Immigrant Transition from Primary to Secondary Education in Finland – Future Orientations and Educational Expectations

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About Transit

- Transitions and educational trajectories of immigrant youth¹: A 4-year longitudinal study from compulsory to further education
- Funded by the Academy of Finland for years 2014–2018. University of Helsinki & University of Turku, Finland
- ¹ By *immigrant* youth we refer mainly to young persons with *mixed origin* (first generation immigrants or second generation immigrants with at least one parent born abroad).
Overall aim of Transit

- to understand and interpret the educational trajectories and transitions of immigrant youth on these tracks, especially contrasted with the majority population
- to follow a group of young people (n = 445) for three years, starting from the upper secondary education decision through transition to upper secondary education, and, finally, during their individual, post-comprehensive pathways.
Theoretical background

• Upper secondary transitions as trajectories
  • socio-economic factors, institutional structures of formal education and individuals in their biographical constructions
  • enhances the interaction of structures and individual – the institutional settings, individual resources and biographical experiences and orientations of young (Walther et al. 2015; Stauber & Walther 2002)

• Late modern uncertain and contingent transitions
  • (Furlong & Cartmel 1997; Heinz 2009)
Educational pathways and immigrants

- Finnish *universalistic transition regime* (Walther 2006)
- Dual upper secondary education system: general and vocational
- Respectively equal access to tertiary education, yet majority of students transfer to tertiary education from general track
- When socio-economic status and school achievements are standardised, young with immigrant background choose general (academic) education more often (Teräs & Kilpi-Jakonen 2014)
- Young with immigrant background face 2 x odds for dropping out
- NEETs in Helsinki: Majority 7% vs. Immigrant background 22 %
  - (2013; 16-29 years, Finnish or Swedish-speaking vs. other mother tongues; Statistics Finland)
Focus of this presentation

- the first phase of the follow-up (survey, spring 2015)
- the respondents were at the final year of the comprehensive school and making the upper secondary education decisions
- aim is to accomplish a view of the complex intertwinement of (1) attitudes, (2) orientations and (3) experiences with (4) gender, (5) origin and (6) upper secondary education choices
- hierarchical cluster analysis, cross tabulations and logistic regression model
Data

• Matched subsampling (n = 317)
  • from 445 respondents by origin, gender, parents’ education and employment levels
    – Both parents employed ~50 %
    – Unemployed ~ 38 (maj) 40 % (imm) (at least one of the parents unemployed last year), rest unknown
    – Vocational education 36 % (maj) 39 % (imm);
    – University education 24 % (maj) 22 % (imm)
• Mainly (67 %) second generation immigrants (with at least one parent born abroad)
• Country of origin: Iraq, Iran, East-Europe (Estonia and ex-Jugoslavia), Africa (Somalia)
Projected upper secondary school choice, gender and origin (1-2 months prior to choice)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Academic choice</th>
<th>Vocational choice</th>
<th>Uncertain choice</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Girl (majority)</strong></td>
<td>57 %</td>
<td>31 %</td>
<td>11 %</td>
<td>100 % (n = 82)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Boy (majority)</strong></td>
<td>48 %</td>
<td>23 %</td>
<td>28 %</td>
<td>100 % (n = 74)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Girl (immigrant)</strong></td>
<td>59 %</td>
<td>21 %</td>
<td>19 %</td>
<td>100 % (n = 84)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Boy (immigrant)</strong></td>
<td>39 %</td>
<td>32 %</td>
<td>28 %</td>
<td>100 % (n = 77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>51 %</td>
<td>27 %</td>
<td>21 %</td>
<td>100 % (n = 317)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

χ²(6) = 14.88; p ≤ 0.05
Academic choosers and accumulation of positive educational attributes (cluster of extended education)
Academic choosers and accumulation of positive educational attributes
(cluster of early transition to work)

- Difficulties in learning
- Avoidance orientation
- Peer orientation
- Early cohabitation and family establishment
- Vocational orientation

Academic chooser
Vocational chooser
Uncertain chooser
The “immigrant paradox”: positive orientations but difficulties in learning (cluster of extended education)
The “immigrant paradox”: positive orientations but difficulties in learning (cluster of early transition to work)
Goal-oriented transitions

- Strong goal-orientation indicates in our analysis certainty of choices, feeling of subjectivity in transition and willingness to study several years.
- This orientation is generally stronger among academically oriented young and weaker among young oriented to vocational education or young that think they will apply to additional 10th grade.
- Strong learning orientation and liking school enhances the goal-oriented attitude towards the transitions in general.
- When these attitudes and orientations are standardised, girls and boys, immigrant and Finnish background are equally goal-oriented towards future transitions.
Uncertain transitions

- Uncertainty of choice indicate in our analysis hesitation or pondering of upper secondary choice
- This uncertainty is more general among young that are most likely attending vocational school, additional 10th grade, expecting early transition to work or taking a gap year
- The odds (logistic regression analysis) reveal that the uncertainty is most prevalent among vocationally oriented boys.
- The attitudes towards schooling and future choices, as the experiences from the comprehensive school do not have significance in explaining the uncertainty of choice
- Immigrant and Finnish-origin young are also equally sure or unsure about their choice, if attitudes, orientations and gender factors are standardized
Summary: general and vocational choices

• Academic choosers had an accumulation of positive educational attributes and goal-oriented transition

• Vocational choosers liked being in school less, and had, in general, a little believe in education
Summary: immigrant contradiction

- Young with immigrant background, and especially boys, had the strongest learning orientation, and trust both in education and employment.
- Yet they seem to have more difficulties in learning and statistically drop out education more often.
- Although uncertainty and goal-orientation are equally common among Finnish-origin and immigrant-origin young, are they parallel?
Summary: goal-oriented choices

• Especially young girls with immigrant background seem to choose general (academically oriented) upper secondary education most often.

• Most of them have very positive attitudes and orientations, and do not have severe learning difficulties.

• Among vocationally oriented young (with Finnish and immigration backgrounds), exists also strongly goal-oriented choices that are connected to a variety of school orientations and other background factors like avoidance orientation and occupation of the parents.
Goal-oriented transition to vocational upper secondary education?

[What school did apply to?]
-- I applied to become a harvester, to [city located 200 km apart from his home town]. Generally I think that [comprehensive school] wasn’t good for me, sitting in the school.

[Why did you apply there?]  
-- Well, I like all that has to do with engines and then I like to be by myself and do things in the forests. [--] I go to the Scouts and take some weekend camps.

[Interviewer asks about school report card and motivation]  
-- I raised my grades up, at least half a number this year. I’m sure I will have an motivation peak if I get to study what I really want.

• Boy, immigrant background (Sub-Saharan Africa), working class parents, self-reported learning difficulties, very strong vocational orientation
Summary: Uncertain choices

• Uncertainty of vocational and non-typical choices: open possibilities, but more uncertainties
• Especially among Finnish boys there are group of pupils that seem to lack goal-oriented attitude towards transition and strong avoidance orientation
• Some of the immigrant youth, especially girls, seem to follow the external pressure to achieve academic, university level education, but simultaneously face learning difficulties and lack of learning orientation
Uncertainty of vocational and non-typical choices

[---Why do you want to go to general secondary?]  
*Because I don’t have a clue what to do. I don’t know what to do at all.*

[---What about your teacher?]  
*Well, [teacher] told that vocational school might be my thing. I said that no it won’t.*

- *Finnish-origin boy, uncertain choice to general (academic) upper secondary*
- *Very weak goal-orientation, learning difficulties, strong avoidance-orientation, highly educated parents but currently placed at children home*
Immigrant paradox

[What school did apply to?]
My first choice was Helsinki Media Arts Upper Secondary School. I didn’t know where to apply in the future, so I chose the general (academic) upper secondary. Second choice was -- Helsinki Vocational College and Omnia [vocational schools].

[What programmes there was?]
-- One was this practical nurse -education [--], and other was this program working with young people. I think that… Basically I wanted to become the second occupation [practical nurse], but I put the media school there because I don’t know about my future, so--

- Girl, immigrant background (Sub-Saharan Africa), general (academic) upper-secondary choice
- Learning difficulties, weak learning orientation, likes schooling, wants to work with the children in the future, eldest child
References


