actions that are needed in the coming years. They found it a very interesting learning platform and a platform for networking e.g., to familiarise themselves with the work of other stakeholders.

Their objectives and suggestions were to select a current topic for the next NRT in co-operation with many different stakeholders. They also suggested interviewing both Finnish and immigrant youth before selecting any topic for the next NRT. The National Ethnic Advisory Board could be the main partner organisation for selecting a topic in co-operation with Sirius as a national partner and to disseminate the results of the 2019 NRT nationally. Some extra resources are needed to make a national survey to collect data in the field of youth needs. It was also suggested that there is a need to form a national body or forum that could analyse the survey results and decide on the most important and relevant topic for the next NRT. This would demand a national/regional advisory board and regular meetings on the current development needs in the field of integration of immigrant youth, the contents of the NRT and the national dissemination plan of the NRT report. The discussion suggested approaching the General Secretary of the National Ethnic Advisory Board to create a team for the next NRT, although this depends on next year's resource allocation. The General Secretary also participated physically as a panelist and participated in the discussion session in our NRT this year.

The social media discussion piqued interest among all participants and created a collective development goal. The theme united all participants similarly. Social media is a skill that can also be acquired by using social media actively. There are advantages and disadvantages of using social media, but one of the great things that unites all young generations of Europe is that the recent response to climate change has been seen as a positive side of using social media. Many who were previously unaware of the detrimental effects of climate change are now actively following reports, articles, news and blogs on climate.



Recommendations:

- Raising awareness amongst non-formal and informal actors, parents and pupils
- The concept should be promoted widely so that stakeholders can understand the main point of validating learning outcomes and the purpose of the validation of skills
- Clear guidance and co-ordination on validation amongst class teachers
- Some new apps for self-assessment of skills to encourage pupils to take their own initiative in reporting their skills to the formal system to validate the experiences that they acquired through informal settings
- As many pupils have extraordinary digital skills, they can guide other pupils on how to document their skills in the app
- It is important to identify more information on the overview of validation and its practice at the national level, which might also encourage other actors in pursuing the same
- Parents can demonstrate in WILMA what their children learn through informal settings. However, many parents are not aware of the national arrangements for validation. Some training, workshops for parents to inform them of the importance of validation
- Generate ideas for more voluntary activities by utilising social media platforms
- Some national strategies by MoEC
- The Municipality Education service can operate a working group to find different ways to facilitate stakeholder engagement in this regard. This working group can co-operate with youth parliamentarians and develop measures to identify and ensure co-operation among stakeholders towards a coherent approach.



NATIONAL ROUND TABLE

Annex 2

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Annex 2

Name	Organisation/ institution	Position in organisation/ institution	Reason for inviting him/her	Participation confirmed (Yes/No)
POLICY MAKERS				
Hussein Al -Tae	Parliament	member		
Esko Lotvonen	Municipality	Mayor		
Antti Lassila	Municipality	Director		
Risto Varis	Municipality			
Anne Luro	Municipality	Planner		
Tuija Kuusela-Korva	Employment Office			
Eero-Pentti	Rovala	Director		
Peter Kariuki	Ministry of Justice			
Jukka Hakola	City corporation	Network Coordinator		
Timo Koivurova	Arctic Centre	Director		
Minka Lampsejärvi,	City	Intern		
Ira-Eerika Kopakka,	City	Cultural producer for children		
Sanna Hiltunen	ELY- Office	Regional coordinator		
<i>Rauno Savela</i>	<i>Nuorisopalvelut</i>		<i>Rauno Savela</i>	<i>x</i>
<i>Annina Kuitava</i>	<i>LAPIN YLIOPISTO</i>		<i>Annina Kuitava</i>	
<i>RISTIHARJU JUHA-MATTI</i>	<i>ROVANIEMI KAUPUNKI</i>	<i>MEDIAKASVATUSASIA</i>		
<i>Raija Kintaloh</i>	<i>Redu</i>	<i>Vapaa-ajatu</i>		
<i>Saija Niemelä-Pentti</i>				
MIGRANT-LED ORGANISATIONS (Rovala, Arffman and Akuislukio opiskelija/ VALMA)				
Alcheikh Ghazala,	Arffman			
Mäkitalo Bunchuai,	Arffman			
Chesniuk Denys,	Arffman			

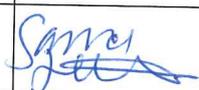
Frank Niemelä Paula Rovala

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Name	Organisation/ institution	Position in organisation/ institution	Reason for inviting him/her	Participation confirmed (Yes/No)
POLICY MAKERS				
Hussein Al -Tae	Parliament	member		
Esko Lotvonen	Municipality	Mayor	x	
Antti Lassila	Municipality	Director		
Risto Varis	Municipality			
Anne Luiro	Municipality	Planner		
Tuija Kuusela-Korva	Employment Office			
Eero-Pentti	Rovala	Director		
Peter Kariuki	Ministry of Justice			
Jukka Hakola	City corporation	Network Coordinator		
Timo Koivurova	Arctic Centre	Director		
Minka Lampsejärvi,	City	Intern		
Ira-Eerika Kopakka,	City	Cultural producer for children		
Sanna Hiltunen	ELY- Office	Regional coordinator		
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Anne Luro	Municipality	Planner		
Tuija Kuusela-Korva	Employment Office			
Eero-Pentti	Rovala	Director		
Peter Kariuki	Ministry of Justice			
Jukka Hakola	City corporation	Network Coordinator		
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Minka Lampsejärvi,	City	Intern		
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Mäkitalo Bunchuai,	Arffman			
Chesniuk Denys,	Arffman			



Edem Esther Eno,	Arffman			Edm.
Thongkao Narumol,	Arffman			
Alcheikh Mahdi,	Arffman			
Fedosieikin Iorii,	Arffman			ged
McDonald Punnee,	Arffman			
Jebur Qasim Mejbel,	Arffman			
K C Sanjita, Arffman	Arffman			Arff
	Rovala			
	Adult College			
	VALMA			
MARIKA KOTAZA	ARFFMAN			
Katriina Hoppinen	Sie Mickeskus			
Li Zhang	Sie Nie Keskus			
Doorko Luoma	Sie Keskus			

Edem Esther Eno,	Arffman			
Thongkao Narumol,	Arffman	NARUMOL		
Alcheikh Mahdi,	Arffman	CS		
Fedosieikin Iorii,	Arffman			
McDonald Punnee,	Arffman			
Jebur Qasim Mejbel,	Arffman			
K C Sanjita, Arffman	Arffman			
Sheikh Kabeem	Rovala	KS		
	Rovala			
	Adult College			
	VALMA			
Tasneem Shaiqta		Shaiqta		
Khan Araqj		Araqj		



Name	Organisation/ institution	Position organisation/ institution	in	Reason for inviting him/her	Participation confirmed (Yes/No)
TEACHERS, TEACHER-TRAINERS, SCHOOL-LEADERS OR OTHER SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVES					
Adela Ratiu	Adult college	Teacher			
Katja Alaluusua	Kärki-Adult education <i>Hanna Taimisto</i>	Teacher		<i>deli</i>	<i>Peri</i>
Virpi Keskitalo	Elementary school	Teacher		<i>Virpi Keskitalo</i>	<i>Hanna Taimisto</i>
Hellevi Tervo	Rovaniemi Vocational education	Teacher			
Paula Niemelä	Frantti-Rovala	Education Director			
Marika Ojanen, Toni	Arffman Elementary school	Teacher			
Pesola Pirjo,	Vocational Luovi	Teacher			<i>Toni Ojanen</i>
	ROVALA	Teacher		<i>x</i>	<i>Pesola Pirjo</i>
Leena Vainiokangas	REDU	Teacher			
Ristiharju, Juha-Matti,	Rovaniemen City				
Leevi Alakorkko	Youth Parliament	chairman			
Evilla Lumme	Youth Parliament	Member			<i>Sari Hakola</i>
Laura Honkala	Youth Parliament	Member			
Saika Hasnat	Youth Parliament	Member		<i>x</i>	<i>Saika Hasnat</i>
Venla Luusua	Youth Parliament	Member			<i>Luusua</i>
Samu Nukarinen	Youth Parliament	Member			
Jussa Posia	Youth Parliament	Member			
Joni Nieminen	Youth Parliament	Member			
Salomo Juupaluoma,	University	Teacher			
Pirjo Hinkkanen,	Elementary school	Teacher			
Arttu Pynninen,	Youth Parliament	Member			<i>Pirjo Hinkkanen</i>
Tarja Niemi	Library				<i>Niemi</i>
Salomo Juupaluoma	Lyseon Puisto Higher secondary school	Teacher		<i>Salomo Juupaluoma</i>	

Name	Organisation/ institution	Position in organisation/ institution	Reason for inviting him/her	Participation confirmed (Yes/No)
TEACHERS, TEACHER-TRAINERS, SCHOOL-LEADERS OR OTHER SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVES				
Adela Ratiu	Adult college	Teacher		
Katja Alaluusua Kärki-	Adult education	Teacher		
Virpi Keskitalo	Elementary school	Teacher		
Hellevi Tervo	Rovaniemi Vocational education	Teacher		
Paula Niemelä Frantti-	Rovala	Education Director		
Marika Ojanen, Toni	Arffman Elementary school	Teacher		
Pesola Pirjo,	Vocational Luovi	Teacher		
	ROVALA	Teacher		
Leena Vainiokangas	REDU	Teacher		
Ristiharju, Juha-Matti,	Rovaniemen City			
Leevi Alakorkko	Youth Parliament	chairman		
Evilla Lumme	Youth Parliament	Member		
Laura Honkala	Youth Parliament	Member		<i>Suvela</i>
Saika Hasnat	Youth Parliament	Member		
Venla Luusua	Youth Parliament	Member		
Samu Nukarinen	Youth Parliament	Member		
Jussa Posia	Youth Parliament	Member		<i>Posia</i>
Joni Nieminen	Youth Parliament	Member		
Salomo Juupaluoma,	University	Teacher		
Pirjo Hinkkanen,	Elementary school	Teacher		
Arttu Pynninen,	Youth Parliament	Member		
Tarja Niemi	Library			
Salomo Juupaluoma	Lyseon Puisto Higher secondary school	Teacher		

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PARENTS- AND STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES/CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATION				
Linda Määttä	University	Student	X	Linda Määttä
Moona Harju	Lapland University	Student	X	Moona Harju
Joona Kelloniemi	Lapland University	Student	X	Joona Kelloniemi
Jaana Niemelä,	Lapland University	Student		
Tanja Tauro,	Lapland University	Student		Tanja Tauro
		Student		
		Student		
		Student		
Korteniemi, Pekka,	Napapiirin school	students	X	Pekka Korteniemi
		Student		
		Student		
Hietala, Ursula,	Napapiirin School	Students	X	Ursula Hietala
Santteri Mikkainen	Napapiirin School		X	Santteri Mikkainen
Lehto, Eetu,	Napapiirin School	Students	X	Eetu Lehto
Yousef Shofah	Ounasvaara	Student	X	Yousef
Intha Saranukul,	Ounasvaaran	Student		
Lotta Juotasniemi,	Ounasvaara School	Student	X	Lotta Juotasniemi
Hannes Gylden.	Ounasvaara School	Student	X	Hannes Gylden
Vlad Alupov	Ounasvaara School	Student	X	Vlad Alupov
Antti Kinnunen	Ounasvaara Higher secondary School	Student	X	Antti Kinnunen
	Ounasvaara Higher secondary School	Student		
Vilja Koivurova	Lyseon puisto Higher secondary	Student	X	Vilja Koivurova
Ola Jomppanen	Lyseon puisto Higher secondary	Student	X	Ola Jomppanen
Johanna Uusitalo	Lyseon puisto Higher secondary	Student	X	Johanna Uusitalo
	Lyseon puisto Higher secondary			



Joona Sandberg	Ounasvaaran Higher Secondary School			
Satu Sirviö, Hanna-Leena Martin,	Red cross Red Cross		X	<i>[Signature]</i>
Kimmo Nyman	Lapin ensi ja turvakoti	Practitioner		<i>[Signature]</i>
Timo Juhani Lappalainen	University of Lapland			<i>[Signature]</i>
Pasi Rauta	Toivola-Luotolan Settlementti	Practitioner		<i>[Signature]</i>
Tytti Kurtti	Lapin sairaanhoitopiirin kuntayhtymä	Project Coordinator		
<i>Viljam Nyman</i>	<i>O:k.yo</i>			<i>[Signature]</i>
<i>Minna Patronen</i>	<i>LIIK PALVELUT</i>	<i>Läikuntakoordinaattori</i>		<i>[Signature]</i>

OTHER RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS/ MEDIA

Matti Posio	Lannen media Newspaper	Chief Editor	<i>[Signature]</i>	
Riitta Kemppainen-Koivisto	Lappilainen	Editor	<i>[Signature]</i>	X
Ria-Maria Adams	University	Researcher	<i>[Signature]</i>	X
Mari Molkoselkä	Lapin Kanssa	Journalist	<i>[Signature]</i>	
Nafisa Yeasmin	SIRIUS		<i>[Signature]</i>	X
Eve Orhanli-Viinämäki	SIRIUS		<i>[Signature]</i>	X
Raiija Kivilahti	City Board	Memeber		

WHICH EU PLATFORM HAVE YOU CONTACTED?

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Eija Laine Ritva Vattulainen	Rovaniem kaupunki	Vieshtiä		Ritva Vattulainen