This is a self-archived version of an original article. This version may differ from the original in pagination and typographic details.

Author(s): Kärkkäinen, Katarzyna; Tarnanen, Mirja

Title: Teachers' and Adult Migrant Students' Perspectives on Integration and Belonging in the Context of Finnish Vocational Education and Training

Year: 2022

Version: Accepted version (Final draft)

Copyright: © 2022 the Authors and Atlas förlag

Rights: In Copyright

Rights url: http://rightsstatements.org/page/InC/1.0/?language=en

Title: Teachers' and Adult Migrant Students' Perspectives on Integration and Belonging in the Context of Finnish Vocational Education and Training

Katarzyna Kärkkäinen*

University of Jyväskylä

Finnish Institute for Educational Research

Alvar Aallon katu, 40600, Jyväskylä, Finland

E-mail: katarzyna.k.karkkainen@jyu.fi

Mirja Tarnanen

University of Jyväskylä

Department of Teacher Education

Alvar Aallon katu, 40600, Jyväskylä, Finland

E-mail: mirja.tarnanen@jyu.fi

* Corresponding author

Abstract: This article examines how teachers and adult migrant students view integration in the context of Finnish vocational education. Integration is understood as a complex and two-way process in which finding a place and a feeling of being socially bonded happens through participation, acquiring new skills, negotiation and involvement of both migrants and natives. Our research questions are: 1) What kinds of meanings do teachers and adult migrant students give to integration in the VET context? 2) Under what conditions can a sense of belonging emerge or be experienced by adult migrant students?

    The qualitative data, 25 interviews with VET teachers and adult migrant students, were analyzed using thematic analysis. According to the results, integration is understood as participation in the formal and informal spaces of daily life such as VET education, working life and hobbies. Integration can be promoted by supporting participation and a subjective feeling of belonging.

Keywords: integration, belonging, learning, adult migrants, vocational education, Finland

Bibliographical notes:

Dr Katarzyna Kärkkäinen works as a project researcher in the Finnish Institute of Educational Research at the University of Jyväskylä. Her research is on learning and teaching in international educational settings, teacher professional development at different levels of education, and migrant education and integration in VET (including adult migrant guidance in workplaces). Her recent work has focused on Finnish-educated teachers working in international contexts, and the evaluation and development of university pedagogical training at the University of Jyväskylä.

Dr Mirja Tarnanen is professor of language education in the Department of Teacher Education at the University of Jyväskylä. Her research interests lie in the areas of language teaching and learning in the diverse settings and development of teacher education. Her recent publications deal with literacy and assessment practices across curricula, policies and practices in education for migrant students, teachers' professional development, and curriculum reforms in educational communities.

1   Introduction

In this article, we explore teachers' and adult migrants' views and experiences of integration in the context of Finnish vocational education and training (VET). The focus of the article is on vocational education as a site for supporting the learning and integration of adult migrants. Our research questions are: 1) What kinds of meanings do teachers and adult migrant students give to integration in the VET context? 2) Under what conditions can a sense of belonging emerge or be experienced by adult migrant students?

When a person arrives in a new country, they are expected to acquire a place in the new society, in both the national and local communities, culturally, socially and physically. This process of acquiring a place can be considered to be integration, although what this means in practice is the subject of debate (Saharso, 2019; Ager & Strang, 2008). Officially, integration is considered a two-way process that requires mutual involvement, learning, adjustment and negotiation of positions and responsibilities, and leads to changes on the parts of both migrants and natives (Morrice, 2017; Komisarof, 2009; Leong, 2014). Modood (2011) argues that migrants seek to become equal members of the host society or community and thereby gain a feeling of

independence, equality and real bonding to the new society (see also e.g., Penninx & Mascareñas, 2016). Previous studies show that this involves unequal power relationships, and usually more changes are expected on the side of migrants (Berry, 2001; Kalonaityte, 2010). In addition to the personal, integration also has a policy dimension. Policies, as Penninx & Mascareñas (2016) argues, tend to represent society's expectations and demands rather than being based on participation, negotiation and agreement with immigrant groups. The aim of the official Finnish Integration Program is to ensure that those who have a residence permit in Finland get access to normal accommodation, education and training as soon as possible, and subsequently to the Finnish labour market (Government of Finland, 2016; Saukkonen, 2016).

Finland has been a destination for increasing numbers of migrants since the late 1980s (Statistics Finland, 2016). In comparison with other European countries, Finland's migrant population is still rather small, comprising 258,000 people (4.7% of the population) in 2018. In that same year, almost 400 000 people living in Finland had a mother tongue other than Finnish or Swedish (Finland's national languages) or Samì (an officially recognized minority language) (Statistics Finland, 2019). Migrants in Finland come from 180 countries, with the largest groups coming from Estonia, Russia and Iraq. In 2018 the three most spoken languages of citizens with a migrant background were Russian, Estonian and Arabic (Statistics Finland, 2019). The number of migrants in Finnish educational institutions, including VET, has grown steadily. Between 2010 and 2018, the percentage of foreign language speakers in Finnish VET grew from 4.6% to 11.4%. In response to these trends, and partly too because of the wave of refugees coming to Europe and Finland in 2015, migrants' access to Finnish VET was made easier in 2016, for example by reserving some places for migrants and changing the language requirements (AMKE, 2016; FNAE, 2017). Despite the demographic changes in the student population, educators are not yet fully prepared to face the complexity and multidimensionality of diversity they have brought about (e.g., Kärkkäinen, 2017; Teräs, 2007). Improving our understanding of integration from the different viewpoints of those involved in education could enable us to promote the integration of migrants in formal learning, particularly in VET.

VET is considered one possible educational path for adult migrants who want to upgrade or gain new skills and improve their chances on the job market (Bergseng et al., 2019). However, a number of factors may make adult migrants' educational paths more difficult. The national curriculum for any level of education tends to be designed for

native students, so it may be difficult for students with a migrant background to adapt to the culturally and cognitively rooted teaching and learning practices (e.g. Lamonica et al., 2020). Insufficient language skills, age at migration, and a lack of both cultural and economic capital can also impact on educational advantage (Contini, 2013; Lamonica et al., 2020). Then although VET is an important arena of integration for migrants, the transition from VET to the labour market is not always smooth (Bergseng et al., 2019). The research literature therefore indicates that the relationship between education and integration should be considered more holistically, and more consideration should be given to the kind of support adult migrant students need for educational achievement and gaining a feeling of belonging.

2   Theory

2.1   Participation and a sense of belonging as mirroring the nature of integration

This study uses the concept of integration, despite its vagueness, inadequacy, and politicization (eg., Grzymala-Kazlowska & Phillimore, 2018; Miera, 2012; Veikou, 2013), to explore the phenomena and processes caused by increased migration. The use of the concept in this study goes beyond normative and assimilationist stances (Grzymala-Kazlowska & Phillimore, 2018; Phillimore, 2012) and emphasizes the two-way nature of integration. We mean by two-way the active and mutual involvement of migrants and non-natives in various activities and the life-long process of learning that takes place in different spaces (Modood, 2011; Morrice et al., 2017).

Fair participation leading to equal opportunities, independence and a feeling of being truly bonded to society is seen as one of the key issues in successful integration (e.g., Grzymala-Kazlowska, 2018). By fair participation we mean actual involvement in education, working life and social life as well as a subjective feeling of participating (Forsander, 2013; Ryan, 2018). Opportunities for participation outside formal settings also matter (Alenius, 2015).

Meaningful participation in different areas of life followed by a subjective feeling of taking part in whatever is going on leads to many positive developments. Through participation individuals see themselves (and are perceived by others) as valuable members of the community (Forsander, 2013) and have the opportunity to extend and diversify their social networks and feel truly bonded to a certain place (Phillimore et al.,

2018). Especially having local, in this case Finnish, friends is considered to support integration (Dahinden, 2013). Socio-psychological stability and security are gained by engagement in searching for different types of anchors, e.g., economic, material, cultural, and habitual (Grzymala-Kazlowska, 2018). Independence and autonomy, as well as a feeling of control over one's own life, are recognized as being important to integration, regardless of a migrant's gender, education, socio-economic position, family status (Ager & Strang, 2008; Bakker et al., 2014; Cheung & Pillimore, 2013) or migration status (Strang et al., 2018).

The process of creating a sense of connection to people and places, realized as a feeling of attachment, embeddedness and stability in the new country, is also a sign of gaining a sense of belonging (Fortier, 2000; Grzymala-Moszczynska & Trabka, 2014; Ryan & Mulholland, 2015). Belonging refers to a subjective feeling of being safe, comfortable and at home, and is experienced in people's friendliness. The sense of belonging is considered a basic human need, which adds to well-being (e.g., Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and is formed in the "process of being and becoming, belonging and longing to belong" as manifested by individuals themselves (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 202). Belonging is understood as identification with the country of residence. It is considered to be a result of everyday routines and practices (Anthias et al., 2013), and is related to having a feeling for and being familiar with the manners and customs of a certain social context (May, 2013).

Definitions and the boundaries of belonging are constructed, negotiated, disputed and performed as an effect of social and political processes (e.g. Ager & Strang, 2008; May, 2013; Yuval-Davis, 2011). The issue of belonging comes to the fore when individuals' welfare is disturbed and threatened (May, 2013, p. 94), for example when living in a new cultural and linguistic environment. The process of negotiation of the senses of belonging and attachment is dynamic, temporal, spatial and relational (Ryan, 2018). This process is the result of a complex interplay of various social and intersectional dimensions such as ethnic and national attachments, age, gender, education, legal status, class, migration channels, policies, and religious and family background (e.g. Kaukko & Wernesjö, 2017; Yuval-Davis, 2011); it can also be related to everyday experiences and opportunities in the new country (Vertovec, 2007; Wessendorf, 2018).

Ryan (2018) argues that desire to have a new life somewhere happens step-by-step through "experiences of engagement with the people and places that make up their

social worlds" (p. 235). Thus, both integration and belonging are long-term processes which mostly occur imperceptibly, as they are integral to everyday life (Veikou, 2013). They happen as one makes sense of new experiences and new knowledge on the basis of one's previous knowledge and experiences (e.g., Merriam et al., 2020). The process of integration also affects the native population, who must give up some earlier beliefs and acquire new knowledge and skills (Pitkänen, 2007).

Some previous research shows that the lengthy nature of the process is also related to the ideal of a 'good' migrant as someone who works hard, unlearns old ways and shows gratitude in order to become accepted (Näre, 2013; see also Shukla, 2016). Migrants often try to overcome the suspicion that they lack skills and qualifications through education, including VET (e.g. Kärkkäinen, 2017; Simons & Masschelein, 2008). Educators and employers may be concerned about migrants' language skills and their cultural background (Ahmad, 2020; Olakivi, 2020), especially if the migrants come from so-called 'Third World' countries (Krivonos, 2019). Merriam et al. (2020) noted that typically the 'ideal' adult learner is white, middle class, quite young, and already working and well-educated (p.112). These views of the 'ideal' adult learner are challenged by the presence of migrants, especially those with a non-Western background.

3   Methods

3.1   Research context and participants

The VET programmes of the study were organized according to the Finnish Competence Based Qualification (CBQ) system. This offers flexible recognition of previously acquired competences through training, work experience or being engaged in some other activities (FNBE, 2014). Learning and the assessment of students' competences happens mostly in actual workplaces. Before taking competence-based exam students are required to prepare a portfolio. Personalization is a feature and strength of Finnish VET (FNBE, 2010). Attention is paid to individual students' needs, including for those of students of migrant background (FNBE, 2010). This is usually realized through a Personal Study Plan designed in cooperation with the student, language support, and flexible language requirements (FNAE, 2017; Law on Vocational Education for Adults, 274/2015).

As this qualitative study focuses on meaning-making that is constructed in collaboration with the interviewees, the study has features of the constructivist approach (Schwandt, 2007). The study was conducted in one of the biggest providers of adult vocational education in Finland. We found the participants, both teaching staff and students, through a contact person in the institute who was carefully informed on the terms of participation. We selected participants for the study through purposeful sampling, and the main criteria for participation were, for migrant students, arriving in Finland as a young adult or adult, aged over 21, and studying in a VET programme, and for teaching staff, having some experience of teaching migrant students. We tried to ensure that the sample was diverse in terms of age, gender and VET programme. The participants (n=30), all of whom participated voluntarily, consisted of two groups: migrant students (n=17) and teaching staff (n=13). The vocational programmes they were involved in were Social and Health Care (practical nursing), Cleaning Services, Hotel and Catering Services, Food Production (bakery/confectionary), Wood Processing, Audio-visual Communication, Business and Commerce, Safety and Security, and Construction. The gender ratio of the students was 13 women and 4 men, their ages ranged from 22 to 45 years, and they had moved to Finland either as adults (n=16) or as youths (n=1). Their reasons for migrating to Finland were marriage to a Finn (n=8), marriage to an Ingrian Finn (n=2), marriage to another person of the same ethnic background (n=1), following their husband who got work in Finland (n=3), coming as an asylum seeker or under refugee status (n=2), or having Finnish ancestry (n=1). The students spoke 17 languages (including Finnish) and came from Africa (n=3), Eastern Europe (n=5), South America (n=2) and Australia/Oceania (n=1). Most of the students migrated to Finland from their country of birth (n=9), but others had lived in one or more other countries before arriving there (n=6). Two of them had acquired Finnish citizenship. The length of stay in Finland ranged from 3 to 20 years. All the students had participated in language courses during their time in Finland, although there were significant differences in the type and length of courses and consequently in the students' level of Finnish language proficiency. About a third of the students had some work experience in Finland (n=5) and a few studied in the field that corresponded to their education or previous work experience (n=3). Though participation in preparatory training is not always obligatory before undertaking the CBQ test, all the students had participated in this type of training in the form of school-based preparatory training, apprenticeship training, or alongside their regular work. All

the migrant participants were participating in regular VET programmes designed for Finns.

The teaching staff (n=13) ranged in age from 33 to 64 years. The gender ratio was female (n=8) to male (n=5). Teaching experience (generally and in terms of teaching migrants) varied from very little to 20 years. Some experience involved teaching migrants on integration training programmes. About half the teachers (n=7) had some international experience, two (n=2) had lived abroad for an extended period of time, and the partner of one of the teachers was a non-Finnish citizen. The teaching staff claimed to speak other languages with varying degrees of fluency: English (n=13), Swedish (n=6) and German (n=5).

3.2   Data and data collection

We used interviewing, including one focus group interview, as our method of data collection (Brinkmann, 2014; Pietilä, 2010). The interviews were semi-structured and focused on themes such as adult migrant students' and VET teachers' views on and experiences of migrants' learning processes, integration, teaching this group of migrants, and the role of education and the VET teacher in these processes. The themes for the interviews were developed after initial familiarization with existing research in the field and finalized after pilot interviewing.

All 13 staff members (including the director of the adult institute) were interviewed individually. The set of data gathered from the students (n=17) comprises 11 individual interviews and one group interview with six female students studying cleaning services. In the individual interviews, knowledge was built in interaction between the interviewee and the researcher. During the group discussion, the researcher acted as a moderator and the participants were encouraged to debate and construct knowledge in the process of their interaction (Pietilä, 2010).

Before the interviews, the main researcher contacted all the potential interviewees to provide information on the research and to explain the purpose of the interviews and group discussion. All interviews with the institute staff were conducted in Finnish. Despite being offered a choice, all the student participants also wanted to discuss in Finnish. This preference was respected and other languages were used only if necessary. The interviews lasted from 30-120 minutes and were audio-recorded (30 hours of recording) and transcribed (520 pages of text). In order to follow the Finnish Research

Council's ethical policy on the anonymity of research participants, the participants were coded by a single letter and a number, teaching staff (T1-T13) and students (S1-S17). All the participants signed the informed consent and were informed about the possibility of withdrawing from the study. The multilingual and multicultural setting of the study was taken into account in the process of collecting, analysing and reporting the data according to suggestions developed by Nikander (2008), Ratsas, (2005) and Ryen (2002).

3.3   Data analysis

The data were analysed using inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The identified themes mirror the data on migrant students' and teachers' perspectives on integration and belonging in the Finnish VET context. Before the analysis we familiarized ourselves with the range of research and theoretical concepts related to the topic. Those parts of the data that related to integration and belonging were read, re-read and coded freely (inductively). The codes were grouped in potential themes, which were reviewed, defined and named. Finally, examples were chosen for analysis. The analysis concentrated on description of the patterns in each theme, but it also involved theorizing about the patterns, their meanings and implications in relation to the literature presented in the theory part. The analysis was conducted using Qualitative Data Analysis & Research Software (Atlas.ti). Table 1 presents an example of the steps of the analysis of the whole data set.

TABLE 1. An example of the steps of the analysis.

Codes	Sub-themes	Main theme
• Updating skills • Gaining new position • Negotiating between context and positions • Gaining context-specific knowledge • Negotiating of responsibilities • Negotiating one's own learning and integration path (also responding to the obligation to learn) • Negotiating who am I and where I belong • Negotiating one's own role in giving space to the expression of migrant identities	Negotiation of new position as difficult, and the lifelong learning process	Theme 2: Negotiation of new positions and meanings as a lifelong learning process and a condition for experiencing belonging
• Learning as part of migrant everyday life, which happens in a variety of spaces • Constant learning of new things • Hard beginning • Learning about the working culture of a certain field • Extending one's vocational knowledge	Adjusting through the acquisition of new skills and knowledge	
• Accepting a reduction in position • Adjusting to Finnish ways of doing and thinking • Accepting that the homeland will always be a homeland • Living (in) the present • Taking the best from both contexts	Acceptance	
• Being positive about others' intentions • Being patient • Concentrating on emerging opportunities • Being proactive in building one's own life in a new country • Self-confidence • Finding one's own path • Joy of learning something new	Positivity (as a condition for negotiating a new position)	

4 Results

4.1 Integration as participation and finding one's own place in the host society

The study's participants, both VET teachers and migrant students, perceived integration as finding one's place in a new society and developing belonging through mutual engagement in various interactions. Participation in education and working life during practice periods was recognized as only one of the possible avenues to being bonded to Finnish society. The study participants (especially the teachers) saw being involved in

common activities outside the formal education context, such as hobbies, as excellent opportunities to diversify and extend social networks and intercultural learning for everyone involved in these interactions. A few teachers pointed out that people with a migration background show that they are active in society through such involvement. The teachers perceived this activity as positive and claimed that potential employers shared this perception.

> […] a hobby naturally gives the opportunity to be engaged in different activities with people. If you don't have a job, having some hobbies can be a good idea. Through hobbies you'll get to know people and often in order to get a job, it's necessary that somebody knows you. (T10)

As was made clear in this and some other interviews, especially having Finnish networks and knowing a Finn was considered essential for finding a job. Participating in both education and in activities outside the official hours of education and working life was considered to create ample opportunities to gain context-relevant knowledge (including knowledge of the Finnish language) and was seen as a condition for gaining independence, autonomy and full membership of society. These aspects were further recognized by some teachers as a step towards creating the sense of belonging:

> […] Integration is like you would find your place in this society. You have here your home, work or study place and you feel a part of this society and you know how this society works, what your rights are, what your obligations are, for example as a citizen […] you can work and in the end you'll find your place […] earn money, and you'll become a tax payer and then eventually you'll be integrated. And maybe at first you miss your home and you want to leave, but then [you think] that this is the place where you live now. (T12)

Here the teacher also follows ideas of the ideal migrant who contributes to the host society. At the same time the teacher recognizes the importance of employment in creating a feeling of belonging, but without commenting on the relevance of employment to the migrant student's qualifications. The teacher also recognized the importance of knowing about the new society. Some students, too, emphasized that knowing enough about the host society is linked to having the same ability to act as everybody else, being independent and attached to the host society. Separate interviews with one student (S6) and one teacher (T3) showed that ignorance of the details of

practical matters in Finland, like for example being unaware of the laws related to managing a company or property rights in Finland, created complications.

On the other hand, though recognizing the importance of equipping migrants with knowledge of how to deal with officialdom in Finland, T7 expressed concern at the idea of limiting integration to formal settings and the transmission of such technical information. The teacher saw this as a threat to creating a true bond with Finnish society. Some students' experiences reflected the validity of T7's concerns. Despite attending courses and having context-specific knowledge, some students said they felt excluded and lonely, with only limited contacts with Finns outside the formal hours of learning and integration. A couple of teachers also noticed that their migrant students frequently had poor social networks and that not all migrants have the same chance of inclusion, as the following reflection on migrant students from non-Western backgrounds shows:

> […] now we once again have to make clear whether we're talking about Westerners or others. People from Western countries are usually accepted by society much more easily because they have pretty much the same cultural background: the Russians, Germans, Swedes, Americans, Brits, French, they integrate more easily. But then if we're talking about someone from Burma, India, Arab countries, Africa, they're very much outsiders and they aren't accepted easily. (T7)

This excerpt is also an example of how students are categorized and at the same time the generalizing and stereotyping of what kind of students they are and where they stand in relation to (opportunities for) integration. Othering practices and colonial thinking (e.g., seeing Africa as one country), and dividing the world into more privileged and intelligent Westerners, the 'first World', and less privileged and less intelligent non-Westerners, 'Third World', may work here as barriers to participation and to finding one's own place in society.

Similarly, not being fluent in the language was considered a hindrance to full participation and a cause of many frustrations for both students and teachers. Two or three students had experienced that being foreign-born was quickly associated with a lack of language proficiency. In two cases their peers and co-workers used their poor proficiency in Finnish as grounds for questioning their right to belong to Finnish society. The interviewees, both teachers and students, recognized that every vocational field and workplace offers different opportunities for being engaged, having

conversations, exchanging ideas, learning, extending social networks and at the same time developing a sense of belonging.

4.2 The negotiation of new positions, skills and meanings as a lifelong learning process and an expected condition for experiencing belonging

Integration was also characterized by teachers and students as acceptance and a long process of negotiating new roles, positions and meanings (often in relation to others). According to these views, being a migrant requires acceptance of the idea that moving to a new country usually involves a reduction in status, and gaining equal status in the new country requires persistence, hard work and time. This indicates that teachers and migrant students themselves believed that immigrants are expected to work hard and show gratitude, and that one becomes accepted once one becomes the ideal "good" immigrant. One teacher explained the need to update skills and how long it takes to find a satisfactory job. Many students described their life as a long journey of learning Finnish, and learning both a vocation and about the specifics of Finnish working life. Discussions with some students showed that a good education did not always result in a good position in the labour market, nor in immediately finding the right integration path. For three students, this negotiation process and learning journey as well as the desire to be accepted and to belong involved trying out different training courses and vocations. The length of this process was also related to distrust in migrants' skills and the expectation that one should be perfectly prepared for a certain vocation. As the following excerpt shows, it was believed that these problems could be overcome with learning:

> […] there where they come from they have their own requirements concerning work quality and these requirements can be so different from here. Then it easily happens that the guy does his job for a while, then someone says that he still doesn't know enough or isn't good enough. So much time has to be invested in learning. (T10)

Adjustment, acceptance and learning were usually perceived as obligations or conditions for integration and belonging. Some teachers suggested that in order to adjust successfully, students needed to unlearn their old ways, which prolonged the process of adjustment. This also meant that the expectation was that migrants in integration and vocational education should change, become something else, adapt, obey and submit to what is needed. The change was viewed as the end result of

13

participation in education and consequently integration. The dilemma they face in negotiating a new position is evident in this reflection:

> […] we had an Afghan guy and he was some kind of village chief in his country of origin […] he couldn't go to such a working-class job, he couldn't wear overalls [...] I mean he was keeping up his role in his country of origin, though it didn't matter here at all […] In a way, immigrants have to give up something from their past. (T10)

The aspect of unlearning something in one's own past did not emerge in the students' interviews. They considered their previous experiences as a basis for learning and integration. Only one teacher, in the field of construction, discussed the need for a two-way process and mutual collaboration.

The process of negotiation for a new position and of understanding one's own role in this process was accompanied by many existential dilemmas. This was evident in students' reflections on who they are, their right to be in Finland and on what terms, what really makes somebody a part of a new society, what is important, and if the feeling of becoming a part of the host society reduces the migrant's background identity. For example:

> I've been asked many times [why I came to Finland]. If I came, for example, because of marriage or work, then I'd be a foreigner. My grandmother is a Finn, she speaks Finnish. I was only born in another country. But I don't feel that I'm a Finn. No! But I have a right to be here. (S3)

The student talked about the way her belonging was questioned by some of her Finnish peers, which she experienced as unfriendliness and a challenge to her process of developing a sense of belonging. Another student considered the best possible solution when negotiating between different cultures to be taking the best from both cultural backgrounds, recognizing that constructing one's own identity meant balancing between existing and historically and socially created frames. Teachers, too, showed that they were involved in the process of negotiation by discussing how, on the one hand, to respect students' origins and, on the other, to promote their integration by adapting their own pedagogical practices or encouraging their students to adjust to Finnish working life.

Both teachers and students recognized that the process of adjustment and negotiation is especially challenging when migrants arrive in Finland. The challenge

then is the need to live in a completely new environment, the lack of local knowledge (e.g., the language, or how to deal with everyday matters) and limited social networks. Teachers saw their own early years of teaching migrant students as challenging, too, awaking contradictory emotions (like joy, anxiety and uncertainty) and involving a process of gradually gaining self-confidence, expertise in practice and acceptance of the circumstances. Learning to interact and constructing reciprocal relationships between teachers and students was a question of two-way, mutual integration which seemed to happen of itself, without their being aware of it.

Both students and teachers viewed a positive attitude to others' intentions, patience and intercultural encounters as emerging opportunities and as promoting integration. They also thought that openness to new situations, encounters and learning made the negotiation of positions and adjustment easier. This was discussed by two students of Eastern European background who were convinced that if migrants had persistently negative thoughts, their lives would reflect that negativity. These two students had a different strategy: they took control of their lives and gained the necessary qualifications. They asserted with evident self-confidence that they would succeed in Finland. They were not alone in having such views:

> In [student's homeland] we say that a man makes his own life. If you want to work you will always get a job […]. In my view, everything depends on you […] And I'm convinced that I'll get a job. (S1)

These views are in line with 'ideal integration' thinking and may be a sign that the students have internalized the 'ideal immigrant' mentality, according to which, migrants should think positively, be grateful, find a job and have a good life in order to integrate. At the same time, some of the students recognized that different groups of migrants have different starting points for developing their own lives in Finland, with refugees (or others forced to migrate) and non-Western migrants being at a relative disadvantage. As the discussion with the following student shows, the process of really belonging and being attached may be lengthy and difficult:

> In the beginning I wanted to move back, the first two years. I didn't want to study Finnish or anything else. I was 15 years old […]. It was a difficult age and all my friends stayed there [in my home country]. And then everything changed when I got my first job and I was appreciated there. (S3)

As the above excerpt illustrates, getting a new job that corresponds to a person's expectations may change one's psychological state and may encourage a feeling of attachment and future orientation to a new country, and stability.

The negotiation of a new position in the context of demographic changes was also challenging for Finnish teachers. However, the teachers considered that concentrating on the positive aspects of teaching migrant students, like feeling that they are learning something new and growing as professionals as well as the migrant students' appreciation of their work, helped them do their work properly and with passion, and adjust to the new situation.

5   Discussion

The aim of this study was to examine the meanings that teachers and adult migrant students give to integration, and under what conditions a sense of belonging can emerge or be experienced by adult migrant students. According to the findings, the participants saw participation, engagement in various activities and the extension of their networks as greatly supporting structural integration, for example, in terms of finding gainful employment (Drever & Hoffmeister, 2008). This aligns with Ager and Strang (2008), who argue that participation is a key element in finding one's way to one's own place in a new host society and ensuring a feeling of belonging. The study has also shown that both a variety of interactions and social connections and their quality are essential for belonging (Dahinden, 2013). Social contacts limited to one's own ethnic group and other migrant groups do not ultimately seem to be sufficient (Cheung & Phillimore, 2013).

The conviction was that migrants should take the initiative, accept the situation, learn, and finally integrate and contribute to society, e.g., by paying taxes. This follows the perspectives of the 'good immigrant' and 'ideal integration' (Näre, 2013; see also Shukla, 2016). According to the results, especially teachers' talk echoed a normative perspective on integration, i.e., migrants' own responsibility for being agents of their life (Grzymala-Kazlowska, 2018; Grzymala-Kazlowska & Phillimore, 2018), especially for those of non-Western backgrounds (Krivonos, 2019). For migrants, learning more and responding positively to any subsequent changes in their lives were seen as beneficial and an essential part of their lives and obligations, but they were seen as voluntary for Finnish teachers. Such expectations may be related to the belief that

16

migrants' lack of certain qualities, certain types of previous experience and learning is an obstacle to integration and that this can be corrected by means of education (Lamonica et al., 2020). However, this previous knowledge and experience should rather be seen as a resource for negotiating new meanings and building migrants' lives in Finland (Merriam et al., 2020).

Local knowledge, including knowledge of the Finnish language, was perceived as a facilitator of participation in society, and this knowledge was believed to be further extended as a result of engagement in different interactions. This type of knowledge was linked in the study to migrant students gaining independence, and to their feelings of equality, stability and security, all of which are elements in gaining a subjective feeling of belonging (Grzymala-Kazlowska, 2018; Ryan, 2018; Yuval-Davis, 2011) and creating connections between migrants and the state (Ager & Strang, 2008). However, some participants challenged this type of thinking and questioned the view of integration as something that develops through acquiring practical knowledge (e.g., related to dealing with Finnish officials) and participation that is restricted to the official working hours of Finnish institutions (Ager & Strang, 2008; Veikou, 2013). This argument is connected to a sense of belonging and attachment that develops gradually and imperceptibly in daily interactions and observations and mainly in informal spaces (Alenius, 2015; Veikou, 2013). The results of the study suggest that the opportunities for learning that exist in daily life are not fully understood and utilized. Finnish national policy emphasizes the importance of lifelong learning and education (including VET education) for integration (Ala-Kauholuoma, 2018; Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, 2017). However, the results of the study suggest that the role of education in integration should be considered critically, in terms not only of students' individual needs and difficulties in the recognition of migrants' skills and experiences, but also of teachers' pedagogical competence in culturally responsive teaching and the response of teacher in-service education in this regard.

The study showed the importance of a two-way perspective on integration and difficulties related to it. This mutual character and reciprocal nature of integration emerged when teachers and students talked about the need to rethink and negotiate their own positions, rights and obligations, and their own role, often in relation to others. The teachers echoed the view that they, as natives, also have some responsibilities in this respect (Komisarof, 2009; Leong, 2014; Modood, 2011). By engaging in interaction and negotiation both migrants and teachers had an opportunity to build a new understanding

of themselves as people and professionals. This process was accompanied by teachers reflecting on their practices and their practices being occasionally questioned by other parties involved in the process. Migrant students' sense of belonging was particularly threatened by their peers' questioning of their right to be in Finland. In line with previous research, all these processes were shown to be emotionally, socially and cognitively challenging and stressful for both migrants and natives (Leong, 2014).

6   Conclusions and suggestions for further research

This study deepens our understanding of integration as a process of fair and equal participation leading to the gaining of independence and autonomy and developing a subjective feeling of belonging (Ager & Strang, 2008; Grzymala-Kazlowska, 2018; Ryan, 2018), and which requires involvement and change on the side of both migrants and natives (Komisarof, 2009; Leong, 2014). The results also raise awareness of the challenges and opportunities that support adult migrants' acquisition of new knowledge and skills and promote their integration in an educational setting. First, the study shows that, although educational institutions can support integration and create possibilities for integration to happen, there should also be more opportunities for "meaningful" interactions outside the hours of formal schooling and work (see also Grzymala-Kazlowska, 2018). Second, it became clear that adjustment and the development of a sense of belonging depend on the intersection of opportunities, socio-demographic dimensions and expectations (see also Kaukko & Wernesjö, 2017; Wessendorf, 2018; Yuval-Davis, 2011). Normative views on integration may be a barrier to two-way, mutual integration. Third, especially novice teachers struggle with the negotiation of new positions and the increasing diversity in the classrooms.

In conclusion, future research needs to lead to better understanding of diversity and intersections as well as ways of supporting migrants and experts in professional orientations, including VET teachers. This, as well as broadening teachers' and migrant students' perspectives on integration, may be crucial for promoting migrant students' integration and their sense of belonging. Further research is needed on the conditions most conducive to integration and the development of a sense of belonging and attachment, with the emphasis on researching integration as life-long learning, as a two-way process that requires mutual engagement and change on the part of both migrants and natives (see also Miera, 2012).

Due to the small size of the sample population (n=30), the findings of this study cannot be generalized: they could be different in another educational institution or another region of Finland. Nevertheless, different groups of interviewees and different types of interviews enriched the study by providing different parties' perspectives and generating a much richer set of data in terms of interaction and knowledge, which added to the study's credibility (Pietilä, 2010) and content (Hennink, 2008). To deepen understanding of the process of integration and the role of VET in this process, comparative research in the VET context and work organizations nationally and globally could be of value.

References

Ahmad, A. (2020). When the Name Matters: An Experimental Investigation of Ethnic Discrimination in the Finnish Labor Market. *Sociological Inquiry*, *90*(3), 468-496. https://doi.org/10.1111/soin.12276

Ager, A., & Strang, A. (2008). Understanding integration: A conceptual framework. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, *21*(2), 166-191. https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fen016

Ala-Kauholuoma, M., Pitkänen, S., Ohtonen, J., Ramadan, F., Hautamäki, L., Vuorento, M., & Rinne, H. (2018). *Monimenetelmäinen tutkimus kotouttamistoimenpiteiden toimivuudesta.* Parliament of Finland.

Alenius, P. (2015). *Informal learning in a transnational setting: Exploring learning spaces of people migrating between Estonia and Finland.* Tampere University Press.

AMKE. (2016, April 16). Lisäpaikkoja maahanmuuttajille, rahoitus budjettiperusteiseksi - Ammatiosaamisen kehittämisyhdistys AMKE ry. *Scribbr.* https://www.amke.fi/ajankohtaista/uutiset/uutinen/lisapaikkoja-maahanmuuttajille-rahoitus-budjettiperusteiseksi.html

Anthias, F., Kontos, M., & Morokvasic-Müller, M. (2013). Introduction. In F. Anthias, M. Kontos, & M. Morokvasic-Müller (Eds.), Paradoxes of integration: Female migrants in Europe (pp. 1–16). Springer

Bakker, L., Dagevos, J., & Engbersen, G. (2014). The Importance of Resources and Security in the Socio-Economic Integration of Refugees. A Study on the Impact of Length of Stay in Asylum Accommodation and Residence Status on Socio-Economic Integration for the Four Largest Refugee Groups in the Netherlands.

Journal of International Migration and Integration, *15*(2), 431-448. htpps://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-013-0296-2

Baumeister, R.F., & Leary, M.R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, *117*(3), 497–529. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.117.3.497

Bergseng, B., Degler, E., & Lüthi, S. (2019). Unlocking the Potential of Migrants in Germany. OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training. OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/82ccc2a3-en.

Berry, J. W. (2001). A Psychology of immigration. *Journal of Social Issues*, *57*(3), 615-631. https://doi.org/10.1111/0022-4537.00231

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77-101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Brinkmann, S. (2014). Unstructured and semi-structured interviewing. In P. Leavy, *The Oxford handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 277-299). Oxford University Press.

Cheung, S.Y., & Phillimore, J. (2013). *Social networks, social capital and refugee integration. Research report for Nuffield Foundation. Scribbr.* https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/sites/default/files/files/Phillimore%20Refugre e%20Integration%20Report.pdf

Contini D. (2013). Immigrant background peer effects in Italian schools. *Social Science Research*, *42*(4), 1122–1142. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2013.02.003

Dahinden, J. (2013). Cities, migrant incorporation, and ethnicity: A network perspective on boundary work. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, *14*(1), 39-60. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-011-0224-2

Drever, A.I., & Hoffmeister, O. (2008). Immigrants and social networks in a job-scarce environment: the case of Germany. *International Migration Review*, *42*(2), 425-448. https//doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2008.00130.x

Forsander, A. (2013). Maahanmuuttajien sijoittuminen työelämään. In T. Martikainen, P. Saukkonen & M. Säävälä. *Muuttajat: kansainvälinen muuttoliike ja suomalainen yhteiskunta* (pp. 220-244)*.* Gaudeamus.

Fortier, A. (2000). *Migrant belongings*. Berg.

FNAE. (2017). *Maahanmuuttajien koulutuspolut ja integrointi - kipupisteet ja toimenpide - esitykset II. Publications of Ministry of Education and Culture 2017:5.*

FNBE. (2014). *Competence Based Qualification guide. Publications 2013:22*. Juvenes Print - Suomen Yliopistopaino Oy.

Government of Finland. (2016). *Valtion kotouttamisohjelma*. Helsinki: Government of Finland. *Scribbr*. https://kotouttaminen.fi/valtion-kotouttamisohjelma

Grzymala-Kazlowska, A. (2018). From connecting to social anchoring: Adaptation and 'settlement' of Polish migrants in the UK. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *44*(2), 252-269. https:://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1341713

Grzymala-Kazlowska, A. & Phillimore, J. (2018). Introduction: Rethinking integration. New perspectives on adaptation and settlement in the era of super-diversity. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *44*(2), 179-196. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1341706

Grzymala-Moszczynska, H., & Trabka, A. (2014). From Children of Migrants to Migrant Children. *Studia Migracyjne – Przeglad polonijny*, *40*(3), 5-15.

Hennink, M. (2008). Emergent issues in international focus group discussions. In S.N. Hesse-Biber & P. Leavy (Eds.), *Handbook of emergent methods* (pp. 207-220). Guilford Press.

Kalonaityte, V. (2010). The Case of vanishing borders: Theorizing diversity management as internal border control. *Organization*, *17*(1), 31-52. https:://doi.org/10.1177/1350508409350238

Kärkkäinen, K. (2017). Learning, teaching and integration of adult migrants in Finland. University of Jyväskylä. *Scribbr*. http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-951-39-7212-7

Komisarof, A. (2009). Testing a modified interactive acculturation model in Japan: American–Japanese coworker relations. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *33*(5), 399-418. https:://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2009.03.007

Kaukko, M., & Wernesjö, U. (2017). Belonging and participation in liminality: Unaccompanied children in Finland and Sweden, *Childhood*, *24*(1), 7-20. https:://doi.org/10.1177/0907568216649104

Krivonos, D. (2019). *Migrations on the edge of whiteness: Young Russian-speaking migrants in Helsinki, Finland.* University of Helsinki.

Lamonica, V., Ragazzi, E., & Sella, L. (2020). Including adolescent migrants in school through VET approach: evidence from a pilot action in Italy. *Empirical Research in Vocational Education and Training, 12*(6). https://doi.org/10.1186/s40461-020-00092-x

Leong, Ch-H. (2014). Social markers of acculturation: A new research framework on intercultural adaptation. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *38*(1), 120-132. https:./doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2013.08.006

May, V. (2013). *Connecting Self to Society. Belonging in a Changing World.* Palgrave Macmillan.

Merriam, S. B., Caffarella, R. S., & Baumgartner, L. M. (2020). *Learning in Adulthood: A Comprehensive Guide*. John Wiley & Sons, inc.

Miera, F. (2012). Not a one-way road? Integration as a concept and as a policy. In A. Triandafyllidou, T. Modood, & N. Meer (Eds.), *European multiculturalisms: Cultural, religious and ethnic challenges* (pp. 192-212)*.* Edinburgh University Press.

Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland (2017). *Maahanmuuttajien koulutuspolkujen nopeuttaminen ja joustavat siirtymät -työryhmän loppuraportti ja toimenpide-esitykset*. Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriön julkaisuja 36/2017. *Scribbr.* https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/80625

Modood, T. (2011). *Multiculturalism and integration: Struggling with confusions.* European University Institute.

Morrice, L., Shan, H., & Sprung, A. (2017). Migration, adult education and learning. *Studies in Education of Adults*, *49*(2), 129-135. https::/doi.org/10.1080/02660830.2018.1470280

Näre, L. (2013). Ideal workers and suspects. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, *3*(2), 72-80. https://doi.org/10.2478/v10202-012-0017-5

Nikander, P. (2008). Working with transcripts and translated data. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *5*(3), 225-231. https::/doi.org/10.1080/02660830.2018.1470280

Olakivi, A. (2020). The problematic recruitment of migrant labor: A relational perspective on the agency of care work managers. *Current Sociology*, *68*(3), 333-352. https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392119837319

Penninx, R., & Mascareñas, B.G. (2016). The concept of integration as an analytical tool and as a policy concept. In B.G. Mascareñas & R. Penninx (Eds.), *Integration Processes and Policies in Europe: Contexts, Levels and Actors* (pp. 11-30). Springer Open. *Scribbr.* https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007%2F978-3-319-21674-4_2

Phillimore, J. (2012). Implementing integration in the UK: Lessons for integration theory, policy and practice. *Policy and Politics*, *40*(4), 525-545. https:/doi.org/10.1332/030557312X643795

Phillimore, J., Humphris, R., & Khan, K. (2018). Reciprocity for new migrant integration: Resource conservation, investment and exchange. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *44*(2), 215-232. https::/doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1341709

Pietilä, I. (2010). Ryhmä- ja yksilöhaastattelun diskursiivinen analyysi. Kaksi aineistoa erilaisina vuorovaikutuksen kenttinä. In J. Ruusuvuori, P. Nikander & M. Hyvärinen (Eds.), *Haastattelun analyysi* (pp. 212-241). Vastapaino.

Pitkänen, P. (2007). Retorisesta moniarvoisuudesta etnistä tasa-arvoa edistävään viranomaistyöhön. *Yhteiskuntapolitiikka*, *72*, 309-320.

Ratsas, A. (2005). Kulttuurit ja erot haastattelutilanteessa. In J. Ruusuvuori, L. Tiittula & Aaltonen, T (Eds.), *Haastattelu: Tutkimus, tilanteet ja vuorovaikutus* (pp. 78-102). Vastapaino.

Ryan, L. (2018). Differentiated embedding: Polish migrants in London negotiating belonging over time. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *44*(2), 233-251. https://doi.org.10.1080/1369183X.2017.1341710

Ryan, L., & Mulholland, J. (2015). Embedding in Motion. In L. Ryan, U. Erel, A. D'Angelo & P. Hetherington, *Migrant Capital* (pp. 135–153). Palgrave Macmillan.

Ryen, A. (2002). Cross-cultural interviewing. In A. Holstein & J.F. Gubrium, *Handbook of interview research: Context and method* (pp. 335-354). Sage.

Saharso, S. (2019). Who needs integration? Debating a central, yet increasingly contested concept in migration studies. Editorial. *Comparative Migration Studies*, *7*(6), 1-3. https://doi.org.10.1186/s40878-019-0123-9

Saukkonen, P. (2016). Mitä on kotoutuminen? *Kvartti*, *4*(4), 73-90.

Schwandt, T. A. (2007). *The SAGE dictionary of qualitative inquiry* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Simons, M., & Masschelein, J. (2008). The Governmentalization of learning and the assemblage of a learning apparatus. *Educational Theory*, *58*(4): 391-415. https://doi.org.10.1111/j.1741-5446.2008.00296.x

Shukla, N. (2016). The good immigrant. Unbound.

Statistics Finland (2016). *Population structure 2015. Scribbr.* http://tilastokeskus.fi/til/vaerak/2015/index_en.html

Statistics Finland (2019). *Immigrants in the population.* Scribbr. https://www.stat.fi/tup/maahanmuutto/maahanmuuttajat-vaestossa_en.html

Strang, A.B., Baillot, H., & Mignard, E. (2018). 'I want to participate.' Transition experiences of new refugees in Glasgow. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *44*(2), 197-214. https://doi.org.10.1080/1369183X.2017.1341717

Teräs, M. (2007). *Intercultural learning and hybridity in the culture laboratory.* University of Helsinki.

Veikou, M. (2013). Integration: A hot button issue. Contextualising multiculturalism and integration in Amsterdam. *Diversities*, *15*(1), 52-66.

Vertovec, S. (2007). Super-diversity and its implications. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *30*(6), 1024-1054. https://doi.org.10.1080/01419870701599465

Wessendorf, S. (2018). Pathways of settlement among pioneer migrants in super-diverse London. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *44*(2): 270-286. https://doi.org.10.1080/1369183X.2017.1341719

Yuval-Davis, N. (2011). *The Politics of Belonging. Intersectional Contestations.* Sage.

Yuval-Davis, N. (2006). Belonging and the politics of belonging. *Patterns of Prejudice: Boundaries, Identities and Borders: Exploring the Cultural Production of Belonging*, *40*(3), 197-214. https://doi.org.10.1080/00313220600769331