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The Role of the Mother-Tongue Based Programs in Promoting Education and Integration of
Immigrant-Background Children within the Turku Municipality

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Abstract

This study evaluates the extent to which the introduction of the OMO (Education given in students' native languages) and MAI (Immigrant native language education) programs into the comprehensive schools in Turku has contributed to the academic development and integration of young immigrants. OMO and MAI are two language programs that promote the teaching of mother tongue to children of immigrant backgrounds. The programs also aim to teach regular comprehensive school subjects in the mother tongues of immigrants in order to promote understanding of the subject contents.

The study employed phenomenography as a method. Six facilitators of the OMO and MAI programs were randomly selected and interviewed using the unstructured interview approach. Data obtained through the interviews were coded and analyzed using the qualitative content analysis. The outcome of this research indicates that the OMO and MAI programs have helped to promote the smooth integration of young immigrants into their new cultural and linguistic environment. The programs have energized the zeal in young immigrants to appreciate their cultural identity, thus helping them to respect the culture of the larger Finnish society in Turku. The research also indicates that the educational development of children of immigrant descent in Turku has improved through their participation in these language programs.

Although these mother tongue-based programs play vital roles in helping young immigrants to integrate, the implementation of the programs has been fraught with challenges that need immediate attention. This study identifies those challenges and suggests that when they are dealt with, the programs may more effectively enhance the integration of immigrants in general, and especially their inclusion in the comprehensive schools in Turku.

Keywords: Acculturation, Education, Immigrants, Integration, Mother Tongue (L1)

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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This research activity examines how successfully the Finnish educational system contributes towards the effective integration of young immigrants into Finnish society. Two important programs that aimed at facilitating the integration of young immigrants into Finnish school community and society are the OMO (Education given in students' native languages) and MAI (Immigrant native language education) programs. The objective of these two programs is to teach young immigrants using their mother tongue in order to enable them to keep these mother tongues while they integrate into the new culture they find themselves. The importance of this study lies in the attempt to unearth the usefulness of the OMO and MAI programs in the promotion of education and academic success among young immigrants. For the purpose of this study, academic success for these students is considered in a holistic context, taking into account performance in school, thorough comprehension of the subject contents, motivation to pursue further education, and ultimately integration into Finnish society as educated individuals.

Immigration has become a global phenomenon and people continue to move from one country to another for different reasons. Finland and its school system have become more diverse and multicultural; different languages, cultures, ethnicities, nationalities, and religions exist in Finnish schools. Immigration can become a strenuous experience, especially for children. Immigrant children are often prone to various challenges in their new environments. Some of these challenges include cultural and social obstacles, new language, different school system, and loss of identity. These may result in stress and even trauma, which, in turn can result in making academic success a herculean task for young immigrant students. The Finnish education system has provided various mechanisms such as the introduction of the OMO and MAI programs to make the integration of young immigrants into Finnish school community and society much easier.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been formulated with the purpose of making life better for all humans (Griggs et al., 2013, p. 16). The promotion of equal access to education through inclusion is one of these SDGs. Finland committed to contribute towards the attainment of these goals within its boundaries, culminating in the Finnish government's effort to ensure that the successful inclusion and integration of young immigrants into its educational and societal system remains a priority. This led to the introduction of various lan-

guage programs to promote cultural integration, academic performance, and also to preserve the unique identity of young immigrants.

A significant objective of the Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration (2010, Section 79) is to promote the integration of migrants into Finnish society and culture and to ensure that their active participation in this culture is supported. To fulfil this mandate, the Integration Act presents a set of procedures that are necessary to facilitate the integration of young migrants. These procedures include the introduction of the immigrant mother tongue teaching into the educational system across various schools in all municipalities in Finland (Finnish National Board of Education, 2005).

Another core objective of the Integration Act is to ensure that all migrants into Finnish society become sufficiently informed about their basic human rights as well as what is expected of them as responsibilities. The integration process also includes the teaching delivered and learning achieved in either the Finnish or Swedish as part of other languages that would be deemed necessary for aiding the integration process of migrants so that their educational attainment could be supported and enhanced. Additionally, the integration processes are developed to ensure that migrants have access to employment and further education (Finnish National Board of Education, 2005).

The main purpose of this research is to explore through a phenomenographic study, how the introduction of the OMO and MAI programs has influenced the academic performances of young immigrants in Finland with a specific focus on young immigrants living within the Turku Municipality. The research is expected to contribute towards the implementation of measures that will help the effective running of the OMO and MAI programs to enable immigrant children to reach their educational potential. The study will provide directions for further research, extension, and development schemes that will benefit the Turku municipality in assessing the success or failure of the OMO and MAI programs within the comprehensive schools. Documentation of the identified problem provides directions for the Finnish Ministry of Education, Turku Municipality, and other organizations whose activities are centred on efficient integration of immigrants in Finland.

1.1 Research Objectives

The study aims to determine:

1. The contribution of the OMO and MAI programs towards the educational achievements of young immigrants in the Turku Municipality.
2. The influence of the OMO and MAI programs in promoting the integration of young immigrants within the Turku Municipality.
3. The challenges facing the successful implementation of the OMO and MAI programs within the Turku Municipality.

1.2 Research Questions

The following research questions formed the heart of the study:

1. How do facilitators of the OMO and MAI programs perceive the contribution of the programs in promoting the educational achievements of young immigrants in Turku?
2. How do facilitators of the OMO and MAI programs perceive the program's effectiveness in assisting the integration of young immigrants in Turku?
3. What challenges do the facilitators of the OMO and MAI perceive as hindering the successful implementation of the programs?

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The focus of this chapter is to review a collection of literature that relates to the topic being studied. Pautasso (2013, p. 20) confirms that a review of the various literatures that connects to a phenomenon being studied provides important information that helps to deepen its comprehension. De Los et al. (2008) also reiterate the contribution of review of various literatures to a research by stating that reviewing various literature “contributes immensely towards helping to situate the study within a defined historical context” (p. 87). Furthermore, the authors affirmed that a literature review helps to draw the relationship between the research being undertaken and those already completed by forebears in the area being investigated. The paragraphs that ensue present a synthesis of the various materials which will place this thesis within the current field.

Two important frameworks were used to provide guidance for the research and to define the direction of the empirical study. These include Chomsky’s theory of Universal Grammar (UG) and Berry’s theory of acculturation which also involves the question of possible marginalization of young immigrants. Bak (2004) has emphasized that an explicit theoretical perspective has the capacity to establish a firm boundary within which the research could be explicated. The need for a theoretical perspective in academic research is also endorsed by Rockinson-Szapkiw (2013, p. 2) that it helps the researcher to come out with research questions and a methodology that will be applicable to the study. Coser (1981) states that theoretical framework helps the researcher to make meaningful explication of the world around them.

2.1 Chomsky’s Theory of Universal Grammar (UG)

The theory of Universal Grammar developed by Noam Chomsky has been a major theoretical framework for undertaking linguistic studies for nearly a century (Kliesch, 2012, 88). The theory posits that all individuals possess a certain innate capability (linguistic rules) that facilitates their acquisition of languages. Chomsky further affirms that these natural organizations towards first language acquisition are devoid of the influence of sensory experiences where additional linguistic stimuli become acquired in the process of the psychological development of children (Chomsky, 2007). In the course of the psychological development of children, they tend to adapt to specific grammatical rules that agree with what became known as the

Universal Grammar (UG). The theory of Universal Grammar is also known as Mental Grammar (Baker 2003, p. 67). This form of grammar does not conform to other known grammatical forms such as prescriptive, descriptive or pedagogical grammar (Sampson, 2005). The advocates of this theory uphold the position that there is a universal property of natural human languages (Baker, 2003). When children are able to fully develop these universal tendencies in language acquisition, it facilitates their acquisition of other new languages whose grammatical structures they might not be aware of (Chomsky, 2007).

Chomsky reiterates that the human mental faculty has limited sets of constraints for ordering the structure of languages. The implication of this is that all languages of the human race, irrespective of where they are found and which category of people speak them, have a common grammatical foundation or basis which is known as the Universal Grammar (Chomsky, 2007). According to Chomsky, a group of people who speak a particular language are aware of expressions that are acceptable and those that are not (Chomsky, 2007). What remains undiscovered is how the speakers of a shared language come to acquire this knowledge of what is acceptable and what is not.

The implication of the theory of a Universal Grammar suggests that knowledge of a mother tongue could foster children's acquisition of other languages (L2). This is because L2 learners already have knowledge of the grammar of the first language which incorporates elements of the UG that defines specific sets of its boundaries for learning the second language (Baker, 2003).

2.2 Acculturation and Constructive Marginalization

The importance of using the theory of acculturation and constructive marginalization developed by Berry (1997) is to discover the coping mechanisms and behavior of migrants in their new cultural environment. This is important because immigrating into new cultural environments presents many challenges to migrants, particularly children. Knowledge of one's mother tongue prior to the process of immigrating into another linguistically new environment plays significant roles in determining the coping attitudes and behavior of young immigrants (Sam & Berry, 2006, p. 18).

In a multicultural environment as well as a highly cosmopolitan society, the tendency that two or more cultures are likely to have close contact with one another is very high. In the event of

this occurrence, the need for a peaceful co-existence and adaptation or assimilation is very significant. The concept of cultural acculturation refers to the process of cultural change and adaptation, which takes place when individuals or groups with opposing cultural orientations and norms interact (Schwartz et al., 2006, p. 16). To prevent the clash or conflict of cultures, it is expedient that these individual cultures develop their respective survival mechanisms in order to be able to adapt to the traditions and beliefs of the opposing culture while ensuring that their own cultural and belief systems remain intact. The concept of cultural acculturation could also be referred to as cultural assimilation.

However, studies conducted by Berry (1997) show that the concept of cultural assimilation was not equivalent to cultural acculturation. His studies largely focused on cross-cultural psychology and also formulated his own perspective of what should constitute acculturation. According to Berry (1997), “in all plural societies, both dominant and non-dominant cultural groups must deal with the issue of how to acculturate” (p. 6). He mentions two important concerns that each individual or groups ought to work on in their day-to-day encounters with other cultural groups. These concerns include “cultural maintenance” and “contact and participation”. Four strategies unfold based on the character and form in which these individual groups react or respond to the issue.

Fig. 1.1 Berry’s Acculturation Model

FIGURE 1
Four Varieties of Acculturation, Based upon Orientations to Two Basic Issues

		Issue 1 Is it considered to be of value to maintain cultural identity and characteristics?	
		Yes	No
Issue 2 Is it considered to be of value to maintain relationships with other groups?	Yes	Integration	Assimilation
	No	Separation	Marginalization

Source: Berry (1990)

Figure 1.1 presented approaches the above discussion from the perspective of the less dominant or non-dominant group. When the group who forms the minority in a society interacts with the dominant group and becomes reluctant to maintain or preserve their unique cultural differences while they sought for daily interaction with the other culture, the situation will be described as one of a cultural assimilation, where the less dominant cultural group is absorbed

by the dominant group. The concept of separation occurs when the less dominant is unwilling to give up her cultural identity and continues to avoid interaction with the other culture in the society (Berry, 1997, p.14). Cultural integration occurs when the less dominant culture seeks to maintain their cultural elements either material or non-material, while they continue to interact with members making up the larger cultural composition on daily basis.

The final state of cultural acculturation is known as marginalization. Marginalization occurs when members of the lesser cultural grouping are unwilling to maintain their unique cultural differences and also do not want to have any relationship in terms of interaction with the other members of the society as well. Berry's position that the issue of acculturation and the shape and form it takes is based only on choices made by the individual or members of the less dominant group are contestable. Two examples from Europe would help explicate this opposition to the claim being made by Berry. Firstly, Finland has a strong policy on immigration and also well established policies on how immigrants should be integrated into the larger Finnish society while they maintain their language and cultural integrity. However, the case in France is purely structured on what is known as the "melting pot" ideology, which is framed on cultural assimilation (Murov, 2014, p. 19).

The terminology of acculturation path has been used by Alitolppa-Niitamo (2004) as metaphor to describe the acculturation of individuals, families or ethnic groups. He further emphasized that "the direction and pace of movement on the acculturation path are affected by human and social capital of migrants, by the characteristics of the receiving society, and by human agency" (p.92). The author further reiterates that migrants are heterogeneous in character and appearance; hence, they do not share similar coping capacities. Due to this, it becomes very challenging to typify their respective processes of acculturation as producing specific results such as assimilation, marginalization, separation and integration. Similarly, one can perceive acculturation as a fragmented process but not a single entity (Sam and Berry, 2006, p. 22).

Educational establishment and the family as a unit are the two most influential institutions that contribute significantly to the integration of young immigrants in to societies that are new to them. Formal education is a very essential institution that holds the capacity of augmenting the social mobility and also promoting the economic activity of young immigrants. The need to promote young immigrant's performance in school as they adjust to a new curriculum and environment has stimulated significant research in this area.

In addition, the pursuit of academic opportunities is held as one of the salient windows of hope that young migrants could use to better their situation in their new countries (Punch, 1998, p. 17). In most cases, voluntary groups of immigrants see their new societies as one that come with various possibilities, but they do not see themselves as belonging to it. It has been discovered that some migrant children do well in school in certain societies compared to other groups of migrant children. This disparity in academic achievements among young migrants in their host countries has also triggered various investigations aimed at unearthing the causal elements (Alitolppa-Niitamo, 2004). The performance of migrants could be linked to the level of acculturation as well as the linguistic capabilities of the individuals. The framework below is a review of the framework of Carola and Suarez-Orozco’s model of the individual variables that influences the academic achievements of the young migrant by Alitolppa-Niitamo. This revised framework aims at providing a comprehensive presentation of the multiple factors that affect the academic performances of young immigrants.

Fig. 1.2 Framework on Factors Influencing Academic Performances of Immigrant Children (Alitolppa-Niitamo, 2004, p. 64)

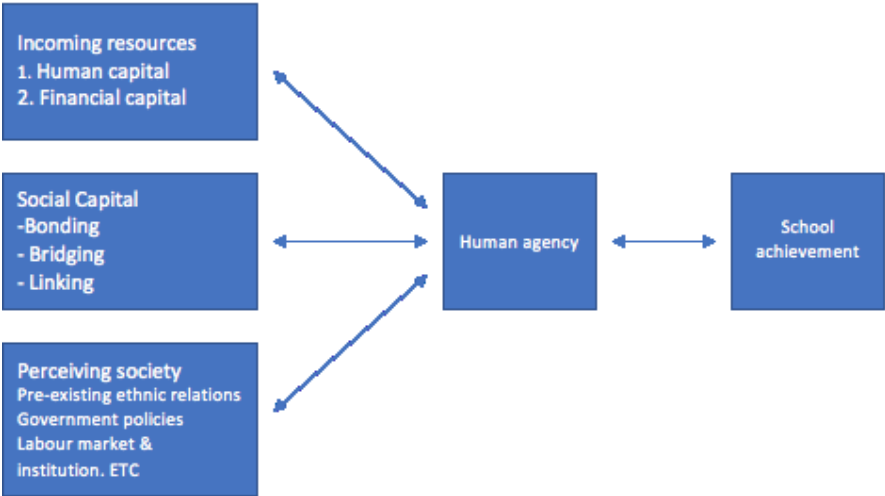


Figure 1.2 above is a representation of the framework of Alitolppa-Niitamo on the factors influencing the academic performance of children of immigrants. He states that common variables that affect the education of young migrants also have key roles in building their path to acculturation in general. The effect of these variables even becomes more significant to the ensuing generations that are born in-between. It is significant to note also that although there may be some resemblances in what people experience on a daily basis, they may respond to these things differently. People become predisposed to the choices they make based on how

they respond to their external stimuli. Based on this, this framework could not be used as a framework for generalization.

Another essential concept is the debates on the acculturation process of young migrants and the objective of the avoidance of encapsulated marginality. According to Torres et al. (2004, p. 18) this can be achieved by constructive marginality. Most often, the concept of marginality connotes some limitations when an individual is unable to choose any appropriate cultural context that suits his or her interest. This is where the concept of encapsulated marginality becomes important, it refers to the situation where the individual is caught in between cultures, unable to choose one or the other, thus culminating into never feeling comfortable in the new society. One effect of this encapsulated marginalization is that it grows in the individual, the inability to recognize reference groups and the struggles to make decisions between options increase. The concept of marginality can involve the creation of a sense of powerlessness, isolation, frustration and also a sense of insecurity (Torres et al, 2004, p. 7). These situations pose serious threats to young immigrants who are in the process of forming their cultural identities.

For new migrants to be able to adjust successfully into new social and cultural environments, it is necessary to practice constructive marginality. Constructive marginality ensures that people develop positive lifestyles that enable them to survive in middle of two or more cultures. With this tools having been developed in the young migrant, he or she then perceives or views the issue of marginality as both an opportunity and also as a challenge. This is because the individual migrant becomes very flexible in moving around different cultural contexts. Torres et al. (2004) reiterated that constructive marginality enables people to make good choices and they imbibe in them the character of self determination which ensures that they are able to enjoy their position as flexible between.

To be able to effectively discuss the processes an immigrant goes through as he or she begins a new life in a new environment or society, the concepts of integration and acculturation are used simultaneously in this study. Within the Finnish context, integration has a deeper meaning than merely referring to the process of fusing into a new society and culture. The Finnish word “Kotoutuminen”, which means integration, refers also to the various processes that are used to integrate migrants into the Finnish Society, or the acculturation of new migrants into Finland. This difference in the meaning of what constitutes integration makes it challenging

for research, especially when the term is used in most of the available literature relating to immigrants.

2.3 Immigration

Migration is the act of leaving a town, area or in some cases country of domicile to settle in another country (Raymer and Willekens, 2008, p. 5). Immigration, however, refers to the exiting of people from their respective countries of birth to settle permanently in another country (Berry, 1997). The need to understand the processes of migration and also the various phases that characterize the phenomenon is essential for establishing a clarification of the processes related to international migration. An explanation for the occurrence of the phenomenon could not be offered for Finland without the blend of different approaches that are available and offering uncommon perspectives that could become applicable.

To study the phenomenon of international immigration, it is fitting to fix it within the larger concept of the migration within the European continent. Considering the EU area as burgeoning, especially in the development of migration systems, the Turku municipality in Finland is a minute representation in which the theoretical system of migration could be used to describe the processes of migration. Immigrant population in Finland began to rise, and as an EU member, Finland began to integrate itself within the bigger systems of migration. The integration into the larger systems of migration constantly results in new forms of interdependencies and massive transfers within itself and also towards the outside of the systems.

2.4 Immigration in Europe

The study of migration is dynamic; that is why there are various theories that could be used to undertake studies in this area or field of study. In classical discourses on immigration, the focus is placed on economic determinism as the factor responsible for the movement of people, either from their country of origin to live in another country or from one local area to another within the same country (Forsander, 2004 p. 19). From the early 20th century, the various transformations in the process of migration could not be limited to the theories being offered by classical analysis. There is an upsurge of new theoretical perspectives that seek to offer some explanations for the recent trends in migration processes.

These new perspectives, as mentioned by Kepsu et al. (2009), center on the “meso-level of migration through exchange processes between social spaces” (p. 7). The flow of migrants across all regions of Europe, particularly; the Western European region right at the dawn of the 20th century, has presented very unstable and confusing perspectives. Stalker (2002), irrespective of these varying changes, makes the effort to categorize the trend or concept of migration into four main categories: migration as a result of labour (-these people include short to long term migrants and seasonal workers), reunification with families (this includes a group of people who migrate from one country to another as a result of joining relatives who already hold permanent residence status in another country), illegal and undocumented migrants (these are groups of migrants who have entered another country through illegal means, they also could have come into the destination countries using tourist visas and have overstayed their permits mostly with the reason of searching for jobs) and finally, refugees, also known as asylum seekers. To be able to understand the dynamics of migration in Europe properly, it is important to consider the identifiable trends and how migration took place immediately after the Second World War. Stalker (2002) categorizes the trend of migration in Europe into the following phases:

1. The Movement of Refugees Between 1940 and 1950
2. Migration of Labour Force Between 1950 to 1973
3. Restrictive Politic of Migration 1974-1980s
4. Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Illegal Migration Mid 1980s to 2001 and Beyond

2.4.1 The Movement of Refugees (Between 1940 and 1950)

When the WWII ended, over 15 million people migrated from one country to another predominantly owing to the changes in national borders (Stalker, 2002, p. 152). A large number of people were compelled by these shifts in borders and relocated to settle in other countries. Borrie (1970) recorded that these changes in national borders after the WWII affected nationals of countries like Germany, Poland and former Czechoslovakia. Borrie further stated that over 30% of the population of Western part of Germany became refugees. The population of refugees in West Germany began to dwindle towards the middle of the 1950s; however, refugees still existed within Berlin even after the construction of the Berlin wall.

2.4.2 Migration of Labour Force (Between 1950 to 1973)

Massive revival and the triumph of economic activities characterized the reconstruction Europe after WWII. Most of the OECD countries recorded massive growth rates of 5% in their individual economies between 1950 and 1973. France, the United Kingdom and Germany, who are key players in the European economies, were then undergoing rebuilding and rival of their respective economic poles and this resulted in the rise in the demand for labourers (Stalker, 2002). These countries started suffering deficits in labour forces. The shortfalls in the force of labour were shored up with people who were displaced during the wars, but the number was not large enough to fill the gap of the total force needed for the rebuilding processes. Rural-Urban migration became a dominant part of this era. Rural-Urban migration was dominated by people from Portugal, Spain, and Italy. This led to the rapid development of urbanization and industrialization, culminating into a dramatic turn within the processes of migration. This caused a shift in the flow of migration within the UK and France (Murov, 2014). The processes of migration by these two countries were directed towards their former colonies. France focused on the Northern part of Africa, whereas the UK based its activities of migration in the Caribbean and in the subcontinent of India. Due to the fact that Germany, as a strong force in Europe, did not involve much of its activities in colonization, it premised its migration agenda on attracting short-term contract workers from Turkey and Yugoslavia (Stalker, 2002, p. 153). It is held that “the net migration for Western Europe reached around 10 million, compared to outflows of 4 million for the 1914 to 1949 period” (Stalker, 2002, p. 18).

2.4.3 Restrictive Politic of Migration (1974-1980s)

During this period of migration across Europe, policies on migration were tightened, more strictly enforced, and offered more preventive measures. The UK reduced the number of people who could have the leverage to emigrate from the Commonwealth of the British Empire. Two events that further emphasized the implementation of tougher mechanisms to control the flow of migrants were the economic recession and the oil crisis that resulted from the activities of OPEC through its oil embargo (Stalker, 2002, p. 155). These events significantly and directly impacted policies of migration by imposing additional control measures related to the immigration of labour and the declaration that immigrants who already existed in some European countries should return to their respective countries (Scheffer, 2010, p. 17). What trav-

ailed during this period was the fact that most of the governments in Europe allowed already existing immigrants to continue to stay while allowing their family members to reunite with them. The flow of migrants shifted from the major EU economic forces to the Southern part of the continent that joined the EU and had received some supports that augmented their economic performances such as Italy, making them attractive to new immigrants.

2.4.4 Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Illegal Migration (Mid 1980s to 2001)

The mid 1980s to 2001 was dominated by unexpected political instability and friction particularly, in the Eastern part of Europe. The period also denoted the end of communistic ideologies and marked the beginning of neoliberal capitalistic ideologies. The creation of what became known in history as the “Iron Curtain” commenced a new dawn of immigration from the Eastern region of Europe to Western Europe. The Eastern Europe before this time was noted for high inflows of immigrants who resettled due to hunger, poor living conditions and conflicts. The phenomenon could be traced to as far back as the 1980, which has evidence of about 109, 000 Turkish citizens who had applied for asylum status in West Germany (Feld, 2000, p. 3-40). It is documented that between the period of 1989 and 1999, over 4 million citizens of other nations had sought for asylum in various European countries. Salt (2000) wrote that among these figures of asylum seekers, over 43 % were from other European nations, 35% of them had Asian origins and 19 % of them were from Africa. Due to the massive inflows of people seeking asylum in Europe, many EU governments have begun to develop more policies on the issue of asylum seeking. In addition to this, EU governments have been compelled to sharpen more political tools relative to the issue of immigration due to the increase in the number of illegal migrants who have travelled to European countries either by themselves or by various nefarious conducts of human trafficking (Stalker, 2002).

2.5 Immigration in Finland

Various elements that are peculiar to a group of people who have immigrated into Finland are used to describe them. Some of these elements of reference relative to the description of immigrants include their nationality, country of origin or their mother tongue. The source of the data for the analysis of immigrants in Finland is the Finnish statistical population data. From this source, information concerning the backgrounds and citizenship of immigrants were obtained. The population described as native in this study refers to those who have Finnish,

Swedish or Sami language as their mother tongue. In the early 1990s, there were only a small number of foreigners who were residing in Finland (Alitolppa-Niitamo, 1994, p. 15). Owing to this, people who speak languages other than Finnish, Swedish or Sami were perceived as migrants. The statistics of languages of immigrants available at the Finnish Statistical Services are developed on the mother tongues that were declared personally by the individual immigrant.

Historical evidence available confirms that Finland was traditionally a country of emigrants (Koivukangas, 2003, p.7). The population of Finland was highly influenced by massive occurrence of emigration, especially between the early 19th century and the beginning of the 21st century. About 1.3 million Finns are recorded to have emigrated from Finland between these periods (Statistic of Finland, 2011). The significance of this massive outflow of the Finnish population is understood when placed in the context of the entire Finnish population, which stood at slightly over 5 million people within the period of the study. Koivukangas (2003, p. 19) further points out that during the period of WWII, a total of 775,000 Finns emigrated from Finland. The emigration activities of Finns started taking a downward trend during the 1970s while the populations of immigrants begin to see upward movement during this period. Heikkila and Peltonen (2002, p. 8) stated that the moments that ensued after the 1970s saw a total divergent trend of emigration. Finland became a host to a higher number of immigrants than Finns emigrating. At the dawn of the 1990s, there were a total of 22, 000 immigrants in Finland. This represented a total of 4% of the entire population of Finland (Koivukangas, 2003, p. 22). In 2002, it was recorded that the population of immigrants in Finland had rapidly increased reaching a total of over a 100, 000 immigrants representing about 1.9% of the population (Heikkila and Peltonen, 2002). Koivukangas (2003, p. 30) added that although this figure of immigrants in Finland was one of the lowest in the whole of the EU, if the country was to receive an equal number of immigrants as France, Italy and Germany, this number have been nearly more than a million of the entire Finnish population.

A strong causal factor of the massive inflow of immigrants into Finland has to do with changes in global politics. Changes in global politics such as the Cold War, the impact of neoliberal capitalism, the dismantling of the former USSR and Yugoslavia, the collapse of the Berlin wall, and the civil wars in Somalia, Iraq and in many other Middle Eastern countries, negatively impacted labour forces as well as triggering the great influx of immigrants into the Finnish region (Stalker, 2002, p. 161). Data available from the year 2000 and beyond posited a continuous rise in the number of immigrants arriving in Finland. The population of immi-

grants in Finland around the 1990s was 4% of the total population of Finland (Dhalmann & Yousfi, 2010, p. 9). This number kept rising from that period to the level of 2.6% in the year 2000. In 2009, the population of immigrants had reached a total of 4.4% of the Finnish population. This percentage of immigrants in Finland as at 2000 excludes those of Russian descent who were neither Sami nor Swedish speaking population. The population of this category of people represented 1.15 % of the population of Finland in 2000 bringing the total immigrant population to 4.92% (Statistic of Finland, 2011).

2.6 Immigration in Turku Municipality

The process of the immigration within the Turku Municipality in Finland presents a pattern that is very unique as compared to what exists in other areas of Finland or to a larger extent, the Nordic region. Rikkinen (2014) identified new trends of migration that were emerging within the EU and also in Finland. Within the borders of Finland, a larger proportion of the population is concentrated in the southern part of the country. Therefore, by default, the southern part of Finland continues to receive the larger proportion of immigrant population. Mention can be made of Helsinki and Turku as areas that are densely populated with immigrants (Koivukangas, 2003). More than 60 % of the population of immigrants lives within the Turku and Helsinki Municipalities. Out of this 60% of immigrants living in the southern part of the country, especially in either Helsinki or Turku, about 25% live within the Turku Municipality (Forsander, 2003). The government of Finland has, as a part of its policy, the intention to settle immigrants in areas of the country that are less populated or less inhabited. It is documented that remigration occurs in Finland and many of these people settle either in Helsinki or in Turku. Turku and Helsinki are the only municipalities in Finland that recorded immigrant population above 5,000 people (Forsander, 2001; Heikkilä & Peltonen, 2002; Kokko, 2002). Dhalmann and Yousfi (2010) mentioned that 6.8% of the population in Turku was those of a foreign descent.

2.7 Integration of Immigrants in Finland

The term used for various programs that have been developed and geared towards the integration or acculturation of immigrants into the Finnish society is “Kotouttaminen”. The Ministry of Interior is the body responsible for seeing to the welfare and successful integration of immigrants. The objective of providing various programs that enhance the acculturation of im-

migrants into the larger Finnish system is to enable them to successfully adjust and function effectively in the society they now find themselves. Learning the Finnish language is one of the major policies within the integration process. The purpose of teaching Finnish language to adult immigrants is to enhance their chances of finding employment in Finland. The agency responsible for the affairs of adult immigrants is the Employment and Economic Development Office, known in Finland as “TE-toimisto” (EEDO, 2014). It is contained in the data from the Ministry of Interior (2011) that the Center for Economic Development, Transport and Environment (ELY-keskus) provides the necessary guidance and needed tools to the officers at the local level to aid them in organizing various activities that could facilitate the successful integration of immigrants.

A survey conducted by the Ministry of Interior in 2009 concerning the needs of immigrants revealed that immigrants posited that the major factor that could facilitate their integration process were work, safety, health needs and also their ability to speak the Finnish language (Maahanmuuttajabarometri, 2009). Available statistics from the Ministry of Interior shows that the employment condition of immigrants have improved greatly over the years. For instance, in 1994, the percentage of unemployed immigrants stood at 50 (Statistic of Finland, 2011). However, this reduced to a total of 24% in 2000. One major institution that was singled out to have played a significant role in boosting the employment opportunities of immigrants is the education sector. Within the period of 10 years, both the adult and children with immigration backgrounds gained the opportunity to enroll in schools in Finland. As a result, they gained employment opportunity. However, rates of unemployment among immigrants living in Finland are still alarming (Kaleva, 2011).

The 2011 reports from MIPEX (Migration Integration Policy Index), an international body responsible for measuring the policies of integration in all of the EU member countries, rated Finland as the 4th best country, behind Sweden, Portugal and Canada, to be adopting successful integration programs for immigrant’s integration. The key components of the integration programs for immigrants living in Finland included opportunities for political participation, creation of access to education, as well as programs that were in against discrimination. Some weaknesses were, however, pinpointed within the integration programs of Finland. These included the absence of intercultural education, long-term residence procedures and access to Finnish nationality. Above all, a report by the Ministry of Interior (International Migration 2016-2017 Report for Finland, p. 19) reveals that policies concerning the integration of immi-

grants in Finland are strong when compared to those practiced by other countries but still maintains that Finland has room for improvement.

The reality in Finland with regard to the integration of immigrants is that there exist various courses for adults meant to facilitate their readiness for the labour market. The Immigrant Integration Act of 2011, which is cited in the labour force survey of Finland (Statistic of Finland, 2011), has as its core the aim to intensify the processes of integration provided for immigrants by segregating immigrants into various categories and providing them with different programs based on their needs. The act also proposed plans that are expected to meet the needs of the aged, youth under the age of 17 years, as well as the physically challenged, with the objective of inclusion in the integration processes.

2.8 Finnish Policy on the Education of Immigrants

Policies on education in Finland hinge on providing equal access to education while maintaining equity. As a signatory to the Salamanca conference held in Spain in 1994, which aims at ensuring that all children of school going age are provided with the needed opportunities to attend school without any degree of exclusion (Polat, 2011, p. 22). Finland has instituted various measures as a way of complying with the policy document from this conference as well as those of the United Nations on education as a right for all children (Polat, 2011). Immigration and moving to a new place is a strenuous experience, especially for children. There are many problems and challenges facing immigrant children in their new home. The visible ones are cultural and social obstacles, new environment and different school system, different language and new school curriculum, feeling lonely and losing identity (Weinreich, 2009, p.12). All of these may cause stress and even trauma. Therefore, academic success can be challenging and difficult for immigrant children. In order to assist immigrant children in their education process and support them in adapting to their new home and new school system, the Finnish education system has provided various methods that facilitate the integration of immigrants into its larger society.

The core objective of the Finnish education system is to offer everyone equal opportunities to acquire quality education regardless of place of birth, gender, race, nationality, social status, language, or religion. This is a perfect implementation of United Nations motto “Education for All” as a basic human right (UNICEF, 2007). Immigrant children in Finland, therefore, enjoy various forms of supports from the Finnish policies on education as a way of better fos-

tering their integration into their new society and culture while maintaining their respective languages and cultural orientations. To achieve the effective integration of immigrants, the Finnish education system provides the services of MAI, and OMO programs to pave way for a swift integration into the Finnish society for immigrants.

2.9 Immigrant Native Language Education (MAI)

According to the Finnish Constitution (1999, section 17), everyone living in Finland has the right to maintain and develop their own language and culture. For children and young people with immigrant backgrounds, their native language teaching (MAI) is organized in basic education and in upper secondary education where an immigrant child or youth can study his or her own mother tongue. Mother tongue instruction is offered two hours in a week (Pirinen, 2015, p. 96). In Turku, Mother Tongue instruction is given in 28 different languages in 2017-2018 and there are 33 teachers. Most of the teachers teach both OMO and MAI. The MAI-lessons are usually after school day in specifically selected schools. Approximately 1000 students participate in MAI teaching in Turku each year. Both OMO and MAI teaching are mainly financed by the state (Opetushallitus), but the city of Turku also partly finances the teachings as well (Multicultural Education, Turku).

The aim of mother tongue teaching is to support the pupil's bilingual development and to build a strong cultural identity and establishing a unique self-esteem for immigrant children. Mother tongue has a very powerful impact in the formation of individuals, shaping their thoughts, emotions and identity. Achieving literacy in one's mother tongue and appreciation their own cultural background makes it easier for children to learn to appreciate other cultures (Nekatibeb, 2007, p. 66). It also provides the basis for learning other languages and thinking about languages (Cummins, 2000). It provides the ability to identify and describe characteristics, structures and features of other languages, leading to the promotion of learning skills for immigrant students and success in school.

2.10 Education Given in Students' Native Languages (OMO)

Education Given in Students' Native Languages (OMO) is a method that is used to teach the contents of the Finnish comprehensive school subjects in the student's mother tongue. It is to simplify the difficult concepts and terms in all school subjects (Immonen-Oikkonen & Leino, 2010). For instance, in history, mathematics, geography or biology courses, the goal is not to

translate the subjects, but to use the immigrant student's mother tongue to explain and simplify the notions and concepts of the subjects in order to prevent language competence becoming an obstacle in understanding the subjects. Education given in students' native languages supports students in understanding school subjects better and helps them to adapt and integrate into the school community (Immonen-Oikkonen & Leino, 2010, p.102). Another important aim of education given in students' native languages and the role of the native language teacher is to coordinate and interact between students' parents and the school's staff. Laaksonen, (2001) points out that education given in students' native languages and native language teachers play an important role in cooperation between the home and school in different conflict situations. Overall, the objective is to support immigrant children to master school subjects better, and achieve the educational goals of the curriculum. OMO teaching is mainly targeted for students with enhanced or special support. Approximately 400 students receive OMO teaching in Turku each year. In Turku there are 25 OMO teachers in 15 languages in the school year 2017-2018. (Multicultural Education, Turku).

From the discussion postulated above, it is clear that the Finnish government and its comprehensive school system strives to promote inclusion and learning environments that are serene and conducive for all children, irrespective of their origins and cultural practices. Despite all of these measures and programs, it could be realized that many children of immigrant status have not been sufficiently able to climb up the academic ladder after their comprehensive education. This might be a case of hidden lapses or malfunctioning of the integration process which would require reevaluation. It should be mentioned that much of what has been presented here has been drawn from my experience as a teacher within the Turku municipality here in Finland while functioning as a facilitator of the MAI and the OMO programs. However, irrespective of the elusive weakness of the programs, it should be noted that these programs have contributed significantly to integrating immigrants into Finnish societies across the length and breadth of the country.

2.11 Mother Tongue (L1) and Academic Performance

Some studies have posited that the use of a child's first language or mother tongue in literacy and teaching is necessary for developing the linguistic needs of children and their overall educational and personality development (Doyle, 1997, p. 34). When children have sufficient knowledge of their mother tongue, it enables them to easily acquire a second language and

supports them in properly integrating into new cultural settings (Hashim and Sahil, 1994, p. 19). Knowledge of their mother tongue propels children to respect and keep their culture and also helps them to respect cultures that are different from theirs (Schweers, 1999, p. 8).

These benefits that are obtained from teaching children using their mother tongues call for the need for facilitators and professionals of global mobility to promote mother tongue based teaching as a way of supporting international students and children of immigrants during their first contact with a foreign linguistic environment (Auerbach, 1993). Atkinson (1987) points out in his studies that the use of mother tongue in teaching immigrant children and children of international descent promotes the successful performance of tasks that are “accuracy-oriented” (p. 18). Doyle (1997, p. 12) at a presentation on TOESL, confirms that about 90% of the lessons they conduct in their classrooms are carried out using children’s mother tongues. Doyle further reiterates that 65% of their students preferred teaching and learning activities to be conducted in their mother tongues (Doyle, 1997, p. 30). Studies by Hashim (1994, p. 14) on the importance of mother tongue and its contribution to academic achievements and integration of young immigrants reveals that the L1 or mother tongues of learners determine the rate at which a second language is acquired and promotes the integration of young immigrants. Hashim discusses further that a child’s mother tongue serves as his or her repository of knowledge which he or she uses either positively or negatively to distill information from the second language to be able to perform academic exercises in the L2. Furthermore, Schweers, in his studies on the relevance of the use of mother tongue in English Language lessons stipulates that the learning and acquisition of a second language can be augmented by pointing out the similarities between a child’s mother tongue and his new linguistic environment (L2) (p. 24).

To add to the above, Auerbach (1993) also writes that “children’s knowledge of their mother tongue provide them with some sense of security and also helps to validate their individual experiences. When a child has sufficient knowledge of his or her mother tongue, he or she becomes willing to express him or herself in a second language”(p. 12). Auerbach further makes the following suggestions as some possible uses children can put their mother tongues to: “Negotiation of the syllabus and the lesson; record keeping; grammar, phonology, morphology, and spelling; discussion of cross-cultural issues; instructions or prompts; explanation of errors; and assessment of comprehension” (p. 16).

In the study conducted by Gottardo, Yan Siegel and Wade- Woolley (2001), which focused on the examination of 65 selected pupils whose mother tongue was Cantonese and who were acquiring English as a second language, the authors unearthed some evidence of inter-language transfer of knowledge especially in the area of phonology, writing and thinking from the Cantonese into English. The result of this study revealed that there was a sufficient transfer of knowledge from the mother tongue of the learners to the new subject content they were being taught although the two languages do not share similar linguistic characteristics.

Lambert and Tucker (2003) undertook a study using students whose mother tongue was French in a school that makes use of English as a medium of instruction. The study revealed that the selected students who had early on received all their teaching instructions in French were able to reach the average score limits in almost all of the subjects they undertook. The authors therefore concluded that students had made use of the linguistics skills sets they have in their mother tongue (French) to the tasks that were assigned to them in the English language.

To add to the above, Jiang and Kuehn (2001) analyzed the concept of transfer of knowledge for a lower grade of intermediate students studying an ESL module. The thrust of their research was to discover the impact of knowledge transfer on the development of an academic English language skill among young and old immigrant students and how this contributed towards their adaptation into their new cultural environment. The authors concluded that there was significant evidence that migrants who were old and had sufficient knowledge of their mother tongue (L1) performed better than the young learners who lacked enough knowledge of their mother tongue. This therefore tends credence to the relevance of the important contribution that the knowledge of (L1) has in the knowledge transfer process into an (L2).

A study conducted by Fradd (1994) posits that the process of transfer of different aspects of knowledge during learning happens at efficient stages of second language learning and progress. This endorses the claim that there is a transfer of knowledge of first language and cognitive strategies from the L1 to the L2. The existence of a relationship between a learner's mother tongue and a new language and culture makes a case for a common fundamental excellence in reading and understanding of concepts across the linguistic divide. Eisterhold (2000, p. 14) concluded that "Literacy skills can be transferred across languages" (p.95) when he discovered the correlation between reading across different languages.

Finally, Hassanzadeh & Nabifarm (2011) undertook a study regarding the effect of awareness of explicit knowledge of mother tongue grammar on the learning of foreign grammar. The authors held mother tongue as a predictor for mastering the new grammar of foreign language and its acquisition. The outcome of this study indicated that the results students obtained from their mother tongue proficiency test did predict their performance in the second language test they took. This outcome from this study also emphasizes the idea that first language capability of learners plays vital role in the extent to which they perform in a new cultural and linguistic environment where learning is delivered in another language other than their mother tongues.

What is common to all the authors whose works have been considered in this section is that, children's knowledge of their mother tongues plays indispensable roles in their integration and academic achievements. The knowledge of their mother tongues also provides immigrant children with sufficient security to freely express themselves in their new linguistic environments.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study aims to discover the contribution of the OMO and MAI programs towards the education and the integration of immigrants into the Finnish society, especially within the Turku Municipality using a qualitative methodology (phenomenography). To collect data for the study, interviews were conducted and transcribed. Participants of the research were drawn from the teachers who delivered the OMO and MAI programs within the Turku municipality. The transcripts of the interviews were then analyzed using the thematic content analysis to arrive at the outcome of the study.

3.1 Quantitative Versus Qualitative Methods of Research

Quantitative study refers to a method of research that is based on the testing of various theories that relates to a phenomenon using measurement tools and analyzing the outcomes statistically. Most research conducted in the field of natural sciences employ the quantitative method of study. Studies of phenomena such as topics relating to chemistry, biology, physics which deals with elements that are expected to be measured and numbered are studied quantitatively. This is because they can be measured and be re-measured by others as well. The fulcrum of this type of method is to determine the extent to the generalization of a theory could be made or not. The quantitative approach to the conduct of a research is carried out in an independent manner. This is because researchers using this method are expected to distant themselves from the study. The element of independence in quantitative study implies that the personal values of the researcher could not become a part of the study this is because most subjects in this type of study are items that can be studied with objectivity. The method employs a deductive reasoning from an already existing knowledge through the formulation of good hypothesis that proposes the outcome of a study. The aim of quantitative studies is the development of outcomes that could be generalized for an existing theory. The statistical approach of a quantitative study relies so much on sampling from a population so as to develop overarching rules that could be extended to the whole population.

The quantitative research method is not without criticisms despite its wide usage in the natural sciences. Silverman (2006, cited in Kloss, 2010, p. 24), for instance, stated that this, method of study can only be used for large standardized sampled populations that are based on unbiased selection. Kloss (2010) argued that this method of undertaking research is cumbersome

and time consuming. Apart from this, it also lacked direct contact with the phenomena being studied. The quantitative method uses numerical and statistical approaches to quantify experiences however; it is not all phenomena in the world that could be measured either numerically or in a random sampling. Silverman (2006, cited in Kloss, 2010) further affirms that the use of the quantitative method could limit the possibilities of unearthing certain aspects of a phenomena being researched using this approach especially, those that involves human behavior and the social sciences.

On the other hand, the use of the qualitative method to study various phenomena enables the researcher to of conceive the subjects from different perspectives. The qualitative approach is very useful for studies involving human behavior such as social sciences, history and psychology (entities that could not be studied using the quantitative approach). This method is very useful in the exploration of new sets of knowledge that are beyond the study of statistical and numerical studies. Most research that focus on discovering why phenomena exist the way they are and also why human beings act the way they do often employ the qualitative method with the purpose of being able to study these issues using multiple perspectives (Marshall & Rossman, 2010). The subjects of study in a qualitative research are human beings and the social world that they occupy (Morgan, 1983). Strauss and Corbin (1990, cited in Kloss, 2010) wrote that any kind of study that produces outcomes that are not obtained through statistical processes or any means of quantification is a qualitative study.

The qualitative method of research is not devoid of criticisms. Critics question the validity and reliability of outcomes generated using this method of research. They mention that the attainment of an absolute reliability using the qualitative method is difficult (Taylor Bogdan, 1998, cited in Kloss, 2010, p.25). The validity and reliability of the outcome of a qualitative study is important. It is important in the sense that it is worth finding out if this method really measured what it is supposed to measure. Another point worth noting is the subjectivity of this approach to conducting research. This is because most qualitative studies accept the ideas, opinions and views of participants being used for the study thus accounting for the little attention being paid to the issue of objectivity.

It is important to note that in a qualitative study, reliability and validity of the research outcomes are not entirely neglected. This is because in the conduct of qualitative studies, clear processes and plans for the research are developed and pursued. A concise selection of theories for the studies are made and applied in a systematic manner to make it possible for others

to understand and also for other researchers to reproduce (Silverman, 2006). The research method used in the conduct of this study to determine the extent to which the OMO and MAI programs have augmented the education and integration of immigrants within the Turku Municipality of Finland is phenomenography (a qualitative method).

3.2 Phenomenography

Phenomenography is a qualitative method of study that focuses on a non-dualistic approach to obtain and retain discourses concerning participants in a research (Patton, 2002, p.20). It refers to the empirical study of the various ways in which individuals perceive the world around them. The aim of a phenomenographic study is to discover in qualitative terms, “the different ways in which people experience, conceptualize, realize and understand various aspects of phenomena around them” (Martin et al., 1992, p. 33). The focus of a phenomenographic research is to study how individuals experience phenomenon (Booth 1997). Walker (1998) provides a succinct definition of phenomenography. According to Walker, “Phenomenography is focused on the ways of experiencing different phenomena, ways of seeing them, knowing about them and having skills related to them. The aim is, not to find the singular essence, but the variation and the architecture of this variation by different aspects that define the phenomena”. (p. 20).

The key element in a phenomenographic study is the focus on experiences of people as the subject of study (Walker, 1998, p. 17). Phenomenography thrives on a non-dualistic ontological perspective (Walker, 1998). This means that with regard to phenomenographic study, the object and the subject being studied are not independent of each other, they are not studied separately (Richardson, 1999, p. 69).

The use of this approach is suitable for the study because it enabled the researcher to delve into the lived experiences of the facilitators of the OMO and MAI programs. The method also offered the researcher the opportunity to consider what the perception of the facilitators are concerning the OMO and MAI programs and how they believe these programs have helped in the integration of young immigrants into the Finnish school community and society.

3.3 Data Collection

Under the broad framework of the qualitative method, there are many ways of gathering data for study. Some of these methods of data collection include structured and unstructured interviews, narratives and observations. To collect data for the study aimed at unearthing the contribution of the OMO and MAI programs towards the integration and education of immigrants within the Turku Municipality, unstructured interviews were used as the data collection instrument. Bryman (2012, p. 469) mentions that the most widely used instrument for collecting data for qualitative studies is interviews. Unstructured interviews are preferred by most qualitative researchers to other methods owing to the fact that it is flexible and does not often times needs to be structured compared to most quantitative data gathering instruments (Richardson, 1999, p. 53). The benefit qualitative interview structures enjoy over quantitative ones is that the former gives more voice and space to the participants than the latter (Orgil, as cited in Ornek, 2008, p. 3). The interview used to collect data for this study was an unstructured. This was used because of the intention to allow respondents to be at ease to provide responses concerning their perceptions on the contribution of the OMO and MAI programs towards integration and academic performance of young immigrants within Turku.

In the conduct of this current study six teachers and the facilitators of the OMO and MAI programs within the Turku Municipality were randomly selected and interviewed. The respondents were contacted earlier and informed about the study and the fact that their inputs would be solicited through interview sessions with each of them. All the participants used for this study have been acting as facilitators of the OMO and MAI programs for more than four years and as such they have ample information to provide on the contribution of the programs to the education and integration of immigrants into the larger Finnish society or otherwise. Although some of the participants in the study lacked sufficient knowledge of the English language, the interview questions were translated from English into either Finnish or Kurdish languages for them to be able to make their points and observations about the programs.

3.4 Thematic Content Analysis

The purpose of analyzing data collected through the use of qualitative process is to make meaningful clarifications and to create new sets of knowledge about a phenomenon that has been studied. The aim of analyzing the data collected for a study is to obtain sufficient information from a data that is scattered (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998, p. 138). The term content anal-

ysis as a method of data analysis is loosely used in qualitative research. Content analysis could be defined as the process of summarizing and presenting a written data (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p. 563). It is often used to analyze large volumes of data. One advantage of using content analysis as a means of extracting information from data is its flexibility to be aided with computer programs that could speed up the processes of analysis.

Different authors have proposed different ways by which a thematic content analysis could be initiated. To carry out the analysis of the data collected for this study, the instructions provided by Anderson (2007) as regards how to start the process played a significant part. According to Anderson (2007), to begin a thematic content analysis, the researcher ought to go through the interview transcripts thoroughly with the objective of finding out relevant descriptions or meanings that could be useful to the research. The researcher at this point determines the criteria that will be useful for the study being carried out. After identifying the various relevant descriptions, effort needs to be implemented to discover individual units of meanings and separate them from one another. Meanings that share common themes are put together after similar units are divided from each other.

3.5 Methods of Analysis of the Phenomenographical Data

The structure of a phenomenographic study refers to the presentation of the major findings of the descriptive study of the phenomenon (Kleiman, 2004). The structure is constructed based on the essential meanings that become manifested in the description of the participants of the research and it is determined by both the analysis and intuition.

The interview transcripts were read in entirety with the objective of attaining a global sense of the data. The transcripts were then read a second time. The second reading was much slower than the previous one. The purpose of the second reading was to divide the data into meaningful categories or sections. The next step in the process was the integration of the categories or the sections that have been identified as sharing similar contents in order to make sense out of them. Following this step was the conduct of an imaginative variation. This was done by subjecting the integrated meaningful categories or sections. Finally, an elaboration of the findings was carried out; this included the description of the various essential meanings that were discovered through the conduct of free imaginative variation (Kleiman, 2004, p. 9).

3.6 Coding Frame

After the data for the research were collected and arranged into themes, they were coded to make the analysis and interpretations easier and faster. Thematic content analysis allows the researcher the flexibility to develop systematic descriptions of the interview transcripts by assigning segments of materials to the categories of the coding frames (Schreirer, 2012, p. 58). The coding frames contained the main themes as well as the sub-themes of the analysis. The main categories or themes are also known as the dimensions and they formed the key components of the analysis that would be done in chapter four of the research.

To make the analysis for this study, the approach proposed by Eskola & Suoranta (1998) was used. The data collected was divided into different themes or codes. The themes were those aspects of the data that were connected to the research questions that governed the study and were subsequently analyzed in that order. To avoid the loss of any significant information, the researcher created an open category or theme and put other useful materials under it. Eskola & Suoranta (1998, p. 153) further proposed two strategies for coding data. These include the description of the process of analysis whereas the second is coding the data according to the themes. The researcher looks through the interview transcripts, puts the data into their respective themes and then goes on to use these themes as codes for the analysis.

To undertake a thematic content analysis, it is insufficient to collect themes and present them to the audience as they were gathered. Classifying the data is very different from making an analysis of the data. When describing the outcome of the study using the thematic content analysis procedures, it is vital that the researcher presents information that indirectly referred to by respondents during the data collection process. What will aid elicit those hidden information that could be vital to the research is the use of a thematic content analysis procedures (Ruusuvoori, Nikander & Hyvärinen, 2010).

3.7 Validity and Reliability

The aim of this study is to explore the contribution of the OMO and MAI programs towards the education and integration of immigrants within the Turku Municipality. As a researcher, it is important to make considerable decisions that would ensure the reliability and validity of the research being carried out so as to eschew unnecessary biases and generalizations. The validity of a study refers to whether the study actually measured or observed what it is intend-

ed to measure (Mason, 1996, cited in Bryman, 2012). Validity can be categorized into two types: internal validity and external validity. Internal validity refers to the extent to which the relationship between the research observations and the research's theoretical perspective has been developed (Bryman, 2012, p. 390). External validity refers to the ability of the findings of the study to be generalized across the larger population of the society. Although attaining an absolute internal and external validity in qualitative study is a herculean task, a careful approach ensures that the study is valid and also reliable for the development of new sets of knowledge.

The coding frame used for categorizing the various ideas into themes for the purpose of analysis was carefully created to represent the exact concepts that the study has been intended to measure. The interview transcripts that were used to generate the themes were transcribed to the point that they actually reflected the position of the interviewees.

The term reliability as used in research refers to the repeatability of the outcome of a study. Just as in the case of validity, Bryman (2012, p. 360) identifies two types of reliability: internal reliability and external reliability. Internal reliability refers to whether more than one member of the research participant endorses what they see and hear. This is significant in a thematic content analysis. This is because internal reliability needs to be considered in the construction of the coding frame. The coding frame is reliable so long as it exhibits consistency. The issue of the consistency of the coding frame refers to the degree to which two or more participants within the study population agree within a time period. Also present in the issue of reliability of the research is the problem of its absoluteness in qualitative study; it is quite difficult to attain absolute reliability in a qualitative study. However, attempts were made to ensure that the outcome of the study is reliable as much as possible. Some of these attempts included the meticulous translation of the recorded interviews in order to ensure that they are transcribed just as the participants have stated, thorough reading of the transcripts with the aim of forming themes that are representative of the data and finally, forming codes for the themes that emerged using unbiased approaches. Measures were instituted to ensure the consistency of the coding frames. The coding of the data was done in two different sections and the outcomes compared to ensure its repeatability and consistency. The comparison of the coding frames was done across the participants and also across different time frames as suggested by Schreier (2012, p. 167).

To ensure that the study was reliable, the theories used for undertaking the research (Universal Grammar and the theory of Acculturation and Constructive Marginality), were carefully selected with the objective that they relate to the phenomenon being investigated. Also, both primary and secondary data sources were combined with the purpose of obtaining sufficient information for the research. Finally, the data gathered were categorized into codes that accurately reflected what the participants provided as their perceptions regarding the topic being investigated by the researchers.

3.8 Ethical Issues

Ethical issues are critical in academic research. Punch (1998) mentioned some significant points to be taken note of during the conduct of any academic research. He stated the issue of codes and the consent of the participants of the research, deception and also those bordering on the privacy of participants, harm, identification as well as the confidentiality of participants as vital areas that needs critical adherence. The researcher owes it as a responsibility to inform the participants about the essence of the study and why their involvement is crucial to the study. In addition to this, the researchers need to be briefed about the nature of the study. It is also essential that the researcher is honest and transparent with the participants of the study to ensure trust.

During the conduct of the research, the confidentiality of the participants was maintained. The interviewees were informed that issues relating to their identity and privacy would be held in high esteem. The preamble to the interview questions informed the participants that their responses were absolutely going to be used for academic purposes only. The research was conducted in an honest and transparent manner. The participants were not exposed to any harm either in their reputation or physical appearance. The participants were also pre-informed about the nature of the study. The result or outcomes of the study were not manipulated to meet the expectations of the researcher. The researcher also acknowledged authors whose works or publications found relevance in this present study.

4. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

So far, this study has sought to determine the extent to which the introduction of the OMO and MAI programs into the Finnish school system has supported the education and integration of immigrants within the Turku Municipality using the phenomenographical approach of qualitative study. The scope of this chapter is a presentation of the data that was obtained through interviews. The presentation of the findings is outlined according to the themes that emerged from the interview transcripts.

4.1 Themes Emerging from the Data

After a thorough reading and immersion of self into the data, the following themes emerged. The themes presented here are the categories that emerged from the intuition and imaginative variation made from the interview transcripts. The themes are listed below:

1. Mother Tongue is a Foundation for Learning New knowledge (Facilitates Immigrants' Academic Achievement).
2. Mother Tongue Promotes the Acquisition of a Second language.
3. Mother Tongue is a Tool for the Expression of the Cultural Identity of Immigrants.
4. Mother Tongue is a Tool for Personality and Character Development.
5. Mother Tongue Promotes Facilitation of Cultural Integration.
6. There are Challenges within the Programs that Should be Addressed.

4.1.1 Mother Tongue is a Foundation for Learning New Knowledge (Facilitates Immigrants' Academic Achievement)

From the data collected, the claim that the ability of immigrant children to speak and to understand their mother tongues was essential for learning new sets of knowledge was shared by all six respondents who participated in the study. The facilitators who have spearheaded the implementation of the OMO and MAI mentioned that the programs have contributed to the academic achievement of young immigrants. The belief is that when teaching is delivered in the mother-tongues of young learners, particularly, those of immigrant descent and seeking to be integrated into other new cultures, it helps to break learning tasks that are complex into terms that children are able to understand in their own native languages. When individuals understand the contents of learning goals through their individual mother tongues, it facili-

tates the ability of learners to be able to understand, reproduce and also transfer these ideas to other aspects of their lives apart from their academic development (Berry, 1997, p. 16). The extracts from the interviews lend credence to this.

OMO teaching means teaching comprehensive school subjects in the pupil's native language. The aim of the teaching is to remove the language barrier from learning and understanding comprehensive school subjects. OMO teacher helps students to understand the key concepts and contents of different school subjects and supports students' learning abilities. (First Respondent)

Responses obtained from the second participant of the study also reiterated the view of the first respondent.

Own language education support students to understand the school subjects better and helping them to adapt and integrate into the school community by helping them to transfer the speaking ability of their own mother tongues to the learning of the Finnish language. (Second Respondent)

Apart from these two respondents who share the fact that the programs were crucial to the facilitation of the acquisition of new sets of knowledge by children of immigrant backgrounds within the Finnish Comprehensive School systems, other respondents also shared similar perceptions about the programs. This implies that the OMO and MAI programs make important contributions toward supporting immigrant children in developing their mother tongue as a foundation for acquiring new knowledge and a second language. This is because once the inherent Universal Grammatical tendencies become triggered towards the acquisition of the Mother tongues (L1) of the immigrant children, then the acquisition of the Finnish (L2) becomes less difficult. This corroborates with the theoretical framework underlining how people acquire languages postulated by Chomsky (2007) on the concept of UG and also the proposition by Cummins (2000) with regard to second language acquisition.

Learning mother tongue for everyone can be considered as a right and necessity as well. When a child has a good foundation or a vocabulary in his / her own mother tongue, learning the second language and understanding the school subjects in the second language will be much easier for him/her. (Fourth Respondent)

It is important for a student to have at least one strong language. If they have a strong mother tongue, they can think of things better and combine different elements in their studies. If the pupil's mother tongue is strong, then it helps them to learn the Finnish language more easily, and then if their Finnish language skill is good, this helps in studying and learning other school subjects easily. If a student skill is weak in the Finnish language as well as their own mother

tongue, then this affects the learning negatively and leads to a poor performance in all school subjects. (Fifth Respondent)

Acquiring one's mother tongue is significant for promoting the learning ability of people to be able to acquire new knowledge and/or a second language. Evidence gathered from the data corroborates with the theoretical framework on Universal Grammar as put forward by Chomsky (2007) which posits that every individual right from the cradle of birth has an inherent capacity to acquire certain linguistic knowledge (UG). The relevance of this is that acquiring this capacity of being able to speak and understand one's mother tongue makes it easier to understand new sets of knowledge. When children are able to develop the tendencies of language acquisition, it facilitates their understanding of other new concepts in other languages whose grammatical structures they might not be aware of (Chomsky, 2007). Therefore, the benefit of the OMO and MAI programs in facilitating mother tongue acquisition ability in immigrant children will help these children to easily understand lessons delivered in the Finnish language thereby augmenting their integration and academic performance. Learning one's mother tongue is an important aspect of humanity that helps in being able to exist easily in other different linguistic environment (Baker, 2003).

4.1.2 Mother Tongue Promotes the Acquisition of a Second Language

Another theme that emerged from the categorization of the essences that emerged from the interview transcript is that mother tongue promotes the acquisition of a second language. The respondents affirmed that the teaching of the OMO and MAI programs was critical to the acquisition of the Finnish language (S2). This confirms the conclusion reached by Lambert and Tucker (2003) that knowledge of mother tongue contributes to how children learn a second language when they conducted a study on students whose mother tongue was French but were learning how to speak and write the English language. Evidence of this claim from the interview transcript is presented below.

The better a child knows his/her own language; the easier it is for him/her to learn a second language. Therefore, parents can play an important role in supporting the development of their children's native language by always speaking to them in their language and making them proud of their language and culture. The child has the opportunity to learn Finnish at school, with friends and during recreational activities and clubs. At school, the child will receive teaching in Finnish as a Second Language until they have acquired a level of skills in Finnish near to

that of a native speaker. The positive attitude at home toward Finnish language helps the child learn the second language well. (First Respondent)

The position of the third and fourth respondents with regard to the role of a child's knowledge of his or her mother tongue to the acquisition of the Finnish language is also presented below:

Mother tongue is the first language of the child to be first learned and identified. It acts as a language of emotion, identity and thinking, which is the basis for the whole study and personality development. Mother tongue is an important prerequisite for adopting a foreign language and for successful learning, as well as an important tool for learning and adopting all other knowledge. That is why it is important for a child to study and strengthen her/his mother tongue. It develops reading, writing, expanding vocabulary, and improves oral speech skills. (Third Respondent)

Learning and knowing one's mother tongue is the basic for learning other foreign languages. If the pupil knows his or her mother tongue, it is easier for him/her to learn other languages, for example, Finnish language. Through mother tongue, a student can look at things from a variety of perspectives, helping to develop the student's thinking skills. (Fourth Respondent)

The contribution of the OMO and MAI as an instrument for developing the mother tongue speaking ability in immigrant children with the expectation that it will support how these children tend to acquire the Finnish language was also reinforced by the Sixth Respondent:

Mother tongue is a tool for life management in the sense that it is used to study and manage practical issues. Good mother tongue skills, especially literacy, provide the foundation for foreign language learning. The better a person manages their mother tongue; the easier it is to learn new things, new languages and other school subjects. By mastering the structures, grammar and vocabulary of your own language, it is easier to invest them in foreign languages. Mother tongue skills enable understanding literacy: communication engagement, interpretation, evaluation and appreciation. It helps to shape the worldview and solve problems in a better way. (Sixth Respondent)

From the evidences above, it is obvious that the participants in the study share the essential idea that knowledge of one's own mother tongue contributes significantly towards the acquisition of the Finnish language. Knowledge of one's mother tongue is important for learning a second language (Chomsky, 2007, Baker, 2003, Krsita, 2014). It provides the needed framework within which the second language (L2) becomes acquired. The implication of the existence of a Universal Grammar that augments how children tend to acquire languages connects with how knowledge of mother tongue could deepen children's acquisition of other languages

(L2). This is because L2 learners already have knowledge of the grammar of the first language, which incorporates elements of the UG that defines specific sets of its boundaries for learning the second language.

4.1.3 Mother Tongue is a Tool for the Expression of Cultural Identity

Another important theme that emerged through imaginative variation was the position that mother tongue is a tool for expressing cultural identity. It is undeniable that language is culture. The cultural elements of a group of people are conveyed through the language they speak. The respondents of the study shared the perception on the matter that mother tongue helps to instill a sense of cultural uniqueness in the life of the young immigrants. Acquiring a mother tongue is essential for the preservation of cultural identity. Mother tongue is believed to be one of the most important elements of humanity that is used to preserve and transfer the non-material component of culture to succeeding generations. By gaining knowledge of their mother tongue, children developed a sense of belonging and this makes them comfortable and well prepared to succeed academically. This result confirms the position put forward by Berry (1997) that cultural integration will occur if the less dominant group of people who share a unique cultural identity are willing to keep their culture (both material and non-material) while they participated in the culture of the dominant group. Since language is the panacea for cultural transmission, it forms an integral part of the culture in all groups of people. When people keep their mother tongue while they immigrate into a new linguistic setting, it will facilitate how they become easily integrated into the larger linguistic environment in which they find themselves. The extracts below from the transcripts of the interviews conducted, as a way of collating data for the study is indicative of this theme.

The main objectives of mother tongue teaching (MAI) are to build a strong cultural identity and establish a unique self-esteem for immigrant children. (Second Respondent)

The third and fourth respondents have the following perception about the contribution of the OMO and MAI programs to the promotion of cultural identity:

The programs offer the "maintenance" of one's own culture and identity; they also strengthen mother tongue skills and feeling of belonging, and help the students to adapt better into Finnish school community. We support them to preserve their cultural identity and at the same time we make them familiar with the Finnish school culture and education without depriving from their own culture. I see this in many ways as advantage for pupils and parents. It is important that the

child also receives cultural support from the school in addition to the home. And parents also see this important, because the culture of the family and the common language are preserved. (Third Respondent)

The importance of these programs is that the children feel that they have a language that they should protect and be proud of, and the objective is to support the pupil's bilingual growth and become culturally a member of the society. The most effective way to know your past, origin and your personality is by knowing your own language well. If one cannot master his/her own language well, he/she cannot study or learn about their origins and their existence here in Finland. (Fourth Respondent)

The following is the view of the fifth and sixth respondents about the role of the mother tongue teaching programs in the promotion of cultural identity:

Mother tongue is the umbilical connection to another culture apart from that of the host country for second generation immigrants. This broadens the cultural bounds of a child. It opens up whole new windows of opportunities for these children to get acquainted with different ways and concepts as well as to find positive traits from their parents' cultures and make use of them in their life in a foreign culture. (Fifth Respondents)

The programs are important in protecting the cultural identity of immigrant children, the question of who I am. And the feeling of being without root and uncertainty about their own identity generates many problems with the adaption of the child and the teenagers to the new society. (Sixth Respondents)

The role of mother tongue in the facilitation of a sense of cultural identity in the lives of young immigrants is crucial. The perception of the teachers who facilitate the teaching of mother tongue programs in the various comprehensive schools in Turku concerning how the programs help in promoting cultural identity among immigrants was positive. They believe that through the mother tongue programs, especially OMO and MAI, young immigrants can have the benefit of a cultural uniqueness.

Having knowledge of one's identity through the understanding of mother tongue will help children to easily integrate into their new cultural environment. For integration or acculturation to be possible, people require knowledge of their own unique cultural identity and sufficient understanding of how this identity is expressed. This will help to facilitate a peaceful co-existence between individual cultural groups in all multi-cultural environments (Berry, 1997). When children understand their cultural identity through the understanding of their mother

tongue, it will help them to appreciate their uniqueness and give them the needed stability to be able to study. This result confirms the previous studies conducted by Berry (1997) that knowledge of one's mother tongue is essential for the development of the sense of identity and cultural belonging.

4.1.4 Mother Tongue is a Tool for Personality and Character Development

Another theme that was dominant after the categorization was the contribution mother tongue makes towards the personality and character development of young immigrants. Respondents hold the perception that mother tongue education in the form of the delivery of OMO and MAI instruction to young immigrants within the comprehensive schools in Turku, contributes effectively towards their personality and character formation. Three extracts have been sampled as evidence for the above role of the OMO and MAI plays in the lives of young immigrants in Turku:

Mother tongue forms a multi faceted and wholesome character in children, broadens their thought dimensions, and enriches and evolves their capabilities. However, these points vary from family to family and the same is true for different host nations. Generally, mother language enables different faculties in children and prepares them for a peculiar kind of human, cultural and societal connection. (First Respondent)

The third and the sixth respondents also share the following view with regards to the role of mother tongue education in the development of the character and personality of the young immigrant:

Mother tongue is one of the fundamental bonds that bind a child to his or her family and has a powerful influence on his or her character. It ingrains in children a sort of social cohesion by positive characteristics that help them to act wisely in conflict situations between cultures. (Third Respondent)

Mother tongue brings balance to the student's life by developing his personality and character as teaching creates a bridge between one's culture and Finnish culture. The teaching of the mother tongue at its best promotes a student's growth in multiculturalism and integration into Finnish society easily. (Sixth Respondent)

The perception of the facilitators of the programs about how it contributes to the development of the young immigrants is important. The facilitators indicated that knowledge of one's mother tongue is significant in forming strong character and personalities that would become useful to the larger society. The result indicated that mother tongue teaching programs such as the OMO and MAI have the capacity to contribute towards the formation of character and personality of young immigrants, this is because every child's first understanding of the world around him such as his concepts of learning, his or her skills commences with the depth of the knowledge he or she has about her mother tongue. Language plays an important framework for thinking and the formation of emotions (Lindquist et al., 2016).

4.1.5 Mother Tongue Promotes Facilitation of Cultural Integration

Cultural integration is at the core of this study. One of the key elements that this study investigates is the facilitators' perception of how well the programs promote the integration of young immigrants. Culture and linguistic capabilities of immigrants are very essential to their effective integration into their new environment (Cummins, 2000). The issue of integration was dominant as a thematic element in the transcripts of the interviews. All six respondents agreed that mother tongue teaching in the form of the OMO and MAI programs being delivered to young immigrants in the comprehensive schools in Turku helps to accelerate their integration into the larger Turku community. Four out of six of these perceptions are presented below to lend credence to the above claim.

MAI teaching is not only about the language; it is also teaching culture and history. It is beneficial for the families to meet other families whose children attend the programs and also to meet a teacher who usually comes from the same culture and background as the parents. The teacher can be a good role model for the children of how to integrate into the Finnish culture and society. (First Respondent)

For immigrant students, it is particularly important to have support in their own native language (OMO), which helps them to get better at school subjects and integrate into Finnish school environment easily. It also strengthens their mother tongue skills and increases their vocabulary skills in different topics. In the case of MAI teaching, it is again particularly important for a student to preserve their own mother tongue and cultural identity. The aim of the Finnish education system for immigrants, as well as for all other students, is to get a good education and that they will be able to continue their higher education studies in order to find their place in this society and to prevent exclusion. (Second Respondent)

The third and fifth respondents also share the view that the OMO and MAI programs facilitate the integration of immigrants into school community and the larger Finnish society:

Both programs have helped and supported immigrant students to accommodate and integrate into a new learning and education environment. (Third Respondent)

The main effective way to integrate into new cultures and societies is by learning their languages. With a good command of the Finnish language one can introduce and integrate better to the Finnish society and culture. Integration is a mutual process not a bilateral one. It is just like pouring a glass of hot water into a bucket of cold water; it is true that the hot water gets cold, because the amount of cold water in the bucket is much more than the amount of the water in the glass, but the cold water won't stay the same, too. It gets a little bit warmer than it was. It is true that immigrants should integrate themselves into the Finnish community, but Finns should also understand and be more open towards immigrants. (Fifth Respondent)

The evidence above supports the perception that the implementation of the OMO and MAI programs, which serves as the panacea for the delivery of mainstream lessons to students of immigrant descent, contribute towards their integration into the larger Finnish society.

Language, particularly knowledge of one's mother tongue, is important in facilitating integration of children with immigrant background. This is because for these children, in order to acquire the Finnish language, which is an important part of their integration process, they need to first and foremost be helped to understand, speak and transfer structures of their mother tongue and then use this knowledge to acquire the L2. The relevance of developing the mother tongue before effort is made to train and educate immigrant in the L2 is that the foundation for acquiring the L1 is already inherent through the innate existence of the UG, as postulated by Chomsky (2007).

Also, the cultural component of any group of people is conveyed and preserved through the use of their mother tongues. When the mother tongue is developed, children of immigrant background are able to appreciate their cultural differences and then appreciate the differences in other cultures as well. This enables them to co-exist with others in multi-cultural contexts such as the multicultural environment in Turku. Therefore, through the teaching of the OMO and MAI programs, the integration of immigrant children can be made smoother and less traumatizing. This result thus confirms the finding of Alitolppa-Niitamo (2004) that developing the mother tongue of immigrant children has a strong relationship with the extent to which

they are willing to acculturate or integrate into the new cultural environments in which they find themselves.

4.1.6 There are Challenges within the Programs that Should be Addressed

From the transcript of the interviews, one recurring theme is the challenges facing the implementation of the OMO and MAI programs within the Turku Municipality. From the interviews conducted, respondents enumerated many challenges that they perceive to be hampering the successful implementation of the programs. These challenges range from insufficient time allocations for the teaching of the programs to the lack of adequate logistics. These challenges, among others, have been outlined by the participants as challenges that require immediate attention in order for the programs to achieve its intended objectives. Below are some evidences from the transcripts of the interviews:

The challenges can be seen in the limited number of the lessons and the resources that are not sufficient. There are also students who really need help and support but they do not accept the opportunities and teachings given / directed to them. (Second Respondent)

Responses obtained from other participants mention the following challenges:

At the moment mother tongue teaching lessons are organized in the afternoon ‘(i.e., after school days), it is very difficult to gather or get the students together in the afternoons. In addition, students are usually tired, hungry and restless at that time. Many also have their own hobbies and clubs, so it would be difficult for them to participate in their native language classes. Another problem is that mother tongue classes are voluntary and not compulsory. This is a big problem, because usually students come to class or participate when he or she wants, even though it is said that the teaching is binding (i.e., it should be committed to, that is when a student enrolls in a course, it is obligatory to attend classes throughout the academic year, but in practice this does not happen. (Fourth Respondent)

The fifth respondent adds that:

Another visible problem is that there are not many useful teaching materials available in Finland for the immigrant's mother tongue. Many teachers have to order books from their own country that are not eligible for this society because they are too difficult for pupils or they are full of subjects that are not of interest to a pupil born / raised in Finland. Sometimes teachers make their own books, but that is not so practical because not all teachers can make or prepare books and, in addition, teachers cannot have their own books for students in different stages, because

then every teacher should make nine books (class 1-9.). Mother tongue teachers usually have many different classes to teach, from the first class up to high school students. (Fifth Respondent)

From the above extracts, it is evident that the implementation of the OMO and MAI programs in Turku, Finland, has not been smooth. This is because there are existing challenges to its successful implementation. These challenges need attention in order to enable immigrants to receive the best possible benefit out of the programs.

Finally, the sixth respondent believes that the main challenges facing the programs are:

The main challenge is the budget or resources. The second is about the teachers. Are they qualified? It is better to give teachers some more educational training, and also the budget of those programs should be increased. Most of the teachers are not mother tongue teachers proficiently (i.e., they haven't studied pedagogy and didactics). They teach it because they know Finnish language and their native language, and this is not enough for teachers. They should have more qualifications like pedagogy studies and other teaching qualifications. (Sixth Respondent)

Responses obtained from the participants reiterated the existing challenges that frustrate the smooth running of the programs. The effect of these challenges, such as the poor allocation of time for the delivery of the programs and the non-existence of adequate resource materials, could eventually prevent the programs from achieving their intended objectives. If the Turku Municipality desires to develop the mother tongue teaching programs as a way of promoting the acquisition of the Finnish language learning ability of young immigrants, then a lot more needs to be done to make the programs more successful. In-service training sessions could be organized to sharpen the teaching skills of the facilitators of the programs. Another insightful measure that can be put in place immediately as a way of dealing with the issue of poor time allocation for the programs would be an attempt to reschedule the mother tongue teaching hours into the mainstream system of the schools. When these suggested measures are adopted, it could allow the attainment of the goals for the introduction of the OMO and MAI programs.

5. DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research is a phenomenographic study of the OMO and MAI programs in Turku Municipality. It seeks to determine the extent to which these programs have contributed towards the integration of young immigrants, including unearthing how the programs have contributed towards the educational achievements of young immigrants. It also seeks to identify the challenges facing the effective implementation of the two language programs within the Municipality of Turku.

This section of the study provides a vivid discussion, conclusion and recommendations based on the outcome of the study. The first section of this chapter focuses on discussing the outcomes of the study followed by the concluding section, while the third section is devoted entirely to making recommendations. Recommendations are targeted at the necessary authorities who act as the duty bearers to ensure the successful implementation of the programs.

5.1 Discussions

This section deals with the discussion of the outcomes of the study. The outcomes are presented in the following order:

1. Contribution of the OMO and MAI programs towards the educational achievements of young Immigrants in the Turku Municipality.
2. Contribution of the OMO and MAI programs towards the integration of young immigrants.
3. Challenges facing the implementation of the OMO and MAI programs in Turku municipality.

5.1.1 Contribution of the OMO and MAI Programs towards the Educational Achievements of Young Immigrants in the Turku Municipality

The OMO and MAI language programs were implemented by the Municipality of Turku as a way of contributing towards the integration of young immigrants into the school community. The programs created the opportunities for young migrants to receive teaching instruction in their respective mother tongues. The benefit of the programs was that it enabled young immi-

grants to understand some complex topics better because they were taught using their mother tongues in addition to the Finnish language.

One of the things this study sought to unearth was the perception of the facilitators of the OMO and MAI programs concerning the extent to which they augmented the academic achievements of children with immigrant backgrounds. Six teachers of the programs were sampled and interviewed and their responses transcribed and analyzed using imaginative variations and intuition. The outcome of the study revealed that the teachers perceived the introduction of the OMO and MAI programs have really helped immigrants in the promotion of their academic performance. This supports Nekatibeb's (2007, p. 59) stance that mother tongue has a powerful impact in the formation of individuals, shaping their thoughts, emotions and identity. Learning mother tongue and appreciation their own cultural background makes it easier for children to learn to appreciate other cultures. It also provides the basis for learning and thinking about other languages. It provides the ability to identify and describe characteristics, structures and features of other languages; and it leads to the promotion of learning skills, and helps children to be successful in other school subjects.

In addition, some of the themes that emerged from the analysis of the interview transcripts indicated the OMO and MAI mother tongue programs have indeed aided the academic achievements of young immigrants. According to the extracts from the transcripts, facilitators of the programs perceived that young immigrants' knowledge and ability to speak their mother tongues lay the foundation for the acquisition of the Finnish language as well. This also lends credence to the point made by Nekatibeb (2007) that knowledge about one's mother tongue promotes the learning of a second language.

5.1.2 Contribution of the OMO and MAI Programs towards the Integration of Young Immigrants

A significant part of the study was the desire of the researcher to discover the contribution of the OMO and MAI programs towards the integration of young immigrants into the larger Finnish Community in Turku municipality. The concept of integration was at the heart of this study. Knowledge of the linguistic systems of a new society in which a person is immigrating is essential. It can determine the economic, political and social opportunities that become available to the immigrant. From the extracts discussed in chapter four, based on the perceptions of the facilitators of the OMO and MAI programs, it is observed that the contribution of

these language programs towards the integration of young immigrants in Turku is significant. The facilitators held the view that the programs created a sense of identity and cultural uniqueness in the immigrants. Apart from this, their ability to speak their individual mother tongues enhanced their acquisition of the Finnish language, which was crucial to their successful integration.

This influence of the OMO and MAI programs on the integration of young immigrants into the Finnish society aligns with the findings of Jiang and Kuehn (2001), who analyzed the contribution of the study of mother tongue teaching on the academic performance and integration of children, especially, those with immigrant origin. The aim of their research was to discover the impact of knowledge transfer on the development of an academic English language skill among young and old immigrant students and how this contributed towards their adaptation into their new cultural environment. The authors concluded that there was significant evidence that immigrants' knowledge of their mother tongue contributed to their successful integration.

5.1.3 Challenges Facing the Implementation of the OMO and MAI Programs in Turku Municipality

An objective of the study was to discover the challenges facing the successful implementation of the OMO and MAI programs. From the study conducted, it was revealed by the facilitators of the programs that there exist some challenges that inhibit the effective running of the programs. Among the challenges discussed by the facilitators is the issue of qualifications and trained teachers for the programs. According to the data, most of the teachers who teach the programs are not professional mother tongue instructors or have not received any official training as mother tongue teachers. Many of them have not studied didactics and pedagogy of teaching. Many of the teachers still tend to stick to the frontal approach of teaching without having the skill to use different methods to teach so that the children could get the full benefit of the programs.

The implication of these challenges is that it could influence the perception of teachers concerning the contribution of the programs toward the integration and academic achievement of young immigrants. This is because since the facilitators of the programs lacked pedagogical training, it could affect their effective classroom management abilities, thus making them unable to make the best out of the teaching hours allotted to them with the children.

This challenge therefore calls for an immediate need for the provision of in-service training sessions for the facilitators to enable them to receive training on pedagogy and teaching so that the programs could be delivered to children successfully.

Another important challenge that was discovered was the inadequate time slot for delivering the programs. The time allocated for teaching the programs, especially MAI program, is mainly in the afternoons outside of regular school schedules, which does not help in the effective implementation of the programs. This creates a condition of laxity and unwillingness of the students to participate in the lessons. The condition is also worsened by the fact that the programs are not compulsory since pupils' performances are not graded. The teachers hold a unanimous view that it would be better if the language programs are integrated into the new curriculum and were not only an after school affair. This challenge of lack of interest of the pupils in the program poses the question of how children could be motivated to take the lessons seriously. There would be the need for the facilitators to present lessons under these language programs in a way that the interests of the children could be awakened and sustained.

The issue of the lack of interest in the mother tongue language programs could stem from the fact that children might not have been made to appreciate the relevance of knowing their mother tongue and how the knowledge of these could develop their academic skills. The facilitators of the program need to be trained to ensure that they are able to utilize both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation skills to develop and sustain the interests of these young immigrants in learning their mother tongues.

Finally, another visible challenge is that there are not many useful teaching materials available in Finland for the immigrant children's mother tongue teaching programs. This situation of lack of useful learning resources has compelled some facilitators of the program to search for these mother tongue-based resources from locations outside Finland. The challenges some of these facilitators of the programs face is that some of the resource materials that they are able to procure from other countries are often not suitable to motivate the children to study. Also, some teachers of the programs have attempted to develop their own modules of resources for teaching as a way of mitigating the challenges they encounter owing to the lack of educational resources. This becomes challenging to do because these books that are developed by facilitators might not meet the needed content that these children are expected to learn hence, could culminate into slowing the rate at which the objectives of the programs could be achieved.

What is needed urgently for the sustenance of the OMO and MAI programs is the effort to be made by the Turku Municipality to address the lack of teaching and learning resources for delivering MAI program. When this is done, the interest of learners will be developed in the lessons and also the work of those who serve as facilitators of the programs could be made less burdensome.

5.2 Conclusion

Integration of young immigrants into a new society requires the combination of many different supporting agents. Education and the creation of the necessary enabling environment that would augment efforts to make life meaningful and comfortable for immigrants are crucial. The study sought to determine the extent to which the OMO and MAI programs have contributed towards the education and integration of young immigrants into the larger society of Turku. The essence of integrating young immigrants in a larger society lies in the fact that it enables them to become economically viable and ensures that they are able to capably adjust to their new cultural, social, and political environments.

Finland is relatively a novel country in the hosting of immigrants, as Finns themselves were traditionally noted to be emigrants until the beginning of the 19th century. With the influx of immigrants into Finland, it became necessary to introduce measures that would comfortably integrate these new people into the Finnish society. The process of integrating these immigrants culminated in the Turku municipality's introduction of the mother tongue education modules (OMO and MAI). This was targeted towards the education of young immigrants in their respective mother tongues with the goal of making lessons in the comprehensive school system meaningful and understandable to the young immigrants as well as to facilitate their integration processes.

The theoretical framework on which the study was founded on was the theory of Universal Grammar (UG), acculturation, and constructive marginalization. The theory of acculturation, as discussed earlier, refers to the process of change in culture, norms and belief systems, and adaptation, which takes place when two different cultural groups come into contact with each other. When these contacts take place between cultures, it is essential that the two should be able to adjust to the practices and belief systems of each other without the loss of the uniqueness to either of them (Berry, 1997). The contact that happen between cultures, with each ensuring that they do not lose their unique identities, is what lays the pillars for this research. The introduction of the OMO and MAI programs was aimed at developing the mother tongue of the young migrants in order for the children not to lose their identity as well as promote the preservation of their respective cultures. Thus, apart from the programs facilitating the integration of the young immigrants into the Finnish society, it was also intended to augment the educational activities of the young immigrants.

Findings from the study indicate that the introduction of the OMO and MAI programs have contributed towards the educational achievements of the young immigrants in Turku, Finland. The programs enabled an environment in which immigrants were not only taught their mother tongues but also had the opportunity to have their regular lessons simplified and taught using their mother tongues as the medium of instruction. The contribution of this process to the integration and educational achievements of young immigrants within the Turku Municipality has been significant. Data from the study show that the teachers have a positive perception of the contribution of the programs to the educational pursuits of the young immigrants and their integration. The teachers indicated that the programs have helped in improving the academic performances of the immigrants. The programs have also been touted as having played significant roles in ensuring the integration of the immigrants into the larger society of Turku.

Despite these successes, there were indications that the OMO and MAI programs suffer some defects in their effective implementation. These challenges included the inadequate time allocation for the teaching of the mother tongue programs, and lack of resource materials such as text books and other relevant resources that would facilitate the teaching of the programs. The research outcomes conform to those of Alitolpa-Nitamo (2004), which also bring to light the complexity of acculturation as the importance of the family and other intervention modules that are woven to support the integration of young immigrants.

The OMO and MAI programs are significant in supporting the integration of young immigrants arriving in Finland. Apart from the support the programs provide for the integration of immigrants, they also promote their educational endeavors and achievements. This implies that necessary measures are laid to promote the sustenance of the programs. As part of the study objectives, it was intended that the research would unravel some challenges impeding the effective implementation of the programs. As a way of proposing a solution for these challenges, the following recommendations are made to the teachers and authorities at the Turku municipality such that when they are utilized, they would go a long way to promote the successful implementation of the programs.

The teachers of the OMO and MAI programs should ensure that they employ innovative methods of teaching in order to boost the interest of learners in the programs. This is because through the study, it was revealed that many of the teachers employed to handle the programs stick to the use of old and outmoded methods of teaching, thus contributing to students' lack of interest in the programs. Teachers of the programs need to collaborate as a team so as to

exchange ideas from one another in order to arrive at the best and most innovative approaches to teaching the young immigrants.

Furthermore, the teachers need to build relationships with the children's parents so that they can promote the success of the programs together. The study indicated that not all parents are aware of these programs. Thus, the parents need to be informed in order to create a fertile relationship for the successful implementation of the programs. The essence of the creation of this relationship between the parents and the teachers of the programs is that OMO and MAI teachings are not only about the languages being taught, but also about teaching culture and history. It will be beneficial for the families whose children learn under the programs, as well as the teachers, to meet each other especially as the teachers usually have similar cultural backgrounds as their students. This will enable the teachers to become good role models for the children, helping them to integrate successfully into the Finnish culture and society. Finally, parents should play an important role in supporting the development of their children's native languages by speaking the languages to them at home. This will make them proud of their languages and cultures. In addition, the children should actively participate in native language lessons.

A third recommendation acknowledges that, teaching is a very crucial life development program that requires proper planning and logistics to be effective. As a result of this, it is important that authorities in charge of the delivery of education to children of immigrants make available the necessary logistics in order to allow the children to benefit from the OMO and MAI programs. It became evident that there is an absence of the teaching and learning resources needed to ensure the efficient implementation of the programs. Materials such as textbooks and workbooks which are written in the native languages of the children are lacking. It is recommended that authorities in charge of the programs link up with the education ministries of the home countries of these immigrants in order to obtain materials that could facilitate the education of these young immigrants.

Finally, authorities at the Turku Municipality should ensure that teachers who are employed to teach the programs have proper qualifications and are also well grounded in pedagogy. The research indicated that many of the teachers who are employed for the programs do not have professional qualifications in teaching. Employing people based on their ability to speak their native language and Finnish does not equate to professional qualification. This is why it is important that necessary measures are put in place to recruit qualified persons to deliver the

programs. Also, the authorities should design refresher course modules for the teachers to equip them with new ways of teaching native language lessons.

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APPENDIX

Themes and Interview Questions

- 1) Why is bilingual children's mother tongue important for education?
- 2) What can you say about the OMO and MAI programs?
- 3) Do you think the programs have been successful in helping immigrants to integrate into the Finnish school culture and system?
- 4) Do you think the programs provide enough foundation for immigrants to be able to fully understand lessons that are taught in the comprehensive schools?
- 5) What do you think are some of the challenges facing the successful implementation of the OMO and MAI programs?
- 6) What do you think should be done to improve the programs in order to make it more appealing?
- 7) What is the role of the programs in protecting the cultural identity of immigrants?
- 8) Do you think the programs have some benefits to the family of the children you teach?
- 9) What are the challenges and possibilities of immigrant student's school attendance and success?
- 10) What are the challenges and possibilities of immigrant's integration into the Finnish society and providing equal work opportunity for them after finishing their study?