

MANUAL
**Proposals for easy school
transitions in Lapland**

COMPILED BY:
**Rauna Rahko-Ravantti, Minna Körkkö,
Merja Paksuniemi, Sari Niemisalo**

Lapin yliopiston rehtori on todennut päätöksessään 23.9.2020, että julkaisussa on rikottu hyvää tieteellistä käytäntöä. Sari Niemisalo olisi tullut mainita "Käsikirja: Toimenpide-esityksiä sujuviin koulutussiirtymiin Lapissa" kokoamisessa mukana olleena henkilönä. Sari Niemisalo on merkitty yhdeksi kokoajaksi julkaisuun. Lapin yliopistossa Lapin korkeakoulukirjasto toteuttaa julkaisuun päätöksen johdosta tehtävät lisäykset.

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Preface

The objective of the A Clear Path of Learning (Opintie sujuvaksi) project was to produce information which could be used to support the transitions of pupils belonging to ethnic groups from basic education into upper secondary education and bring forward experiences of the people belonging to the target group regarding the transitional phase and to develop solutions to facilitate easier transitioning. The project included 40 Sámi and immigrant pupils.

This manual presents our proposals for measures with regard to the information received during the project. The proposals are based on the report published within the project. Minna Körkkö, Sari Niemisalo, Merja Paksuniemi, Rauna Rahko-Ravantti, and Maiju Saarreharju gathered material for the project, performed research, and produced the report. The results of the project will be collected and published in a book called *Opintie sujuvaksi Lapissa*¹, published by the Institute of Migration, in which, in addition to the results, essential themes are brought forward by experts in the field. The material on young immigrants used in the *Opintie sujuvaksi Lapissa* book was gathered, analyzed, and reported by Minna Körkkö and Sari Niemisalo (see Körkkö & Niemisalo, *Maahanmuuttajaoppilaiden siirtymät pe-*

¹Körkkö, Minna, Paksuniemi, Merja, Niemisalo, Sari & Rahko-Ravantti, Rauna. (ed.) (2017): *Opintie sujuvaksi Lapissa*. Turku, Institute of Migration, Julkaisuja 6.

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rusopetuksesta toisen asteen koulutukseen Lapissa, 45–67), the material on adult immigrants was analyzed and reported by Maiju Saarreharju and Merja Paksuniemi (see Saarreharju & Paksuniemi, “Koska siitä saa hyvän elämän”, 69–95) and the material regarding the school paths of young Sámi people was analyzed and reported by Rauna Rahko-Ravantti (see Rahko-Ravantti, Saamelaisnuorten opintie Lapissa, 97–113). The book is available at: <http://www.migrationinstitute.fi/files/pdf/julkaisuja-sarja/Opintie-sujuvaksi-Lapissa-Siirtolaisuussinstituutti-J6.pdf>

We wish to thank the European Social Fund who provided funds for the project, the Lapland ELY Centre, and the University of Lapland. We thank all the people interviewed for the project and the partners, without whom this study would not have been possible. We also wish to thank the other people who worked for the project for the valuable input they provided. We also thank the members of the steering group for their expertise during the project.

Rovaniemi, February 16, 2017

Rauna Rahko-Ravantti, Minna Körkkö, and Merja Paksuniemi



The key findings of the a clear path of learning project

Young Sámi people

- ▶ Some young people considered the Sámi language to hold significance for their future. Young Sámi people living in cities had dreamed about applying to upper secondary education in the Sámi region.
- ▶ Young Sámi people living in the cities were satisfied with their school and their friends at the time of the interview. They had, however, experienced bullying or discrimination on one or more occasions due to being Sámi.
- ▶ In the Sámi region, the transition to upper secondary education is an extremely significant process and the students begin preparing for the joint application process as the 7th grade begins.

- ▶ Selections within the joint application system were primarily affected by the pupil's own interests, but the family's opinion and in some cases financial resources were also taken into consideration, for example, regarding the possibility to obtain an apartment in another region.
- ▶ Young people living outside the Sámi region dreamed about living in the Sámi region. The ability to use the Sámi language and thus gain access to the job market was a part of realizing this dream.
- ▶ Providing education in the Sámi language throughout Lapland and not just in the Sámi region is important as it maintains the people's connection with their roots and makes it possible to return, even generations later.
- ▶ The young Sámi people arriving to the cities come from a very different environment and culture. In the new region, the school should be able to support the Sámi cultural identity so that the transition would not be so difficult that it led to abandoning studies.

Young immigrant pupils

- ▶ The selections made by young immigrants in the joint application system are mostly affected by the pupils' own interests regarding education. The significance of the practical training included in basic education is minor with regard to the pupils' decisions.

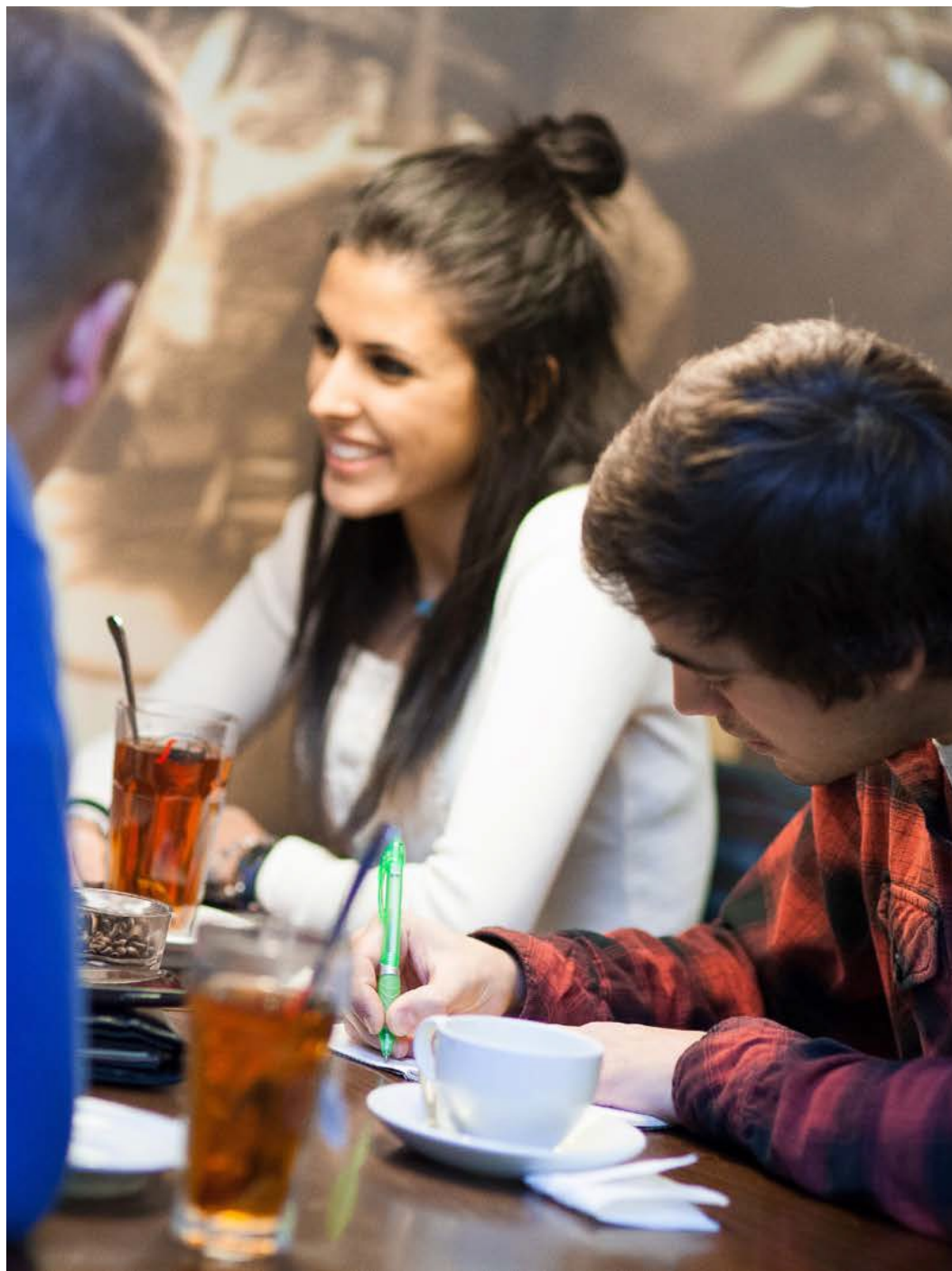
- ▶ Finnish language skills are the most important factor furthering or hindering the educational transitioning of young immigrants: good Finnish will facilitate success at school, make it easier to form friendships, and enable applying to upper secondary education according to the pupil's own wishes. Poor language skills can cause problems at school and occasional difficulties in communicating with other students. Pupils who have a poor grasp of the Finnish language may not apply for upper secondary education according to their desire as they believe that their language skills are not sufficient to succeed at school.
- ▶ Interacting with Finnish-speaking students supports learning Finnish for immigrant pupils. Building social relationships between young people in school should also be taken into consideration.
- ▶ Young immigrants require varying levels of support in education. At the end of basic education, all of the young people may not have adequate language or academic facilities to enable seeking upper secondary or technical education. For these pupils, transitional education, such as initial training, could be a suitable option.
- ▶ Study counsellors have a significant role in ensuring the successful educational transitioning of young immigrants. It is the counsellors job to make sure that young people make their decisions based on sufficient information.
- ▶ The parents of immigrant families are only able to actively participate in their children's education if they have sufficient language skills. Therefore, all family members should learn sufficient Finnish.

- ▶ Some young immigrants see their futures in Southern Finland. The reason for this are the better education and job prospects Southern Finland provides.

Adult immigrant pupils

- ▶ The decisions made by adult immigrants in the joint application system were affected by their interest toward the field, future plans regarding further studies, job prospects, and the experience and advice of friends and family. Practical training was seen as more important with regard to learning Finnish than as affecting employment or educational decisions.
- ▶ The opportunity to continue studying for a profession that the person has practiced in their home country is small. Essential reasons for this include poor language skills and the desire to quickly enter the labor market.
- ▶ The people taking part in the study hoped to become employed and continue to live in Northern or Southern Finland. This supports the idea that investing into education is also investing into future employees in Finland.
- ▶ Poor Finnish language skills prevented some from applying to upper secondary school, as that would require a good grasp of the teaching language from the student. Access to higher education is limited for people who have moved to Finland as adults.

- ▶ The educational support provided by the school was seen as sufficient. The teachers utilized tracking in teaching.
- ▶ The support and help of the family had a significant effect on the progress of studies. Family members' poor Finnish language skills and lack of education were limiting factors on the available support.
- ▶ Pupil's positive attitude had a positive effect on learning and significantly helped the progress of studies.
- ▶ Support received from teachers and counsellors in the transitional phase had a significant effect. Other forms of support were also requested within the transitional phase, such as: practicing entrance exams more than once and visits from pupils who had gone through the transition, during which they shared their experiences of the transition and studies after basic education.
- ▶ Practicing Finnish language skills outside of school was seen as useful and interaction with Finnish people as desirable.
- ▶ Regular study groups after the school day were requested to support studies as homework often proved challenging or impossible to do alone.



Proposals

Language aspects

Supporting the Sámi language

With regard to young Sámi people, the transition is extraordinary because at the upper secondary level, the opportunity for studies in the Sámi language is decreased or completely eliminated. The Sámi languages are endangered and their preservation would require the complete support of the society.

- ▶ Enable access to complete basic education in the Sámi language.
- ▶ Increase Sámi language education in technical and upper secondary schools.
- ▶ Enable studying the Sámi language throughout the Lapland region.

Supporting Finnish language skills

Finnish language skills were one of the most significant factors affecting educational transitioning for immigrant pupils in all age groups. Finnish language skills are also an important factor for integration into the Finnish society and forming friendships.

- ▶ Individually support pupils in learning the Finnish language throughout the entire school path.
- ▶ Strengthen the Finnish language skills of the support networks, such as the families.
- ▶ Attempt to promote friendships with native population.
- ▶ Also enable Finnish language training outside of the school and organize various activities.
- ▶ Introduce 10th grades intended for immigrant pupils as one option to increase language skills and thus provide better access to desired upper secondary education.
- ▶ Provide sufficient opportunities for practicing entrance exams.
- ▶ Create glossaries to help with upper secondary education and future jobs.
- ▶ Design courses that facilitate developing Finnish language skills considering future education, e.g. upper secondary school.
- ▶ Organize courses that improve facilities to study at the beginning of upper secondary education.

Facilitating easy transitions – proposals regarding guiding factors in the transitional phase

While resources are invested into the transitional phase, transitioning from basic education to upper secondary education was made more difficult or prevented by, among other things, the lack of preparatory training, insignificant cooperation between schools, and the geographic location of schools. Young people required more individual support, guidance, care, advice, and adult confirmation that their primary school decisions were correct. Some pupils required additional information regarding different education opportunities after basic education to support their decision-making process and completing their studies with regard to their dream job. Some hoped for more time for consideration before making major decisions regarding the continuation of studies. Receiving support depends on the available resources, potentially leading to regional inequality. Adapting to a new culture and learning its norms was often seen as a challenge for young Sámi people moving due to studies. The integration of immigrant pupils into basic education groups was often considered challenging.

- ▶ Provide pupils opportunities for individual guidance.
- ▶ Introduce the option of 10th grade if the pupil requires additional time to make decisions.
- ▶ Increase individual forms of support for pupils.
- ▶ Expand the preparation for joint application to upper secondary education throughout secondary school.

- ▶ Strengthen peer support activities, include the parents in the process, and increase experience sharing regarding the transitional phase through mentoring.
- ▶ Strengthen the connection between practical training and the pupils' desires regarding further education by introducing planning for the future and employment planning at an earlier stage in secondary school. This provides young people adequate time to get to know various professions and fields of education that may interest them.
- ▶ Develop the practical training used in immigrant pupils' integration education, thus maximizing its benefits from the employment and education perspectives.

” Strengthen peer support activities, include the parents in the process, and increase experience sharing regarding the transitional phase through mentoring.

Socioemotional learning environment, friendships, and family support – measures to improve school success

Schools and their practices are often more likely to duplicate the existing social conventions. The dominant culture having an overshadowing position is more common than an education-enabling interface shared by different cultures. Thus, schools are able to pay attention to the needs of children, young people, and families from the dominant culture as they are aligned with the values and culture of the school. Children and youths from ethnic minorities are therefore faced with an especially challenging task with regard to educational transitions as they operate between two macro systems: at times in their own culture at home and immediate communities, and at times in the dominant culture, while acting as a cultural interpreter in both. This is often done quite independently as their immediate communities are not as well-equipped to support their education as families who come from the dominant culture. Parent and friends and families may have no experience of Finnish schools or school system, which is why they may not be able to understand school requirements or issues at school.

The support and help provided by families was a significant factor in the progress of studies. Therefore, the cooperation between the communities, schools, and the families is important to ensure successful transitioning between schools. A successful partnership between the community and school requires the continued support of all interest groups and the local government.

- ▶ Take cultural sensitivity into consideration and provide sufficient information for the teaching staff with regard to each pupil's individual cultural background.
- ▶ Provide sufficient support for the pupil's comprehensive development, paying attention to teaching contents, education materials, and the operation of the school, modifying them as necessary.
- ▶ Increase facilities for flexible communication through openness, caring, and respecting the uniqueness and individuality of each person.
- ▶ Train upper secondary level students who have gone through the transitional phase for mentoring. Make this a permanent practice.
- ▶ As necessary, develop the schools operational culture and practices to better serve the ethnic diversity and wellbeing of the pupils.
- ▶ Establish study groups organized after the school day to provide opportunities for completing homework.
- ▶ Better include family members in supporting education and cooperation with schools through, among other things, parents' clubs operating at the schools.
- ▶ Provide language training for the parents of immigrant pupils, thus providing them better facilities for cooperating with the schools.
- ▶ Support interaction between immigrant and Finnish pupils.
- ▶ Support friendships between pupils from different ethnic groups.

Additional information



Joint application process, education, vocational selection tests:

<https://opintopolku.fi/wp/fi/>

<https://www.studentum.fi/>

<http://www.infopankki.fi/fi/etusivu>

<http://www.mol.fi/avo/>

<http://www.uramyrsky.fi/Mansikkapaikka/index.html>

http://samediggi.fi/nuorat/images/pdf_tiedostot/

oahppoofela.fi_web.pdf



Regarding education in the transitional phase:

<http://www.edulappi.fi/fi/Nuorelle/VALMA>

<http://www.infopankki.fi/fi/elama-suomessa/koulutus/peruskoulun-jalkeen/lukioon-valmistava-koulutus>

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