

Expatriates or Migrants? The Experiences and Views of Skilled Professionals' Children in Finland

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**Career
expatriates**

**Temporary
migrants**

**Transnational
corporate elites**

**Highly skilled
experts**



- Highly skilled professionals move abroad for career reasons
 - Voluntary mobility
 - Relatively well-off
 - Often temporary stays
 - North-north or south-north

Expatriate childhood: Children's experiences of temporary migration (2019-2024, Academy of Finland)



8-15-year-old expatriate children in Finland

- position in Finland and on the global arena
- everyday lives in Finland
- belonging & identities & distinctions

Research Methods

Ethnography

participant observation

children's interviews

photo projects with children

ethnographic film



Schools

Most international schools in Finland

- are free municipal schools
- follow the Finnish curriculums



A Finnish International School

- Finnish language studies
- Finnish study materials
- National celebrations

In the capital city area, it is difficult to get into the international schools because they are full

→ children may end up in the preparatory classes of Finnish schools



Temporary expatriates and long-term integration goals

“Children do not integrate to Finland when they do not learn Finnish.” (S2 teacher)

- Intensive Finnish studies in the school
- Parents’ language studies vs professional careers
- School starts at the age of seven
- Keep up with the school in one’s passport country?
- Preparatory class may be below one’s age level
- Secondary education mostly in Finnish



Children live here and now

- Hobbies
- Friends

The children live here and now but they are aware of other places and other plans



"The school is much better in Finland. One can just relax and enjoy." (Ajey, 9 years)

"Next year, we will maybe move to Australia." (Luna, 9 years)



- Migrants are the target of various integration measures with long-term goals
- Temporary skilled professionals – “expatriates” – are an unknown category in Finnish migration policies (or measures)

→ Children and families may end up in positions that may feel uncomfortable and unsuitable

Time

Class

Skilled migration is not only about work and money, it's also about life and family
A very significant experience for children

