Cultural minorities in Finnish educational opportunity structures

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Abstract

In many countries, there are differences in school performance between and within cultural minorities and the majority. For, instance, differences between the learning outcomes of immigrant-origin and Finnish-origin students are considerable, and the risk among young people of immigrant origin of becoming positioned outside education and work life is higher than that among young people of Finnish origin.

The aim of this paper is to develop a holistic approach to educational inequalities by offering two theoretical viewpoints concerning cultural minorities in particular. First, we introduce the idea of the opportunity structure, which clarifies why the education system does not offer the same opportunities to all minority groups. Second, we highlight the need to understand the cultural variety of minorities when explaining differences in educational attainment. Here we make the distinctions of cultural differences (primary and secondary) and minority status (autonomous, voluntary and involuntary minorities). Finally, we discuss the question of equal educational opportunities by reflecting on these two theoretical viewpoints.

Keywords: ethnic minorities, immigrants, school performance, John Ogbu, educational opportunity structure, Finland

Introduction

During recent decades, the numbers of immigrants have increased in even northern peripheral countries such as Finland, and caused the emergence of new cultural minorities. In this novel situation, cultural minorities have become more divergent and heterogeneous in terms of, for example, academic achievement. Evidently, school performance varies between and within cultural minorities in many countries (Gibson, 1987; Herrera, 2003; Jonsson & Rudolphi, 2011; Luciak, 2004; Ogbu, 1987; Ogbu & Simons, 1998; Väänänen et al., 2009; White & Lowenthal, 2011).

The Finnish education system has many favourable prerequisites for providing equal educational opportunities to students of immigrant origin and other cultural minorities. Basic education is free for all, most schools have high and equal learning outcomes, teachers are highly appreciated and educated, compulsory education is non-tracking, and all educational tracks can lead to tertiary education. In accordance with the idea of universalism, the education system contains a wide variety of special education and differ-

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ent forms of positive discrimination, counselling is available, and 'second chance' options between lower and upper secondary education are possible.

Nevertheless, Finland currently fails to offer equal educational opportunities to certain cultural minorities, especially to young people of immigrant origin, as the differences between the learning outcomes of immigrant-origin and Finnish-origin students are considerable, and the risk among young people of immigrant origin of becoming positioned outside education and work life is higher than that among young people of Finnish origin. The same applies to the risk of dropping out of school. (Kilpi-Jakonen, 2011; Kalalahti et al., 2017.) It is important to note that different cultural minorities are not in equal positions in this respect. For instance, the Swedish-speaking minority holds a different social position to that of the Sámi or Roma people, whose situation with regard to schooling is, again, different to that of newly migrated minorities, such as refugees.

The aim of this paper is to develop a holistic approach to educational inequalities by offering two theoretical viewpoints concerning cultural minorities in particular. First, we introduce the idea of *opportunity structure* (Dale & Parreira do Amaral, 2015), which clarifies why the education system does not offer the same opportunities to all minority groups; for example, the different *established cultural minorities*, such as the Swedish-speaking minority, the Sámi and Roma people, and *immigrant-origin cultural minorities*. Second, and as a continuum to this, we highlight the need to understand the *cultural variety of minorities* when explaining differences in educational attainment. Here we make the distinctions of *cultural differences* (primary and secondary) and *minority status* (autonomous, voluntary and involuntary minorities, see e.g., Ogbu, 1983). By *cultural minorities* we refer to the distinctive linguistic and ethnic features of minorities. Finally, we discuss the question of equal educational opportunities by reflecting on these two theoretical viewpoints. We argue that it is essential that both institutional and macro-cultural factors are acknowledged when evaluating and developing solutions to educational inequalities.

Framing the opportunity structures for basic education in Finland

One key task in understanding the inequalities of educational opportunities is the evaluation of the nature of *institutional opportunity structures*. National education systems provide various opportunity structures, which include 'different problematisations, mechanisms and solutions to issues in education policy and governance' (Dale & Parreira do Amaral, 2015, p. 30), and are associated with solving the dilemma of minority-related diversity in educational attainment. These opportunity structures are intertwined with the discursive formations of education systems. Although in most developed countries, minority groups are 'identified as significant "educational at-risk groups" ' (Amos et al., 2015, p. 117), they face a wide variety of education systems with different socioeconomic structures, institutional arrangements and cultural patterns, in addition to the accompanying monitoring systems. We will first look at the Finnish opportunity structure and then portray how cultural minorities encounter this.

The Finnish universalistic transition regime

The repertoires of nation states as regards their education policy are vital, as these frame possibilities and transform aspirations into school achievements (Heath & Brinbaum, 2014). According to Walther (2006), the complex systems of socioeconomic structures, institutional arrangements and cultural patterns that form the structure of the journey from youth to adulthood can be understood as *transition regimes*. Drawing on the work of Esping-Andersen (1990), the notion of *regime* relates to 'existing institutional settings that have a history structured not only by conflicts and interests of specific social actors but also by the set of values and interpretations which they constantly reproduce' (Walther, 2006, p. 124).

A *liberal transition regime* – such as that in the United States and Great Britain – values individual rights and responsibilities more than collective provisions. Self-responsible individuals are conceived as

the 'entrepreneurs' of their own labour force. However, the *universalistic transition regime* – as in the Nordic countries – is characterised by an extended public sector and a wide variety of counselling and activation policies. Walther (2006; see also Attewell, 2010) also distinguishes between an *employment-centred regime* and a *sub-protective regime*.

Education systems are vital components of transition regimes. The educational success of some minority groups may be explained by using a regime theory to examine how individual aspirations intertwine with the characteristics of education systems. For instance, the educational inequalities related to social origin tend to be smaller in comprehensive systems, whereas more stratified systems typically increase them (Griga & Hadjar, 2014).

In the context in which cultural minorities appear, Finland can be categorised as a universalistic transition regime, which is commonly based on the comprehensive school system and post comprehensive routes of general and vocational education, both of which guarantee access to tertiary education. In the universalistic transition regime, counselling is widely institutionalised throughout all stages of education, training and transition into employment. Importantly, 'disadvantage' is interpreted individually in terms of not being ready to participate in an individualised choice biography. Hence, most 'second chance' options aim to (re-)open access to the regular and recognised options, rather than adapt to low-status careers (Walther, 2006).

The highlighted merits of the Finnish education system include its high quality and strong basic principle of equality of opportunity. The official education policy states that:

> One of the basic principles of Finnish education is that all people must have equal access to high-quality education and training. The same opportunities to education should be available to all citizens irrespective of their ethnic origin, age, wealth or where they live. (MoEC, 2016, p. 6)

The basic right to education and culture is recorded in the Constitution. Public authorities must secure equal opportunities for every resident in Finland to receive education also after compulsory schooling and to develop themselves, irrespective of their financial standing (L731/1999).

Educational attainment of cultural minorities in Finland

The Swedish-speaking Finns, Sámi and Roma people are established cultural minorities in Finland: Swedish speakers have their own schools, theatres, newspapers, and broadcasts in Swedish. They also have a legal right to be served in Swedish when dealing with state authorities. Measured by level of education, the Swedish-speaking minority fares better than the Finnish-speaking majority. For instance, 34 per cent of the Swedish speaking population aged 15 or over have a higher education degree (2013), compared to only 29 per cent of Finnish speakers. Moreover, in comparison with Finnish speakers, Swedish speakers have more masters- and doctoral-level degrees. (OSF, 2013.)

The Sámi are the indigenous people of the North European area. They number about 9000 in Finland. Despite having the right to maintain and develop their own language, culture and traditional livelihoods, accessibility to education is a major problem among the Sámi people: more than 50 per cent of Sámi pupils of compulsory school age do not receive Sámi language education or education that uses the Sámi language for teaching subjects. This is because over 90 per cent of Sámi education is provided in the northernmost parts of Finland. Outside the realms of the Sámi Homeland, possibilities for Sámi language education or education using the Sámi language in teaching subjects are scarce. (Aikio-Puoskari, 2007.)

Finland's Roma are a linguistic and cultural minority who have lived in the country for over 500 years. An estimated 10 000 Roma live in Finland. Their participation in education is generally problematic in several ways. Although The National Agency for Education have estimated (NAfE, 2016; Rajala & Blomerus, 2015) that the percentage of Roma population completing compulsory education have risen from 25 percentage (1950s) to over 80 per cent (2000s), according to their surveys it is more common among the Roma population (16 %) not to complete basic education than the whole age cohort (3 %). Surveys (Rajala et al., 2011) also portray how Roma students are relatively more often (32%) receiving special support/

transferred to special education in comparison with the whole age cohort (8%) (OSF, 2008).

The numbers of *immigrant-origin cultural minorities* in Finland remained small until the end of the 1980s. After this, wars and other crises led to a massive immigration of refugees, mostly from Somalia, the former Yugoslavia, Iran, and Iraq. During the same decade, the Finnish government enabled the re-migration of the relatives of former Finns from Russia. As a result, cultural minorities increased during the 1990s (Pohjanpää, Paananen & Nieminen, 2003). The number of immigrants in Finland is currently approximately 220 000, and the number of people whose mother tongue is something other than Finnish, Swedish or Sámi is approximately 310 000, which is just under six per cent of the population (OSF, 2015).

In the context of increased immigration, the Finnish education system places the principle of equality of opportunities under a 'stress test' (Hyvärinen & Erola, 2011). The challenges are obvious. First, the differences between the learning outcomes of the immigrant-origin and Finnish-origin students are not only larger than the average of OECD countries, but also greater than that in other Nordic countries (Harju-Luukkainen et al., 2014; Vettenranta et al., 2016). Individual background factors inevitably have an effect on learning outcomes, but these outcomes also vary among the different immigrant generations, as well as among high and low performing students. In this respect, the Finnish education system seems unable to support all students equally. (Kirjavainen & Pulkkinen, 2017.)

Second, the transition from compulsory to secondary education of immigrant-origin youth has been considered problematic in multiple ways. The group most likely to drop out is the Sub-Saharan first generation, for whom the difference in dropout rate from that of the majority is almost 24 percentage points. Overall, first-generation groups tend to be more likely to drop out of education than second-generation groups, and non-European groups more likely than European groups. (Kilpi-Jakonen, 2011; see also Kilpi-Jakonen, 2017.) It seems that weaker school achievements and attachment to upper-secondary education are intertwined, and are linked to a wide variety of resources descending from the family – including an immigrant background. Nevertheless, the causality between prior school achievements and a successful transition to upper-secondary education seems to be oversimplified among young people of immigrant origin (Kilpi-Jakonen, 2011, 2017).

Although youths of immigrant origin have positive learning orientations and attitudes to school (Räsänen & Kivirauma, 2011; Kalalahti et al., 2017), they face multifaceted learning and studying difficulties (Malin, Kinnunen & Rimpelä, 2015; Matikka et al., 2015). Furthermore, the high educational aspirations of parents of immigrant origin (Rinne & Tuittu, 2011), and the strong influence they have on their children's educational choices (Hyvärinen & Erola, 2011; Kilpi-Jakonen, 2011), may result in contradictory pressures when young individuals consider their abilities, talents and orientations. These culture-bound trends of educational underachievement, in addition to paradoxical or contradictory combinations of educational achievements and aspirations (see Kao & Tienda, 1998; Suárez-Orozco, Rhodes & Milburn, 2009; Jonsson & Rudolphi, 2011; Salikutluk, 2013) are evident even in a universalistic transition regime such as that in Finland.

Diversified opportunity structures

Analysis of opportunity structures reveals certain mechanisms that place some groups of established and immigrant-origin cultural minorities in similar positions, but other mechanisms that separate these groups.

The overall policy in Finland is that cultural minorities need to learn the national languages – Finnish or Swedish – in order to attach to the education system. Simultaneously, some of the groups, especially immigrants and the Roma people, are positioned as disadvantaged groups. The Finnish education system does not recognise other individual background factors and fails to support all minority students as effectively as their majority counterparts. The solutions for these cultural minorities seem to be uniform and simple; 'second chance' options (e.g. preparatory instruction) for access to 'regular' educational routes, based firmly on language acquisition.

In general, the governance of educational transitions in Finland seems to be moving toward an individ-

ualistic support system, which may involve either supporting individuals according to their personal needs or supporting a group of people with a specific need; for example, immigrants who encounter language difficulties (Dale et al., 2012). Uniform solutions might not be enough to meet the needs of the rich variety of cultural minorities, regardless of the volume of resources and support (Holopainen, Kalalahti & Varjo, 2017). It is evident that especially in the case of established cultural minorities, the analysis of opportunity structures cannot provide a sufficiently nuanced portrayal of their circumstances.

Macro-cultural theories on minorities and their education

According to Ogbu (1983), culturally-bound explanations for underperformance intertwine with the topics of minority status, power, and the reasons for migration, for instance. The reasoning for the adaptability and relevance of Ogbu's theory stems from its versatility. First, it pays attention to the structural aspects of society and schooling that hinder minorities' academic success. Second, in addition to such system factors, Ogbu also emphasised the importance of the culturally determined responses of minorities to their circumstances.

Cultural differences and power relations

As Amos et al. (2015) have illustrated, the education systems of European countries do not traditionally celebrate differences and diversity. There is a need for a new understanding of equality in educational opportunities; one that does not consider cultural minorities as one homogenous group and can orient education policy so that it does not consist of merely 'extending and strengthening support measures, with a strong focus on language acquisition in all countries focusing on migration as an indicator of disadvantage' (Amos et al., 2015, p. 117).

Distinguishing between *primary* and *secondary* cultural differences is one way in which to recognise diversities and target policies. *Primary cultural differences* may arise when at least two groups are in contact with each other or in a transitional period; for example, when people from non-western countries enter western education systems. Primary cultural differences are related to the uniqueness of each culture. For example, in Finland, Kosovan immigrants' primary cultural differences in relation to Finns are based on cultural features before migration, whereas Finnish cultural differences in relation to Kosovan and other immigrant groups are based on features of the Finnish culture. Secondary cultural differences may occur after the groups have been interacting with each other for a considerable amount of time, or when one group is considered superior to another; in for example, an education system (Kokkonen, 2005; Ogbu, 1983, 1992).

According to Ogbu (1992), the inability to recognise primary and secondary cultural differences leads to stereotypical generalisations of minority cultures; even to regarding western culture as 'good' and others as 'bad'. On the surface, many 'cultural problems' caused by secondary cultural differences may look like primary cultural differences. These include conflicts between people and groups based on cultural misunderstandings, missing conceptual systems, insistence on Standard English, and different teaching and learning styles.

Misrecognition and stereotypes intertwine with unbalanced power relations, which enable the majority to control the minorities' access to education and work, and job ceilings, which prevent minorities from reaching high-status jobs. Job ceilings compel minorities to take low-status occupations in which they lack power, respect or a decent salary. The majority has easier access to high-status jobs if they complete the necessary education and possess individual competences (Ogbu, 1983). For example, Finnish-language requirements vary from job to job, and employers may exclude all non-Finnish speakers as they see fit (Forsander, 2002). This is linked to the tendency to label minority children's lower school achievements the result of unfavourable – cultural, linguistic and genetic – factors (Leonardo & Grubb, 2014; Ogbu, 1983).

Autonomous, voluntary and involuntary minorities in Finland

Ogbu divides minority groups into *autonomous*, *voluntary* and *involuntary* minorities. Typically, autonomous minorities consist of only a small number of people. They may differ from the majority population in terms of ethnicity, religion, or mother tongue. Typical autonomous minorities in the United States include Mormons, Jews and the Amish. People in these groups may suffer discrimination at some point in their lives, but their overall school performance does not differ from that of the majority population (Ogbu & Simons, 1998).

In Finland, the closest group to an autonomous minority is the Swedish-speaking minority, who succeed at school and in society at least as well as the Finnish-speaking majority. According to its constitution, Finland is a bilingual country. This means that members of the Swedish language minority have the right to communicate with state authorities in their mother tongue. The two language groups have parallel schools. A municipality's majority language determines the language of its schools. Officially bilingual municipalities have schools in both languages. In terms of upper secondary and tertiary education, Swedish speakers tend to have proportionately more places than Finnish speakers, and Swedish speakers generally have a higher level of education than Finnish speakers. This may be due to their greater degree of urbanisation at the national level and their generally more favourable socio-economic position. (Saarela & Finnäs, 2003.)

Voluntary minorities are those who have chosen to move to a new country to access better opportunities than those in their country of origin (for example, better work or more political or religious freedom). They typically face problems at school, especially when they first arrive. These problems are usually the result of linguistic and cultural differences but do not last long. First-generation voluntary minorities in particular view their situation as positive. They compare their situation with that of their friends or acquaintances who have remained in their country of origin, and they – or at least their children − consider their circumstances to be better (Ogbu & Simons, 1998).

Ogbu (1987) sees obvious primary cultural differences between voluntary minorities and the majority, but regards them as temporary and as usually diminishing over time. In contrast, the cultural differences between involuntary minorities and the majority are secondary and more persistent. Voluntary minorities are able to maintain their culture outside school, but they follow the majority rules at school. They have acquired a strategy that we can call 'accommodation' or 'acculturation without assimilation' (Gibson, 1987).

Chinese immigrants are a typical example of a voluntary minority in the United States. One reason for their overall success at school is the mutual, binding agreement between adults and children. Children have a moral responsibility to pay their parents back for their sacrifices by being successful and taking care of them. Chinese immigrants regard the job ceiling and other barriers differently from, for example, black Americans. As disagreeable as these barriers are, the Chinese do their best to achieve their goals by, for example, gaining higher standards of living than they would be able to in China. Hence, they encourage their children to study hard and be successful by American standards. (Ogbu, 1983; Ogbu & Simons, 1998.)

Voluntary minorities in Finland include immigrants from Russia and Estonia, many of whom have left their country of origin for occupational or educational opportunities. Some of the best performing students in mathematics in PISA 2012 come from families originally from the regions near Finland, such as Russia and Estonia (Harju-Luukkainen et al., 2014). On the other hand, the fact that in, for instance, the city of Turku, children with Russian backgrounds find comprehensive school less meaningful and teacher-student relationships worse than others suggests some semblance of being an involuntary minority (Räsänen & Kivirauma, 2011). Finnish Russians also have difficulties in schools in Joensuu, in eastern Finland, where many of them have created a counterculture in response to the racism they have experienced from the Finnish majority (Souto, 2011). Russian adults, however, have faced less racism than other immigrants in, for instance, the cities of Turku, Salo and Helsinki (Zacheus et al., 2012).

In contrast to voluntary minorities, involuntary minorities are people who have been conquered, colonised or enslaved during their history. As a general rule, involuntary minorities face wider-ranging cultural and linguistic problems than voluntary minorities, and they have more difficulties at school. Signif-

icant involuntary minorities in the United States, for example, include Native Americans, early Mexican Americans, native Hawaiians, Puerto Ricans, and black Americans (Ogbu & Simons, 1998).

Involuntary minorities in Finland include those who have arrived in the country as refugees or asylum seekers to escape war and tyranny. This group includes Chilean and Vietnamese refugees, who arrived in the 1970s and 1980s, and refugees from the crises in the former Yugoslavia, the Middle East and Somalia since the early 1990s. Currently, refugees from Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, and South Sudan can also be regarded as involuntary minorities. They are involuntary minorities in Finland because they have not come to the country voluntarily, but have been forced to leave their country of origin. They have also experienced racism and oppression in Finland. According to Väänänen et al. (2009), one in three immigrants living in Finland has experienced violence. One in five of these have reported that the reason for the violence has been their immigrant background. A typical racist crime is abuse targeted at an unknown dark-skinned young man. Somalian, Turkish, Afghan, Iraqi and Iranian people are at a multiple risk of becoming a victim of a race crime in comparison with other nationalities (Puuronen, 2011). According to Zacheus et al. (2012), African immigrants in Finland have experienced more racism than those of European origin. Hate crimes increased by 52 per cent between 2014 and 2015. Most hate crimes (79%) have racists motives (Tihveräinen, 2016).

The native people of Finland, the Sámi, can also be considered an involuntary minority. They have suffered colonisation and forced assimilation during their history (Keskitalo, 2010). Even though multilingualism has always been part of the Sámi culture, and the Sámi language has been a part of the school curriculum since the 1970s, many Sámi people have lost their own language because of pressure from Finnish. Today, only half of the Sámi people living in Finland speak Sámi as their first language. (Latomaa & Nuolijärvi, 2002.) Similarly, the Roma minority in Finland is involuntary, as it is in other European countries (Luciak, 2004).

Ogbu's theory can be applied to reflect the intertwinement of minority groups' histories, the related policies and practices. Although Ogbu's theory might be inadequate as concerns the position of refugees in Europe, and it might be an excessively all-inclusive macro theory (Foley, 2004), it offers some way through which to understand the situation and dynamics constructing educational opportunity structures of minorities in Finland.

Kokkonen's (2005) study of Kosovan immigrants' school performance in Finland is strongly based on Ogbu's macro-cultural theory, and examines the intertwinement of schooling and the history of the minority group. According to Kokkonen (2005), Kosovan girls are much more successful in Finnish schools than boys. The reasons for this difference are grounded in many cultural and historical factors related to Kosovan history. Kosovan boys who go to school in Finland have seen, heard and experienced how their fathers and grandfathers survived varied and extremely dangerous conditions for generations. They were mostly able to survive with no academic schooling. Whether they went to school or not had no influence on their quality of life or their economic livelihood. For girls, this tradition has begun to change for many reasons after moving to Finland (for example, girls usually stay at home after school for cultural reasons when boys do not, so they have time to study and do their homework). Since for the boys, schooling is a question of changing traditions and attitudes that have secured their lives for long periods, the change is more profound and is taking longer. This should be acknowledged when trying to understand the educational underachievement of Kosovan boys (Kokkonen, 2005).

Cultural minorities and opportunity structures

The aim of this paper was to outline a more holistic approach to the educational inequalities of cultural minorities by drawing on theoretical viewpoints concerning opportunity structures (Dale & Parreira do Amaral, 2015), education and power relations (Ogbu, 1983). In this final section, we bring these approaches together in order to better understand not only how the positions of cultural minorities are different,

but also how we could or should rethink the problematisations concerning educational inequalities. By problematisations we refer to 'how and why certain things (behaviour, phenomena, processes) become a problem' (Foucault, 1985, p. 115; see also Bacchi, 2012). By rethinking problematisations we also aim to offer some possible points of departure for approaching the educational inequalities of cultural minorities.

According to our analysis, opportunity structures offer various possibilities and opportunities, but also risks, within the systems of education and employment. The conceivable educational gains and losses are not equally distributed, which means that the opportunity structure is not the same for all people. Instead of one common, uniform structure, national systems of education and employment consist of a variety of opportunity structures for different cultural minorities, for example. It is important to also notice that the problematisations for different cultural minorities and their education are not the same. Different groups can be considered to have distinctive challenges within the same national education system.

In the Finnish context, the provision of Swedish-speaking Finns' education in Swedish has been the major problematisation. As a consequence, Swedish-speaking Finns are entitled to education in their mother tongue, and their overall position in the societal hierarchy has to a certain extent become higher than that of the Finnish-speaking majority. (Saarela & Finnäs, 2003.) In the case of the Sámi people, accessibility to education is commonly considered a problem. Due to their geographical position, the possibilities for Sámi language education or education using the Sámi language for teaching subjects are scarce outside the realms of the Sámi Homeland. (Aikio-Puoskari, 2007.) The problematisation concerning the Roma people has been their lower participation in education, which has stereotypically labelled them a disadvantaged minority as a whole.

The analysis of the opportunity structures – even in the case of established minorities, as briefly outlined above – remains descriptive. It is unable to explain the reasons for different problematisations – and the policies and practices involved. Ogbu's macro-cultural theory on minorities' education supplements the understanding of the institutional framework for opportunity structures. Power relations between, for example, established cultural minorities and majority groups have long-lasting effects not only on minorities' educational expectations and achievements, but also on the governance of the education system. Ogbu's theory emphasises the relevance of the position of cultural minorities. Since minorities have different perspectives on whether or not they have an autonomous position in relation to other groups, they are also in a different position as regards the opportunity structures described above.

In addition to making the different problematisations of established cultural minorities more visible, Ogbu's theory provides an analytical tool for comprehending the diversity among immigrant-origin cultural minorities and their positons in social structures. Problematisations drawing on existing opportunity structures cannot sufficiently explain the differences in the educational attainment of different groups of immigrants, for instance. The analytical distinction between voluntary and involuntary minorities makes different expectations and objectives given to schooling, and education in general, more understandable. It has considerable potential to help us to better understand the inequalities involved in existing opportunity structures.

Education policies in Finland are commonly targeted towards homogenous groups of immigrants, who are most often seen as disadvantaged groups in need of specific support measures. The solutions to under-performance seem to be uniform and simple, grounded firmly in language acquisition and offering 'second chances' or additional options for access to regular and recognised educational pathways (see also Walther, 2006). Uniform solutions might not be sufficient for meeting the needs of the rich variety of cultural minorities, regardless of the volume of resources and support. Indeed, there is a need for novel policies and practices that are better able to recognise the needs of labour migrants and refugees, for instance. Career counselling and guidance practices should be further developed to support individual decision-making within families, and the transitions should be comprehended as more flexible and long-term processes involving multiple actors (teachers, study counsellors, etc.).

It is important to note that Ogbu's theory on cultural minorities is a universal model, operating at athemacro level. It concentrates on causalities and stereotypical categorisations and leaves individuals

aside. The main criticism of such macro-level theory is that it fails to take internal variation within groups into account when dividing them into, for example, involuntary (those who have difficulties at school) and voluntary (those who are more successful at school) minorities, as Ogbu does. Hence, the classification is considered mechanistic and incapable of including sufficient individual variation (D'Amato, 1987). Nevertheless, Ogbu's theory does not claim that membership of a minority group in itself explains successful or unsuccessful schooling. It aims to focus on the differences between groups, not individuals. The value of his theory is that it helps us understand why some students behave in the way they do as they follow their group's model. We should also not overlook the fact that any individual can be an exception to the model for their group of origin. (Ogbu, 1983; Ogbu & Simons, 1998.)

Acknowledgment

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