Learning Spaces for Inclusion and Social Justice: Success Stories from Immigrant Students and School Communities in Four Nordic Countries

Report on main findings from Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden

October 2015

Table of contents

Foreword

In this report we present the main findings of the three year NordForsk and Rannís funded research project *Learning Spaces for Inclusion and Social Justice: Success Stories from Immigrant Students and School Communities in Four Nordic Countries.* The project started in January 2013 and will conclude in December 2015. The report is primarily intended for practitioners and policy makers. In the report we first introduce the main aims of the project, the researchers and the methodology, followed by an introduction of main findings from each country. Based on the findings, we conclude with a discussion and some guidelines and recommendations for school development. The report also includes definitions of some of the main concepts applied in our project. We hope that the report will be interesting and helpful for practitioners on all three school levels and policy makers in all four countries.

Hanna Ragnarsdóttir project leader, hannar@hi.is

"The value of the LSP project is its capacity to generate transnational dialogue to inform the development of schooling approaches that are grounded on principles of social justice."
Susan Gollifer

"Participating in the LSP project gives very important insight into the complex nature of developing multicultural early childhood education within the Nordic context."
Fríða B. Jónsdóttir

"The main value of the LSP project is its emphasis on positive and effective practices that we all can benefit from. Personally, participation in the project and discussions with the multidisciplinary and multinational research team gave me countless ideas for my doctoral research."
Anna Katarzyna Wozniczka

"Generally, LSP enriches the lives of many; respondents, participants, conference goers, interested public, readers, researcher. Hopefully the lessons learned will also reach out to educators and students of foreign origin who will ultimately benefit from improved conditions in Nordic countries and everywhere else in the world."
Renata Peskova

"In participating in the project about Learning Spaces for Inclusion and Social Justice I am particularly interested in understanding how such spaces emerge through teachers and students' communication within a given context."
Karen Rut Gísladóttir

"My hope for the project LSP is that we are able to capture stories of students, teachers and parents working towards inclusion through the construction of learning spaces for all students. I hope we can develop knowledge and understanding of these practices, and collect examples of inclusive and successful learning spaces for immigrant students."
Hafdís Guðjónsdóttir

"The LSP project is extremely useful because it provides an overview of issues in education and culturally diverse communities. The project's coverage of varied learning spaces gave me a broader understanding of the roles that different schools and educational institutions in 4 Nordic countries play in immigrants' academic success."
Susan Rafik Hama

Definitions of terms

Inclusion

Inclusive schools are intended to find ways to educate all their students successfully, thus working against discrimination and leading to an inclusive just society where everyone is a valid participant (Slee, 2011; UNESCO, 1994). A broad definition of inclusion focuses on diversity and how schools respond to and value a diverse group of students as well as other members of the school community. Inclusion is aimed at directing attention towards inequalities presented in exclusion and discrimination against diversities such as social and ethnic circumstances, religion, gender, and ability of students and their families. Inclusion is seen as an on going process focusing on increased participation in education for everyone involved (Booth, 2010).

Social Justice & Equity

Equality is often mistakenly associated with social justice in the way difference is treated. According to the equality perspective individuals and groups should be treated according to need; that is, they should be treated equitably. Treating individuals equitably rather than equally provides the potential of counteracting existing unjust differences. Those advocating for critical social justice seek a world that is fair and equitable, for everyone, not a world where everyone gets the same to reach the same goals (Ryan & Rottmann, 2007).

Success

In general, success is often described as achieving set personal, political or social goals and can as such be either subjective or objective. Subjective success is the students' own perspectives and perceptions, in other words, it is the self-fulfilling feeling of achievement based on personal goals, such as relating to well-being, family or agency. Objective success relates to the political or societal success that has to do with education and employment, material goods and status and is based on a standardised or measurable view of what it takes to be successful as an individual, a school or a community (Longfor, Layne, & Dervin, Forthcoming, 2016).

Immigrant

A definition of immigrant can be derived from OECD, referring to the foreign-born population, i.e. all persons who have ever migrated from their country of birth to their current country of residence. The foreign population consists of persons who still have the nationality of their home country (OECD, 2011). Given the different historical conditions in the four countries, in the present research participants also include second-generation immigrants, referring to children and youth born of immigrant parents.

Learning Spaces

Learning spaces refer to school communities as well as other learning environments and practices than schools, which may be important or instrumental for the young immigrants' participation and success. Many learning spaces can be developed within the school and in each classroom these spaces can be created or opened up both by teachers and students. These learning spaces include social contexts, networks and resources that encourage, develop and nurture learning, supporting students to become agents of their lifelong learning and active participants in society. The concept of learning spaces allows us to explore how the issues of social justice and equity are embedded in the learning process (Banks, 2007; Gee, 2004).

Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy is an approach through which students and teachers engage in learning as a mutual encounter with the world. Critical pedagogy implies praxis, i.e. developing the important social action predispositions and attitudes that are the backbone of a democratic society, and learning to use them to help alter patterns of domination and oppression. Critical pedagogy is a way of thinking more openly and critically about learning, rather than being a mechanistic strategy or a technical process. Critical pedagogy is not a standard set of practices, but rather a particular stance vis-á-vis knowledge, the process of learning and teaching, and the educational environment in which these take place (Nieto, 2010).

Critical Multiculturalism

Critical multiculturalism has, over the recent years, challenged liberal approaches to multicultural education. By combining and developing various critical theoretical threads such as anti-racist education, critical race theory, and critical pedagogy, critical multiculturalism has offered a more complete understanding of oppression and institutionalization of unequal power relations in education (May & Sleeter, 2010). This field has examined many challenges in modern societies, such as the cultural rights of minority groups and, on the other hand, educational

development that serves largely the defined needs of a particular majority or majorities (May & Sleeter, 2010; Parekh, 2006).

Leadership

Today leadership is defined as a social interaction among a certain group that is working toward a common goal or purpose. The main objective of leadership is to create followership (Gardner, 2007; Sergiovanni, 2006). One or more persons providing leadership influence followers and lead them to focus on the organization's mission and objectives. An effective and fruitful leadership inspires followers to enthusiastically use their energy to achieve the organizational mission and objectives (Winston & Patterson, 2006). The main focus of leadership in recent times is to create consensus around organizational values (Gardner, 2007; Sergiovanni, 2006; Spillane, 2005).

Diversity

Dictionaries define diversity as the state or quality of being different or varied. Today the term is commonly associated with the terms multicultural and immigrants (Hartmann, 2015). In school context diversity is a natural characteristic of a school community, mirroring the wider community, and it can be explained as the range of characteristics that result in a perception of difference among people. This perception of difference can elicit responses in others that can either be favourable or unfavourable to the individuals in question (Lumby & Coleman, 2007). In this case we refer to diversity in connection with ethnic, religious and/or linguistic background.

Introduction

The main objective of the three-year project (January 2013-December 2015) was to draw lessons from success stories of individual immigrant students and whole school communities at different levels that have succeeded in developing learning contexts that are equitable and socially just. Learning spaces refer to school communities as well as other learning environments and practices than schools, which may be important or instrumental for the young immigrants' participation and success. In the project, students' success is defined as social as well as academic. By identifying success stories and good practices our aim was to provide guidelines for teaching and school reform based on these strategies.

Two main aims of the study are to 1) understand and learn from the experiences of immigrant students who have succeeded academically and socially and 2) explore and understand how social justice is implemented in equitable and successful diverse Nordic school contexts and other learning spaces. The project integrates the following four subthemes and main research areas that are clearly interrelated:

A. Students: Experiences and aspirations of immigrant students.

The main aims of this research area are to identify and describe the experiences and aspirations of children and young adults of immigrant background in each country who have been successful academically and socially. Key research questions are:

What learning environments and practices (schools and other) seem to be instrumental for young immigrants' participation and success in their schools and society and how do they describe their situation, motivations as well as obstacles? What are the young immigrants' expectations of teachers and curriculum? How do students experience belonging to different groups and what are their aspirations in these settings? What are the immigrant children's and young adults' language backgrounds, language learning environments, and attitudes towards their culture of origin and their majority Nordic culture and society?

B. Teachers' professional development, pedagogy and teaching practices: Teachers as agents and facilitators of inclusion.

The main aim of this research area is to identify how schools engage with students and society to promote, develop and sustain inclusive teaching practices based on social justice. Furthermore, to explore how teachers create inclusive spaces within their classrooms that allow them to identify, respond to and build on the multiple experiences, linguistic and cultural background of their students, including the main obstacles the students face. Key research questions are:

What particular roles and practices can be identified in teachers' work with diverse groups of children and parents? What sort of professional development do educational authorities offer teachers to help them to work with children of multiple backgrounds and how effective is it? What are the common pedagogical characteristics of teachers who meet diverse students' expectations and actively promote social justice and equality? How do teachers of immigrant background identify their role in particular as facilitators in empowering immigrant students? How does student diversity influence teachers' work?

C. Leadership, collaboration and school cultures: Promotion of democratic participation and collaboration of students, teachers, and parents.

The main aim of this research area is to explore how leadership promotes and sustains democratic participation, inclusive practices and collaboration of students, teachers and parents and to identify the main obstacles for forming a collaborative school culture. Key research questions are:

How does democratic participation and involvement of teachers, students and parents represent itself in the schools and how is diversity reflected in the school communities? How do teachers, students and parents experience their school community in terms of chances for involvement and access to decision-making? How is diversity regarded in their school community and how is it reflected in school policy, curricula and practices? How are the visions of leaders and the stated policies of the schools consistent with and reflected in the experiences of the teachers, parents and students? How do the schools ensure that adequate resources are available to students, so that equal opportunities for learning are created?

D. Policies and curricula: Main criteria relating to equity, inclusion and social justice in educational policy, national curriculum guidelines, school policy and curricula.

The main aim of this research area is to identify the main criteria relating to equity, inclusion, democracy and social justice in policy documents of the participating schools as well as in national educational policies and national curriculum guidelines. The key research question is:

How are equity, inclusion, democracy and social justice reflected in policy documents and curricula on national and school levels?

In this report we introduce and discuss the main findings within the four research areas from all four countries.

Researchers

Iceland

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University of Iceland, School of Education. She completed a B.A. degree in anthropology and history from the University of Iceland in 1984, an M.Sc.degree in anthropology from the London School of Economics and Political Science in 1986 and a Dr.philos in education from the University of Oslo in 2007. Her research has mainly focused on immigrants (children, adults and families) in Icelandic society and schools, multicultural education and school reform. She has published widely on these issues in international and national journals.

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Anh-Dao Tran adk3@hi.is Tran's field of studies is multicultural education with the focus on upper secondary level. Her dissertation has the title Difficient Foreigners or Untapped Resources: Students of Vietnamese Background in Icelandic Upper Schools. Her MA was in teaching hearing-impaired students. She left her home country, Viet-Nam at the end of the war in 1975. She has found that being able to work with other members

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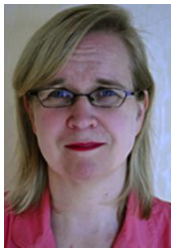

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Sweden

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Methods

Mixed methods were applied in the project and each country research group collected data according to the following research model:

Case studies were conducted in schools on three levels (preschools, primary and secondary schools) in urban and rural contexts in each of the four Nordic countries. Sampling was purposive in that all the participating schools were judged to be successful in implementing social justice and creating inclusive learning spaces for all students. For school selection indicators such as average grades, test scores and drop out rates were used, as well as evaluations and judgement of school authorities. Focus groups, semi-structured interviews, participant observation and questionnaires were used for data collection in the schools, using a framework created by the research team. Document analysis included conversation and discourse analyses. In order to gain a deep understanding of inclusive practices, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with teachers from each of the schools. All the school principals were interviewed individually. The participating teachers were purposefully selected according to the main criteria that they teach students with immigrant backgrounds. Students' experiences of success were collected through in-depth interviews with students of immigrant origin in schools in all countries. Participants were purposefully selected by asking school principals and teachers to identify and select students who were considered to be examples of success. The in-depth study included a variety of research methods, such as semi-structured in-depth interviews in a language of the students' choice, diaries (textual, pictorial or digital), and participant observation (including shadowing), all used in order to gain deep understanding of the different factors involved in the success of each individual. Where relevant, parents of the students and children were selected for semi-structured in-depth interviews in a language of their choice.

National curriculum guides, laws and regulations on education in each of the four countries were analysed, in addition to school policies and curricula developed in each school. Analysis took place concurrently through the research period using qualitative procedures of content analysis, coding and constant comparison.

Finally, an electronic questionnaire was sent to all staff in all participating schools in the project. The survey covered issues of educational policy, support from politicians and educational authorities, the school community, leadership, staff, organization, students/children and parents.

Findings

Survey

The survey was conducted in 2015. Response rates were low in all countries, so the outcomes must be interpreted with caution. Some of the interesting results were as follows:

Finnish respondents are strikingly more satisfied with their national education policy than respondents from the three other countries. Sweden is at the other end, with less than 1/3 of the respondents being content. Iceland and Norway are placed fairly close to each other in the middle.

The Finnish respondents are just as happy with educational policy at the regional and local level, while the Swedish respondents are even less satisfied with regional and local level policy than national policy. The Icelandic respondents have similar feelings regarding policy at all levels, while their Norwegian colleagues are clearly more content with the local and regional policies.

With regard to school funding, the Swedish respondents are massively dissatisfied, next comes Iceland with a clear majority of unhappy respondents, while the Finnish respondents are equally split between the response options. If satisfied respondents and respondents who are neither discontent nor content are grouped together, Norway and Finland are the most satisfied – or perhaps least dissatisfied - of the four countries.

Responses regarding provision of pedagogical help or professional support to schools are similar to those regarding funding: Swedish respondents are highly dissatified, a majority of Icelandic respondents are dissatisfied, while responses from Finland and Norway are more evenly distributed and more positive.

All in all, Finnish school personnel give the most positive responses to items dealing with support from politicians and educational authorities, while the results for Sweden show a high degree of unease with the state of affairs. The Swedish responses seem to indicate a widespread consensus that the Swedish school system is in a state of crisis. In contrast, the figures from Finland are in harmony with the impression that education in Finland is, overall, a success story. The relative satisfaction of the Norwegian respondents does not come as a surprise as there is little controversy over the education policy at the moment and the economy is strong.

A more uniform picture of the four countries is seen in the data regarding issues at the school level, but here too there are differences worth commenting on. Again the Swedish respondents often stand out as an exception. In all countries, the majority of respondents agree that a policy for children or students with foreign background exists in their schools (figures range from 74% in Sweden to 94% in Norway) and to a large extent this policy is agreed upon by the personnel in the schools (from 63% in Sweden to 90% in Norway). In Finland, Iceland and Norway the respondents report that there is a policy for multicultural education in their schools (Iceland 73%, Finland 84%, Norway 90%) and that there is agreement on this policy (Iceland 57%, Finland 67%, Norway 90%). The Swedish respondents tend to be quite uncertain whether or not there is such a policy (32% say there is one, 21% disagree and 47% are in doubt). When it comes to a policy for inclusion, respondents in all the four countries say that there is such a policy in their institutions (from 65% in Sweden to 90% in Norway) and there is agreement on the policy (from 60% in Sweden to 92% in Norway). On the item concerning emphasis on continued professional development in the area of multicultural education, the countries form two quite distinct poles: In Finland and Norway, the respondents report that there is such an emphasis (Finland 71%,

Norway 75%); in Iceland and Sweden less than 40% give a positive response, and in Sweden as many as 50% say that this area is not emphasized while many Icelandic respondents are uncertain (44%).

In all four countries, the respondents indicate that school leaders are active participants in developing the learning environment for children and students of a foreign background (from 54% in Sweden to 88% in Norway), that they emphasize the well-being of all students (from 80 % in Sweden to 98% in Norway), and that they support the teachers and other staff in their work (form 76% in Iceland to 98% in Norway).

On items dealing with the teachers' own work, a majority of respondents across the countries indicate that they plan learning opportunities for children and students of a foreign background (from 57% in Iceland to 97% in Finland), support partnership between children and students with a foreign background and other students (from 75% in Iceland to 94% in Finland), and emphasize equality and participation of all students (from 91% in Finland to 96% in Norway). When it comes to using an adapted curriculum for children and students with foreign background, there is a majority of affirmative responses in all countries but Iceland, and Iceland is also at the bottom concerning cooperation with parents of children and students with foreign background, although a majority of Icelandic respondents (57%) answer positively.

Case studies

Iceland

Country context

The languages, cultures and religions of Iceland's population have become increasingly diverse in recent decades as a result of immigration. According to Statistics Iceland, the immigrant population in Iceland has grown considerably from 1996 to 2014: In 1996, 2% of the Icelandic population were first and second generation immigrants, with an increase to 9.4% in the year 2014 and the numbers are still growing (Statistics Iceland, 2015a). In 2013, 11% of all preschool children (Statistics Iceland, 2015b) and 6.5% of all compulsory school children had mother languages other than Icelandic (Statistics Iceland, 2015c).

Equal access to education is defined by OECD as "the presence of equal opportunities in education for all" (Schraad-Tischler & Azahaf, 2011, p. 7). The Republic of Iceland ratified the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992 and adopted the Education for All Declaration in 2000.The right to education for all persons is clearly stated in Icelandic policy. Icelandic law guarantees equal access to education for all children until they are 18 years old (Ministry of Education & Science and Culture, 2008b).

The Icelandic educational system is divided into four levels: preschool, compulsory (primary), upper secondary, and tertiary. The local municipalities are responsible for operating schools and implementing the laws at the preschool and compulsory school levels (Ministry of Education & Science and Cultural, 2008). Education at the upper secondary school and university levels, on the other hand, is under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (Ministry of Education & Science and Culture, 2008b).

The three separate acts that were stipulated in 2008 acted as the guiding policies for the development and implementation of the national curricula at each school level; preschool, compulsory, and upper

secondary. In 2011, the National Curriculum Guides and the curricula for the three school levels were enacted. As specified in these documents, the role of schools is to facilitate the consistency and continuity of education for students as they progress through these levels in accordance with each individual's ability and needs. The curricula are based on six integral fundamental pillars – literacy, sustainability, health and welfare, democracy and human rights, equality, and creativity – in school activities and studies.

In municipalities where there are high numbers of students of immigrant background, educational policies ensure an education that is equitable and inclusive for this student population. They emphasize open communication and working closely with parents (translating information into different languages and using interpreters), promoting and supporting the children/students' heritage languages, using multiple forms of pedagogical practices, encouraging interactive communication, and providing instruction in Icelandic as a second language.

Preschools (P)

P1 is a preschool located in the northern part of Iceland, in a municipality with around 4% immigrant population. The school was established in the 1950s and accommodates 90 children, thereof 18 with immigrant background. The group of professionals includes 24 women and 2 men, most of whom have a university degree in pedagogy and early childhood education. Two of them have an immigrant background. Staff retention rate is high. The preschool's core principle is *Learning through play*. The preschool is organized into four divisions where children are grouped by age. All divisions share a central open space, where most of the children have their meals and meet and communicate in different activities such as art and free play. Each division is independent and communicates information about activities to the parents through daily communication and the school homepage.

P2 is located in a part of the capital area with around 18% immigrant population. The preschool was founded in 1975 and has specialized in working with children with special needs from its inception. Out of a total of 86 children, approximately 30 % are of non-Icelandic or mixed background. The preschool has an exceptionally diverse staff composition. The group of 29 includes 8 men and 21 women, of which 7 have an immigrant background. The age range of the staff is also broad in comparison to the "average" preschool. The school specializes in inclusive education and emphasizes democracy, equality and social justice. It has also recently responded to increasing cultural and linguistic diversity by emphasizing culturally responsive practices. Everyday activities evolve around free and organized play both indoors and outdoors, organized assignments, and daily routines around rest and mealtimes.

P3 is situated in a part of the capital area with around 25% immigrant population. The preschool was founded in 1980 and is organized into three divisions based on age. One third of the staff have immigrant backgrounds. Out of a total of 57 children, 46 (approximately 80%) have immigrant backgrounds. The preschool's motto is "*Don't fear diversity – embrace it*." Its core values are: Equality, well-being, language, democracy, play and creativity. The preschool strives to make both parents and children feel welcome and that they are valuable members of the school community. The preschool provides mother tongue support as well as Icelandic language classes for parents. The preschool has been awarded

several grants for development projects to support mother tongue teaching, to promote democratic participation within the preschool, to foster preschool – parent collaboration, to strengthen ties between different school levels (preschool/primary school) and to facilitate cooperation with a local sports team.

Policies and curricula

The policies in all preschools are child-centred. Child initiated play is an approach that works well for children that are able to participate in the communicative, social and cultural norms of the preschool and have fluency in the language of instruction. Appropriate linguistic scaffolding benefits the Icelandic second language learners in the group. Creating a community for children, parents and staff is another common emphasis in the preschools. One of the preschools emphasizes positive communication and good cooperation with the children's families. The ethos of this school reflects openness and flexibility and for the last 10 years it has actively participated in developmental projects in the areas of multicultural education, nature and the environment, and international cooperation. The school frequently cooperates with a university in various projects and research. The teachers' beliefs of self-efficacy are a prominent trait that permeates the whole school. The staff is very proud of the school, its policy and curriculum and engaged in impromptu discussions about it during our visits and observations. The staff believes in the ideology and practices of the school.

In another preschool, the ethos and everyday practices reflect equality, diversity and democracy and it has attracted parents from various neighbourhoods because they want to give their children this unique educational opportunity.

One of the preschools has a curriculum with five main aims which can be said exemplify all the schools. The airms are: to work for the equality of all children; to meet every child's needs; to work for the cooperation of all professions; to strengthen the children's social development and work for tolerance and empathy for others; and to strengthen children's general development and thus prepare them for life in a responsible way. The preschool is organized so that every child's needs are met. Its policy and work plan also state that the teachers and staff understand equality in a broad sense: human rights are emphasized, and multicultural and equal validity of viewpoints are implemented in daily activities. The preschool emphasizes collaboration with parents based on respect and trust, which is highly valued by the parents. Various methods are used to achieve this and to ensure that all parents are reached. Interpreters are present at all meetings with immigrant parents, and aids such as visual communication books are used on a daily basis. Individual curricula for the children are developed in cooperation with parents. Information to parents is disseminated in Icelandic and additional languages which is one of the keys to good cooperation with immigrant parents.

The school ethos of one of the schools is reflected in active communication with parents and children across languages and cultures. Both in interviews with parents and in observations the transnational competence of teachers was obvious. The leader of the school conscientiously reaches out to parents to offer them assistance with different matters regarding their children and themselves. Our interviews with parents gave a clear message of parents sensing trust, acceptance, understanding and respect when communicating with the leader. Teachers and the rest of the staff develop a deeper knowledge and understanding by reflecting on everyday practices, and simultaneously creating a true learning community. The school conducts an internal assessment every year as a part of its annual report that it sends to the municipal school authorities. This is carried out with input from all divisions as well as individual teachers and the rest of the staff. This school has developed its own ambitious language and

literacy policy inspired by the municipality's literacy policy which focuses on emergent literacy and active bilingualism. Policy and practice in this school are under revision and no stone is left unturned in the quest to create a true learning environment where individual needs are met.

Leadership

The structure and organization of the preschools does not differentiate immigrant children. They are fully integrated in the schools' organization. In all the schools the leadership regards diversity as a precious asset that needs to be cultivated and nurtured. The leaders focus on children's well-being and go an extra mile to accommodate the immigrant families because of their lack of social network. This is expressed by a parent who notes that it is not enough to have teachers speaking heritage languages if the attitudes of staff and ethos of the school are not supportive of bilingualism and diverse cultural backgrounds.

The leadership in the preschools is also supportive and participative. Initiative taking by staff, children and parents is encouraged and all members of the school community are encouraged to influence school policy. Parents and staff express how their voices are heard and how they are encouraged to develop new ideas and share with others in their school community, although the level of participation differs between schools. In one of the schools, the staff is very involved in all major decisions, such as revisions of school policy, planning events and project development. This results in a strong consensus among the staff because the leadership allocates enough time for in-depth discussions. The children are involved in projects where they can have a voice in influencing the project process. Other examples of inclusive and democratic practices are in one of the schools where the staff is encouraged to put their ideas forward and argue for their importance. If the majority agrees on this, the ideas are put into practice and often the person that came up with the idea is made responsible for its implementation.

In one of the schools the democratic participation of all children appears clearly in the way diversity is integrated in the school culture. All the children participate in all aspects of school life, regardless of their language abilities or physical disabilities. Support is available for all children in all activities to ensure no child is inactive.

The leaders in all schools strive to build a learning environment for diverse children and their families centring on respect and devotion. Some leaders, although working in stressful conditions, go out of their way to meet the need of children and their families.

Teachers

Although everyday activities in the three schools differ, educational practices are child-centred and generally based on diversity with the aim of involving all children in active participation. Child-centred approaches appear for example in child initiated play and curiosity being the driving forces in one of the schools, where everyday activities evolve around free and organized play both indoors and outdoors, organized activities and daily routines around rest and mealtimes – all with the focus on offering the children diverse opportunities to learn through discovery and self-explorations but with assistance as needed. The activities are thus based on the interests of children, but also on expertise of the staff that strive to support the children and share their knowledge with their colleagues.

The children base their choices during group work on their strengths and interest but are gently guided into challenging themselves with new subjects. School-time observations showed how capable the staff is in encouraging the children to make autonomous decisions and become open-minded members of the school community. An example of this from the observations was a discussion between a staff

member and a child about children's different abilities and how some children need specialized equipment to be able to use the computer.

In one of the preschools a calm and nurturing environment is created for all children – with staff members present at all times and even in chaotic situations the children seem to be active and thriving participants regardless of ability. For example, teachers used calm suggestions on how to solve disagreements by giving the children options and asking them if they could help them find a common ground.

In some of the schools the linguistic and intercultural knowledge of teachers with immigrant backgrounds are shared in daily communication with children and parents, by using diverse language skills. Many of the immigrant parents feel more confident talking to a member of staff who shares their experience of moving between countries and being an Icelandic language learner. However, these individuals are not responsible for teaching the children their heritage languages or interpreting very sensitive or emotional matters between parents and the preschool. Rather, these teachers are active in initiating support for the children. In all three preschools, the effects of diversity on the everyday practices of the teachers are visible to some extent.

Children (parents)

The parents in all the preschools share the view that preschools should be open and flexible and develop a feeling of security and competence in their children. They prefer teachers with personal, open and relaxed attitudes. Parents in all preschools are generally satisfied with their children's preschools. Most of the parents emphasize that they feel welcome and content with the preschools.

During the transition into the preschool, communication with the immigrant parents and support for their children is vital. Most of the preschools can be described as learning communities where children of diverse background thrive in an environment that supports and facilitates their learning and personal growth. Emphasis is put on active communication with the parents and involving them in the school community.

Challenges

Some challenges appear in the data from the preschools. One is that the leaders are working in very demanding conditions. Some of the schools suffer from low staff retention and a low percentage of staff with degrees in education or child development. It is often very time-consuming for the leaders to go the extra mile in working with and supporting parents and children with diverse needs. Shortages of staff and resource also present challenges. Another challenge has to do with child-initiated play. Although this focus seems to be suitable for most of the children, Icelandic second language learners could be included more actively with conscious scaffolding and support. We observed missed learning opportunities for some of the immigrant children due to this fact. There are also causes for concern in relation to some of the immigrant children's social position in the peer group and the marginalization of some children, especially those that have not mastered the language of instruction. In one of the preschools there was evidence of hindered communication with parents. Information on the school website and letters to parents were only available in Icelandic. Although this school had a policy that emphasized democracy, it lacked initiative in reaching out to the immigrant parents. Lack of knowledge and confidence among the teachers on how to communicate with diverse families with other languages as the teachers could be one of the reasons.

Compulsory schools (C)

C1 is situated outside of the capital in an area with over 10% immigrant population. The school was established around 1900. In 2013-2014 there were 53 employees in the school (39 women and 14 men), 34 of whom were teachers. None of teachers had a foreign background. According to the school's external report, the staff turnover rate is relatively low. There were 302 students enrolled in 16 classes in grades 1-10; 23% of the students were of a foreign origin. The school runs an immigrant unit called "the international department" with 53 students in attendance. The performance of 4th grade students on the national standardized tests was above national average in 2012. The same can be said about 7th grade outcomes in math, but 7th grade outcomes in Icelandic were below the national average. The performance of students in grade 10 was similar to the national average in mathematics, a bit below average in Icelandic and well above the national average in English. C1 is considered to be inclusive in all areas. Particular emphasis is on respect for diversity. All students are encouraged to participate in school activities and, as an example, special emphasis is placed on including all students in the annual school celebration.

C2 is located in the capital area (with around 20% immigrant population) and was established in the early years of last century. In 2013-2014 there were 46 teachers employed in the school, not including the headmaster, deputy headmaster, the head of the immigrants' unit and supervisors of grades 1-5 and 6-10. Seventeen percent of all school employees were of foreign origin. There were 472 students in grades 1-10, 27% of whom had an immigrant background, representing 30 ethnicities. According to the national standardized tests, the average performance of students in grades 4, 7 and 10 in Icelandic and mathematics in 2012 was above average when compared to other schools in Reykjavik and across the country. The school scored well in the parent survey when an external evaluation was done and there was general satisfaction of parents with the school. C2 is an inclusive and multicultural school where school activities are tailored to the needs of all students. It is considered a pioneer in multicultural education and plays a leading role in this field in the capital area. Emphasis is on students' learning, respect for diversity and cooperative learning.

C3 is situated in the capital area with around 7% immigrant population. It is a rather new school, established in 2010 when two existing schools with a diverse group of students and staff were merged. In 2013-2014 there were five people on the management team, the principal and four department heads. There were 75 teachers and 44 other staff, with males making up around 20% of the staff. Nine teachers and three teacher assistants had an immigrant background. There were 700 students in the school speaking 21 languages, 18% with an immigrant background. There were 81 students in their first or second year in the international unit. According to reports on standardized testing, the outcome for the school for the past few years was above average or average in 4th, 7th and 10th grades in Icelandic, mathematics and English. C3 is an inclusive school focusing on students' well-being, creativity and diverse teaching strategies. The school's overall policy is grounded in a collaborative strategic planning of staff, parents and students.

Policies and curricula

The three schools have a clear and documented structure and framework for working with students with a foreign background. Multiculturalism is particularly visible and intertwined into the schools' ethos, noticeable not only on schools' web pages, but also in everyday activities. In C1, the emphasis is on Icelandic only – both in teaching through the subjects and in communication, but in the other two schools students are encouraged to use their first language as well as Icelandic. All three schools put emphasis on students' academic learning and well-being, control of their progress and collaboration with parents. Each of the schools runs an immigrant unit or international department for children whose native language is other than Icelandic. These units have in common that all the students belong to a regular class with a supervisory teacher and their participation in the immigrant unit depends on their needs and pace of learning. The more they become proficient in Icelandic, the more time they spend in their regular classrooms. There are several differences in how these units are organized and managed. In C3, the unit admits students from other school catchment areas in the town and the students go back to their home schools when they graduate from the unit with adequate Icelandic proficiency. In the other two schools students have connections to the units after they have "graduated", seeking homework assistance and social support or practising reading in their home language.

An important factor that characterizes the personnel who work in these units is their commitment to and support of the students' families. In each of the schools there were stories of how teachers and staff assisted parents who are new to the Icelandic system with translations, making phone calls and other types of assistance.

The schools emphasize diversity and inclusion in their official policies, as well as collaboration between teachers and cooperative teaching methods. The policy of multicultural education in C2 is aimed at learning to appreciate diversity and use it in a positive way. In order to reach those aims, the school is developing teaching strategies that highlight collaboration in the classrooms, finding each student's strength that can be used for the benefit of the group, and that each and everyone should be respected on their own terms. Furthermore, the teachers are expected to use diverse teaching methods with the goal of actively engaging students in lessons through their strengths. This school has developed a website to support cooperation between parents, class representatives and supervisory teachers when providing information about class related activities to/from those parents who have not achieved fluency in Icelandic. These forms are also available in Icelandic, so that foreign parents can use them in order to e.g. invite a child's peers to a birthday party and thereby held the child to improve his or her Icelandic vocabulary. C3 has developed a policy focusing on working creatively using diverse teaching methods, where studies are tailored to individuals' abilities without regard for cultural differences. The policy of bridge building between languages, cultures, and experiences and between talents and skills of both students and teachers is strongly emphasized. The school further emphasizes independence, initiative, and responsibility in students and that they set realistic aims. The school ethos is characterized by enjoyment, play and well-being and it has a whole school reading policy stressing reading comprehension. Furthermore, this school has a policy for assigning homework that is suitable for the student and equally dispersed through the week according to a predetermined homework schedule. In C1 the explicit aim of the unit is to support multilingualism and multiculturalism: to teach children cultural skills, develop knowledge, stimulate learning and promote well-being of students while the acquisition of Icelandic takes place. Thus, the department aims to assist students in adjusting to new customs, traditions and to the new school system and, at the same time, to maintain the culture of their homeland. Icelandic language is taught through other subjects, such as history and geography.

Leadership

The structure and organization of the schools supports diversity and social justice. The schools are organized in two different ways. Two of the schools (C1 and C2) use an integration model where immigrant children are in regular classes with focus on social inclusion. The schools provide special lessons in Icelandic as a second language for the immigrant students based on their age and competences. The third school, C3 has reception classes where the focus is on helping the students gain academic success, which the school believes is the foundation for a successful integration. The expertise in the matters of immigrants lies not with the principal of the school, but with a lead teacher or head of department overseeing the program for immigrant students. The principals in all investigated schools respect the lead teachers and give them every support they possibly can. Interviewed employees of all three schools represented a high level of professional standards that were visible in their interactions with students, parents, colleagues and administrators. The leadership in all the schools takes a democratic approach and can be characterised as participative and supportive. The leaders encourage the participation of students, parents and teachers in having influence on school policy. The leaders appreciate any initiative taken by students, staff or parents in matters regarding school improvement. Active participation among the teachers and some students in the process of decision-making was observed. Including parents is more problematic but the leadership in the schools have seen an increased involvement of parents in school matters. The leaders trust the professionalism of the teachers and are supportive and aim at providing an optimal work and learning environment in the schools.

Teachers

Although the structure of the schools and their policies in relation to multiculturalism vary, common emphases and educational practices were recognized among teachers across schools as contributing factors to students' academic success and social well-being. A strong vision for students' future and well-being was evident in teachers' words and actions. They talked about the importance for students to envision what they wanted to do in the future and engaged them in discussions and activities that allowed students to explore their possibilities for the future and what they needed to do to get there. This kind of work was important for teachers and students to make their learning meaningful for the future. In all the schools teachers talked about the importance of building a strong foundation in Icelandic to enable students to become active participants in the school and society in general. Support for students' learning of Icelandic varied from creating learning environments encouraging the use of Icelandic only within the school context (C1) to fostering students' first language while building a foundation for Icelandic as a second language (C2 and C3). Teachers highlighted that teaching Icelandic as a second language was more than just teaching a language. Students brought their cultural background and language to the classroom and were also exposed to cultural skills of communication. Teachers emphasized the importance of teaching Icelandic cultural skills and Icelandic language through all subjects.

All the teachers spoke about the importance of creating a welcoming and trusting learning environment for students and this was experienced during the observations. The schools used different ways to promote that welcoming environment. Within all the schools there was either a specific department or a homeroom for newly arrived students. This space was seen as important for students' well-being. First, it allowed them to get to know other students that were going through the same experience of negotiating a new culture and learning a new language. Second, the space was thought of as a place of security and support if students needed it. It was common that students kept visiting these homerooms

to get help with homework and discuss personal matters long after they had “graduated” and become full participants in the regular classroom. Teachers worked at developing teaching strategies that emphasized collaboration, in which students’ strengths were recognized and used for the benefit of the group. The learning spaces created or developed varied between schools and teachers, but what characterized them was creativity, respect and motivation. Students’ linguistic and cultural background as well as teachers’ personal and professional resources were used in various ways, including art, story-writing, presentations, individual and cooperative learning. Within all the schools teachers talked about the importance of developing a good relationship with students’ families. They recognized that families had moved to Iceland for different reasons and they, as well as the students, needed time, space and support to learn about the Icelandic school system and adjust to the society. Families often came to their children’s teachers to ask for help with the bureaucratic work involved in moving to a new country or to seek assistance for different matters. In some cases the teacher had created after school classes for the parents to learn Icelandic and meet Icelanders. The teachers talked about how their students’ well-being was closely connected to the well-being of the family and they made the effort to work as closely with the families as they could.

Students

All interviewed students with a foreign background, age 8-15, had positive experiences with the immigrant unit or international department. Some of the children have already graduated from the unit, and they all felt that they were always welcome there, whenever they needed assistance with Icelandic or other subjects. Students agreed on the importance of getting time to understand things, especially when they were newcomers. They talked about different ways of learning the new language, e.g. by writing down words in both mother tongue and Icelandic, using computer translators, or having a peer or an adult who could speak the same language to help them out. They also stressed the importance of having a person show them around and help them during their first weeks at school. When discussing favourite teachers, most of the students named teachers from the international unit and used adjectives including: “caring“, “good“, and “helpful“. Some of the students were particularly impressed with the fact that their teachers were willing to learn students’ mother tongues in order to facilitate communication with them and their families. Observations showed students’ engagement in classes, as well as a warm and rather informal relationship between students and teachers. Students knew what their role and responsibilities were, and they were able to work at their own pace and to incorporate different techniques, such as books and computers or working in pairs, according to their needs and preferences. Moreover, they could choose to sit separately if they needed to work on a project on their own. They were neither afraid to ask questions and share their opinions, nor to use their mother tongues. When asked about their academic achievement, all students admitted that they were doing well and getting high grades. The majority of them mentioned difficulties with learning English and/or Danish. All students had a positive attitude towards Icelandic, although almost none of them was using it at home, e.g. with younger siblings or stepparents. They stressed the importance of knowing Icelandic for communicating with peers. Only some of them attended regular mother tongue classes (in person or virtually) or studied it at home. The majority of the students attended after school activities, including judo, football, dance or music classes. They were still unsure about their futures and older students had not chosen a secondary school yet, but in general they wanted to continue their schooling in Iceland. The students said that they had made friends with other children in the immigrant unit and also with peers from regular classes. They had not experienced or seen examples of exclusion in their schools and talked positively about them.

Challenges

Two of the municipalities have changed their policy of immigrant education by moving away from the model of a reception school to a 'special needs' model in the neighborhood schools. This has influenced the way immigrant students are supported. The teachers working in the units nonetheless still emphasize students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds and their integration into the Icelandic culture. However, the change in policy has affected the structure and management of the units. Another big challenge the three compulsory schools faced was a lack of funding that, combined with the change in policy, affected C1 and C2. They have been forced to downsize their immigration programs by decreasing the administrative role of the lead teachers, giving them fewer opportunities to evolve, seek further education and manage the immigration programs. This downsizing has resulted in frustration among the leaders of the schools and concerns that they were not meeting the needs of the immigrant children sufficiently. The financial cut seems to have had less effect on the C3 due to the fact that it is a reception school for the whole municipality and has a large number of immigrant children. In all of the schools sustainable leadership is a critical issue and frequent changes in the leadership can produce insecurity as well as instability in the management of the immigrant units. This was seen as a challenge along with concerns for imminent changes in policy and organization. An ongoing challenge for teachers is finding ways to make students profit from their prior knowledge and capacities, thus building on their resources, although this challenge was not considered a burden but rather an endless project that kept them on their toes. Finally, there is a need of strengthening cooperation and of creating a space that would allow teachers and school leaders from different educational settings to exchange ideas and experiences and to discuss practices that empower all students.

Upper secondary schools (U)

U1 is an upper secondary school in the capital area providing both vocational and specialized programs. It is subdivided into 13 trade and vocational schools that collectively make up one of the largest secondary schools in the country. U1 has a very diverse student body and the largest number and percentage of students with foreign background in the country (over 4.5%). In January 2013, 119 foreign-born students representing 38 nationalities were enrolled in the school. The majority of them are enrolled in a special program intended for recent immigrants who want to learn Icelandic and increase their knowledge of English, mathematics and computer skills in order to meet the requirements of Icelandic upper secondary schools. Thus, the school teaches students of immigrant background separately until their Icelandic proficiency allows them to enroll in other academic subjects. Many students continue their education in one of the various vocational programs on offer, such as hairdressing, information technology or multimedia.

U2 is located in the capital area and offers preparation for the matriculation exam, preparing students for various academic university level studies. In addition, the school offers vocational training and is one of the leading upper secondary schools in Iceland in Information Technology. The number of students in the school in 2011 exceeded 2000 and 3.3% of the student body were of foreign background. The school

has a long history of educating students with immigrant background and has developed a multicultural policy and reception plan for immigrant students. Teachers and students in the school have often participated in projects with other European schools, funded by Leonardo, Comenius, Nordplus and EEA grants. Although the normal period of study is four years, students can accelerate their studies and graduate in three years. There is also flexibility in the other direction; students may extend their studies a year and a half beyond the normal four years.

U3 is a school with a long tradition and it was the first comprehensive secondary school of its kind in Iceland. The school is located in the capital area. It has a diverse student body and staff. The school offers a day school, an evening school and a summer program. The number of students in the day school has been from 1300 - 1500 and 800 - 900 in the evening school. What makes this school interesting for our project is the fact that it is the largest upper secondary school in Iceland, with over 2000 students and employs 120 teachers.

In addition to preparing students for various academic university level studies, this school offers qualifications in specialized areas such as a Business Diploma (2 years), and state recognized 3-year programs in Licensed Practical Nursing, Carpentry, Electrical Studies, and Cosmetology. They also have a specially designed program for students with immigrant background, a two-year program with special emphasis on learning Icelandic as a second language (ÍSA).

Policies and curricula

The Upper Secondary School Curriculum Guide is framed by the 2008 Upper Secondary School Act. Therefore, the general policies and curricula of the three upper secondary schools (U1, U2, U3, where LSP conducted the research) respond to the particulars of the Act. The Curriculum Guide adheres to the six fundamental pillars of education which are: literacy; sustainability; democracy and human rights; equality; health and welfare; and creativity. The end goal is for students to be well rounded and to acquire knowledge to be able to think independently and critically so that they can actively participate in Icelandic democratic society. The pedagogy includes offering a wide range of academic and vocational courses and the use of varied teaching and assessment methods. The schools focus on cultivating a positive, healthy learning environment where respect, tolerance, and equality are the key words. They have the objective of meeting students at their ability level, being aware of the different needs of each individual student, and ensuring the welfare, overall development, and education of all students.

Two of the three schools have specific reception programs for immigrant students (in accordance with Regulation No. 654). One of the schools has a separate curriculum for teaching Icelandic as the second language with clear missions and goals. The schools emphasize providing these students with the tools to facilitate their integration process both inside and outside of school. They teach them Icelandic as a second language and practical knowledge about Icelandic society. To provide the students with equal opportunity in their learning, the schools provide them with tutors and counselling. Parents of children under 18 years of age can receive information about their children's schooling in their heritage language through the use of interpreters. One of the schools uses a mentor system to assist immigrant students

with their language learning and social integration. Important goals with regard to students of immigrant background included boosting their self-esteem, promoting mutual understanding and encouraging positive attitudes to breach prejudice between students of different backgrounds and immigrant students and their teachers.

Leadership

In order to create successful learning environments for immigrant students, all the schools have created organizational structures in the form of independent units or departments for teaching Icelandic as a second language. The programs for immigrant students are led by heads of departments that either have knowledge or interest in the matter of immigrant students. Primary emphasis is placed on students' language learning rather than their participation and involvement in the school environment. In one of the schools the program for immigrant students is organized as a separate school whose primary purpose is to teach Icelandic as a second language. Students are generally not allowed to take part in mainstream courses until they have gained sufficient skills in Icelandic. However, there is an increased effort made in all the schools to integrate immigrant students in mainstream courses sooner. In all the schools the leaders are concerned about the social isolation of immigrant students. In two upper secondary schools, the school leaders have widened the objectives of the programs for immigrant students to include the aim of decreasing social isolation of students. In these cases, a wider variety of courses are offered to immigrant students. The leadership in all the schools attempts to accommodate the different needs of immigrant students in order to facilitate their learning and prevent dropout. As an example of this one of the schools has reorganized the structure to make it easier for immigrant students to combine work and study. The upper secondary schools have faced a reduction in funding since the economic collapse in 2008. This has resulted in fewer resources for supporting immigrant students. One of the schools has been seriously affected by cutbacks and feels it can no longer service the immigrant students adequately.

Teachers

Despite differences in the organizational structure of the teaching programs in the upper secondary schools, common threads were found with regard to teachers' visions for teaching, teaching practices, and relationships with students. Many of the teachers had lived, studied and travelled abroad and have first hand experience of living in a new country with limited language knowledge. The varied background and experience of the teachers contributed to better understanding and insight into multicultural issues. Several of the teachers had a strong vision for teaching with regard to immigrant students. They emphasized the need to believe in students' capabilities and to provide them with opportunities to continue with their studies and be successful in their future work lives. They felt it was their responsibility to serve as advocates for immigrant students if needed. The teachers had varying opinions about effective teaching practices. Some prioritized meeting students' language needs through second language instruction, while others had a more holistic view towards student needs and were concerned about students' personal and social development as well as academic learning. Many of the teachers were well aware of utilizing culturally responsive teaching methods. They saw the importance of recognizing students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds and personal strengths and had high expectations for their students, while at the same time trying to create for them a supportive and learning environment. In addition, teachers were active in helping immigrant students adjust and participate in society by teaching them about Icelandic culture and society in a variety of ways, sometimes even outside of school time or school walls. This included instruction in life skills, critical

thinking and awareness building. Another common thread exhibited by the teachers in the upper secondary schools was that of building supportive relationships with students. The teachers showed empathy for students and were willing to take extra steps to assist and support students, with both schoolwork and issues in their personal lives. It was also characteristic of teachers to show a genuine interest in the students and in some cases form personal relationships with the students that were giving for both students and teachers. Generally, teachers saw the centrality of Icelandic, rather than the heritage language and identities of the students themselves, in their vision of effective education.

Students

Overall, the upper secondary school students whom we interviewed appeared positive about their schools and many of their teachers. Generally, they compared their schools favourably with those from their home countries. They liked many of their teachers and seemed to benefit from those who took a personal interest in them and their educational and language needs, and those who were able to show their human side in addition to their teaching role. Some students also commented on the usefulness of having to complete demanding (as opposed to too easy) academic work, and of the benefits of working with Icelandic classmates. We had purposefully selected students who were believed to be doing well academically and socially. Most of these students showed determination and had clearly defined goals, both for the immediate and distant future. Most worked alongside their studies, and they all planned to graduate, and in most cases planned to enter tertiary professional or academic programs of study. Some students had Icelandic friends, although most of their friends had immigrant backgrounds. Perhaps even more important than friendships, however, were their close relations with their families, who provided a history of stable financial and moral support. Generally, students tried to maintain their heritage language and identities and remained interested in their heritage culture, albeit with no school support.

Norway

Country context

With the economic upturn during the 1960s, Norway became a country with net immigration. The Halt of Immigration Act was passed by Parliament in 1975, but an influx of refugees and asylum seekers in the following decades, together with family reunifications, brought a steady increase in the immigrant population. Since Norway joined the European Economic Area in 1994, there has been considerable migration to the country, first of all from areas that have been hit particularly hard by the financial crisis. Over the past ten years, the number of immigrants and children of immigrants has more than doubled. By January 1, 2015, 15.6% of the total population of approximately 5.2 million had either themselves immigrated (12.9%) or were born in Norway of immigrant parents (2.6%) (Statistics Norway, 2015). Close to 10% had foreign citizenship. The largest group by country of origin comes from Poland (almost 100,000, 12.5% of the immigrant population). They are followed by immigrants from Sweden and Lithuania, groups which are almost equal in size (39,000). The Somali (37,500), Pakistani (35,000) and Iraqi (30,000) communities are important groups with a non-European background. All together it is estimated that up to 300 different languages are spoken by immigrants, most of them admittedly having a small number of speakers (Wilhelmsen et al, 2013). There are people with an immigrant background in all Norwegian municipalities, but there is great variation in the percentage they constitute of the inhabitants, with Oslo at 32% being at the top. The average percentage is 14.3% and the standard deviation is high, at 10.4.

The official policy adopted for the incorporation of immigrants into Norwegian society is integration, understood as giving the new citizens equal possibilities, rights and obligations to the rest of the

population while granting them the opportunity to preserve their language, culture and way of life to the extent they desire to do so (Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion, 2012). In the education system, approximately 12% of the children attending kindergarten and preschool are considered to be language minority children by having a mother tongue different from Norwegian or Sami. The Norwegian Kindergarten Act states that these children have the right to receive support for the use of the mother tongue in kindergarten and to develop competence in Norwegian. The section of the Act entitled "Kindergarten as a culture arena" states that children from minority cultures must get support in developing their dual cultural identity (Ministry of Education, 2006). For the school system, which comprises primary and lower secondary (grades 1 to 10; ages 6 to 16) and upper secondary (grades 11 to 13), there are no official statistics on language minority students, but a reasonable estimate is that some 15% and 12% respectively of students in these two parts for the system speak a language other than than Norwegian or Sami as their mother tongue. However, the Education Act does not afford any special treatment to students according to language background per se. To be eligible for special tuition, tests have to indicate that the student has insufficient Norwegian skills to follow normal teaching in school. In such case, he or she is entitled to adapted instruction in Norwegian, and if needed mother tongue teaching and/or bilingual subject teaching. Students may also attend an introductory program of up to two years before they are referred to an ordinary school or class.

The local communities and even the individual kindergartens and schools have considerable freedom in how they organize the teaching and learning activities for minority language children and students, accounting for why there is much variation in this area across the country.

Preschools (P)

Both preschools (P1 and P2) in the Norwegian study are located in the central part of Norway, in municipalities with 15–20,000 inhabitants, and an immigrant population of around 6%. Both present themselves and communicate with parents on goals and activities through their homepage.

P1 is a municipal preschool, built in 1942, with three departments accommodating 50 children aged 0–6, thereof 15 of immigrant background. Two departments have children aged 3–5 and one has children from 1–3 years of age. The preschool has seven employees in permanent positions; one of them has an immigrant background. In each department one or two staff holds a university degree as a preschool teacher. There is a playground around the preschool and a park and a forest area for walks nearby. The preschool's core value is *Friendship and safe relations for children and adults,* and it has a focus on early intervention, language, social skills and play. The preschool has established a special room with toys, games, artefacts and other equipment for language training that all departments may use.

P2 is a modern, newly built municipal preschool, with four departments with up to 100 children in total, whereof around ten have an immigrant background. Of the 27 employees with different expertise and professional experience, two have an immigrant background. In addition, they employ temporary staff and practice students. It is a preschool especially constructed to accommodate children with disabilities and they have emergency places for child welfare. The core value of this preschool is *to be an arena for creativity and diversity, with special focus on music and outdoors activities*: One goal is that children in

this preschool learn to enjoy walks and outdoor life through all seasons and in all kinds of weather. Through music and outdoor life they aim to stimulate the children's language and physical development, their self-confidence and identity, and their knowledge of different cultures and traditions.

Policies and curricula

In both the preschools, leaders and employees see working with children of cultural and linguistic diversity as a positive element, strengthening the environment in the preschools for all children, parents and employees. They are among the preschools with the longest experience of working with children with an immigrant background, and one of them with diversity in a wider sense, too. Both are also engaged in network groups with other preschools on issues connected to cultural and linguistic diversity in the preschools, sharing ideas and cooperating to improve on these areas. Following an increased cultural diversity of the children and parents in the preschools in the area, both preschools also have taken part in competence development projects on cultural and linguistic diversity, to strengthen their educational work with these groups. Two to three employees from each preschool were attending gatherings at the local university college four or five times a year for a period of two years. Some hold degrees in special pedagogics, social work, childcare or other related areas. There are no employees with a formal education on cultural or linguistic diversity in either preschool.

The educational platform in one of the preschools presents a holistic view of learning that focuses on care, play and formation, that learning and development happens in interaction with others, and that children are active initiators in their own learning processes. Developing positive social relations, giving time to ponder, explore and philosophize are seen as important. The school ethos in the second preschool is to create a learning environment characterized by well-being and happiness, as well as to promote positive interactions with other children and adults, in and outside the nursery. This preschool also engages in a project where children learn to put words into feelings, to develop strategies to recognize and manage emotions, to give and receive compliments and to build relationships (friendships). They celebrate United Nations Day, a multicultural week connected to Thanksgiving, carnival, and the Sami Indigenous People's day.

Both preschools highlight generosity, positivity and an inclusive culture as values that permeate the schools, both towards children and parents, and among the employees. Observations confirm that these are indeed values that are put into practice, inasmuch as temporary staff members are counted in and included in decisions about daily activities and that children are seen and their needs and demands are taken seriously. Both preschools host students from high school and university college, and persons on work practice through social services. These are seen as welcome additions to the staff although they are not fully qualified as educators. There are of course conflict areas as well, for instance on cooperation across departments when there is staff absent.

The preschools emphasize collaboration with parents and children. All parents are met in the hall when they deliver their children in the morning and collect them in the afternoon. All employees communicate with parents, and encourage those that have the time to join the children for breakfast or just sit and chat for a while. The parents express gratitude and satisfaction with the way they and their children are received and taken care of in both preschools. Some immigrant parents communicate in Norwegian or English. When there is no shared language, the staff uses pictures, Google Translate and illlustrations. In some cases, an employee speaks the same language as the parents and children of immigrant background.

Leadership

In both preschools, the fairly new leaders are described as democratic, giving space to each teacher to develop her department according to her views and the school ethos and curriculum. The leaders are very much present in the daily work in the preschools and take interest and an active part in developing the aims and guiding principles of the work in the preschools. They are both experienced preschool teachers with leadership experience, but have limited experience or education in cultural and linguistic diversity. They are supportive of a diversity focus, and support the teachers who are more experienced in this field in their initiatives. Immigrant children are placed in the department appropriate to their age, like all other children. In one of the preschools the leader attended network meetings whenever cultural diversity was a focus, in order to strengthen her cultural competence. In the other, the leader promoted sharing language training experience among the staff by making time in a staff meeting to share the competence in using the special room that this preschool had set aside for language training.

Teachers

The teachers in both preschools see it as important that the children are surrounded by genuinely interested adults, with a focus on individually-based care and learning, implying that they emphasize diversity, in order to provide justice and equality to each individual child. Teachers in both preschools value outdoor life throughout the year, going for walks in the forest, to a river, or to slide on snow in a steep hill nearby. These activities are stimulating the children's physical abilities as well as allowing for social bonding through activities that value other abilities than language. These activities are also used to promote the learning of new concepts on a particular topic, such as "the forest and all that is in it", or to create belonging and pride in the local community, by walking to the homes of the children within reach of the preschool. Many projects are attached to such walks – and give inspiration to activities such as drawing, painting, telling stories, and creating buildings from a variety of collected trash materials. Many of these activities are not dependent upon faultless Norwegian language, but may still support language learning and create pride and admiration from other children over a beautiful drawing or a nicely constructed building.

In one of the preschools they have engaged teachers with a particular competence in music. They aim to be an arena for creativity and diversity, focusing on giving the children varied experiences both in music and outdoor life. Through music, they stimulate children's language and physical development, self-esteem and identity, and they use music to become familiar with different cultures and traditions.

Both preschools have teachers with a particular interest in working with immigrant children. In one, a teacher heads networks, both within the preschool and with employees in the other municipal preschools, to promote and share competence and experience. This preschool had experiences with several cases of children and parents of refugee background who had had extreme life experiences of violence and abuse, demanding the full attention of the entire staff in order to develop trust and a feeling of safety for these children. They went far beyond what is usually the responsibility of a preschool staff. These experiences contributed to the development of a competence and a dedication among the employees that nurture work with other children, regardless of nationality.

In one preschool there is one temporary employee of African descent in a regular position, one Arabic-speaking and one Russian and Polish-speaking. These individuals are valued among the staff as sources of information and experience in matters relating to parents or children with different languages and cultures. In the other preschool, having hired one Arabic-speaking employee on a regular basis gave the Norwegian staff a positive experience, opening up collaboration that strengthened their cooperation

with immigrant parents by having someone to ask whenever the Norwegian employees felt insecure in their own practice.

Children (parents)

Observations in both preschools show children – immigrants as well as the group as a whole – who thrive and are happy with their preschool teachers, feel safe and welcomed. A few of the children who do not share a language with other children or staff, may show signs of frustration or withdrawing from some activities part of the time. A few children known to have experienced difficult times as refugees also at times may express frustration or aggression. The parents interviewed in our research are generally satisfied with how the preschools take care of and provide a safe and good learning environment for their children. They regard the staff as open and interested in all parents and children, and express that they always feel included and made to feel welcome. They feel that the staff encourages parents and children to share words from their first language, in songs, numbers, letters or fairy tales. Most of the parents have however not had an interpreter when they attend meetings in the kindergarten. Some communicate in English or Norwegian to a certain level, but not all.

Challenges

There is a particular need in the education of minority language children to work with the children's first language. However, access to people who speak the children's first language is limited, varying and random. There are posters on the walls with some words, letters or numbers in different languages, and they use some songs and stories from different countries. Systematic development of the Norwegian language is also lacking in general. Furthermore, there was little or no use of interpreters in meetings with parents. This reduces the chances of democratic participation, in both the general work and the particular education of their children.

Both preschools need to strengthen the staff's formal training and education in multilingualism, interpretation and communication across linguistic and cultural differences and refugee-related questions. All staff members are language teachers – and an increased awareness and competence in these areas may strengthen the use of everyday situations to improve second language learning and language ability for all children in general.

Compulsory schools

The compulsory schools in Norway are altogether four, divided into two separate levels, elementary (age 6 to 13) and secondary (age 13 to 16).

Elementary level (E)

E1 is situated in a medium sized town in South East Norway. The school has 430 students from grade 1 to 7 (age 6 to 13) and approximately 100 employees. Ninety students have another mother tongue than Norwegian, and 39 different languages are represented at the school. Thirteen bilingual teachers are employed part time. E1 is a so-called focus school linked to the National Centre for Multicultural Education (NAFO). The criteria set up by NAFO for obtaining such status is that the school has "come a long way with the efforts to become a multicultural school ", that the leadership and personnel

"maintain diversity perspectives, and that the school is "willing to use time on competence development in the area, both internally and in special municipal and/or regional networks" (from the NAFO webpage http://nafo.hioa.no/, our translation).

The school is one of two schools in the municipality that offers introductory classes for newly arrived students. Following Short's (2002) studies in the US and Nilsson & Axelsson's (2013) studies in Sweden, the model can be described as a separate-side model for introduction. This means that the introductory class gathers students from the whole of the municipality, even though the school is different from the one they administratively belong to. In the introductory class the newly arrived students are offered special Norwegian language training and Social Science, as well as instruction in other subjects, like mathematics. At the time of the fieldwork, 15 students attended the reception class.

E2 is located in a rural area in South East Norway. The school has 560 students (ages 6 to 13, grades 1 to 7) and approximately 100 employees. Two bilingual teachers are employed full time, and eight are employed part time. E2 is also a focus school linked to the National Centre for Multicultural Education (NAFO). Currently the school hosts 34 different nationalities and 27 languages are represented. In 2012 the school was awarded H.M. Queen Sonja's School Award, an annual national prize that is awarded to a school that has demonstrated excellence in its efforts to promote inclusion and equality. The school integrates newly arrived students directly into mainstream education. Schooling is organised so that each grade level has its own teacher providing special Norwegian language training for the newly arrived immigrants. This teacher (who at E1 is the reception class teacher) is part of the team and cooperates with the other teachers at the grade level. This teacher has special training within multicultural pedagogy and/or and Norwegian as a second language.

Observations and interviews at E1 underline the possibilities that the reception class gives for academic support and learning development for the newly arrived students. Because the introductory class is smaller in size than the regular class, the teacher follows the students closely. It seems easier for the newly arrived students to practice the Norwegian language in a smaller class – it is less frightening and gives a better opportunity to learn the language by trying and failing. The model offers a supporting and comforting learning environment which makes the students feel safe and gives them opportunities to form positive relationships in a smaller group of learners. Furthermore, the school leaders and teachers are aware of the potential weaknesses of the introductory model and address them actively, for example in staff meetings. This self-reflection seems to be a key to success.

E2 practices direct integration into mainstream. This model seems to have several advantages. More teachers appear to feel more responsible for all students. The informants have also experienced a higher appreciation of the special Norwegian language teacher's position as several of the teachers express that they see this as an interesting position and would be willing to qualify themselves for such work. Thirdly, the model seems to facilitate access to social resources for the immigrant students in the sense that they establish friendship-relations with the other children, and express the sense of belonging to a larger group of students. Finally, E2 seems also to be aware that their choice of direct integration into mainstream-model has advantages, but also disadvantages. Newly arrived students win something within one model that they lose within another model and vice versa. E2 thus places much effort in addressing the potential weaknesses as part of the pedagogical development among the staff.

Policies and curricula

In E1 the assistant principal has the main responsiblity for the schooling of newly arrived students. The teachers who work in the introductory classes are all qualified in the area of multicultural education and/or Norwegian as a second language. In E2 one of the special Norwegian language teachers has the main responsiblity for the education of newly arrived students. The teacher is part of the school's leadership team. In recent years, both E1 and E2 have had much focus on raising the entire staff's awareness of the needs of immigrant students, focusing on all teachers' responsibility for all students. Both E1 and E2 work closely together with the parents, by e.g. organising an international week, setting aside the regular timetable and putting issues of globalization, internationalization and diversity on the agenda, highlighted from a variety of didactical perspectives.

Leadership

In E1 and E2 the school leaders have worked systematically with multicultural perspectives among the staff. Both schools participate in networks (NAFO), which means that they share their experiences with other schools in the county. Participation in the network also includes access to resource persons from NAFO who work actively together with the schools in developing projects, for example on home-school cooperation. In 2014, both schools initiated a project together with the County Council, the University College and two kindergartens on how to improve the interaction between minority parents and school/preschool. The school leaders also aim to employ teachers with competencies within multicultural pedagogy and/or Norwegian as a second language.

Teachers

Observations and interviews with teachers in E1 and E2 document how the teachers engage with newly-arrived students' identity work in ways that create cultural resistance against dominant discourses in school and society. This includes the understanding of linguistic diversity as a resource in subject-based teaching, in opposition to a mono-linguistic discourse which reduces language to "speech communities", as bounded entities, and students' experiences of translocalisation which are turned into advantages by the teacher, who allows for a wider conception of identity in opposition to ways of restricting the students' cultural background. The fieldwork has identified several examples of how teachers work with concepts and academic knowledge in accordance with the students' proficiency in Norwegian.

Students

Interviews have been conducted with former students in E1 and E2 who look back on their experiences as newly arrived students. Additionally, newly arrived students in E1 and E2 have been observed, with a focus on teacher-student interactions.

The students in the study are between 6 and 16 years of age. Their time of residence in Norway varies between one and five years and they come from countries such as Iraq, Iran, Japan, Somalia, Iceland, Poland, Romania and Vietnam. Some of them came to Norway due to family reunification, others due to work immigration and others as refugees.

The students emphasise the school and their teachers as reasons for their success. They describe their teachers as caring, kind, and genuine concerned with their social well-being and academic success. All of the students report that they like going to school. The interviewed students see themselves as both academically and socially successful. They have many friends, participate in sports, like football, and some express the importance religion – in particular Islam – as an important factor for their success in a new country. For some of the students the Norwegian school system is very different from schooling in their home countries in terms of discipline, teacher-student interaction, and access to learning material

like books and computers. However, all take pride in their home countries, and describe Norway as their second home country.

Challenges

A remaining challenge for E1 and E2 is to involve all teachers in the schooling of newly arrived students. However, E1 has taken several measures in order to make the ordinary teachers take responsibility for the students' transitions between introductory and regular class. E2 reports on an improved practice within this issue by the reorganisation of separate introductory classes to direct integration.

A related challenge is the identification of weaknesses of the two models and to find ways of counteracting the disadvantages. For some of the students within the reception model, segregation into introductory classes makes it more difficult to relate and make friendships with other children in the regular class. For some of the students within the model of direct integration, attending mainstream might be an overwhelming experience that makes the students feel unsafe and contributes to less use of the language and less subject-oriented activity.

Secondary level (S)

S1 is a large mainstream lower secondary school with approximately 320 students from grades 8 to 10 (ages 13 to 16). In total, more than fifteen per cent of the school's students speak another language than Norwegian at home. Many of them were speakers of Somali, whereas others spoke Amharic, Arabic, Dari, Slovenian, Tigrinya and Turkish at home. It is situated in a medium sized town in South East Norway. S1 is known for its work in the field of education for students from linguistic minorities. They are a so-called focus school linked to the National Centre for Multicultural Education (NAFO). In this connection, they participate in a network that focuses on multicultural schools in general, and in several developmental projects that centre round newly arrived young people with little schooling prior to arrival. The school has a reception class for all newly arrived students between the ages of 13 and 16 in the municipality. In addition, the school is responsible for the education of students from the town's asylum seeker centre and asylum seekers from several housing establishments for unaccompanied minors between the ages of 13 and 18 in the town.

The students recruited for the study all attended S1 when they were new to Norway. They were suggested by their teachers. At the time of the study, the students all attended the same upper secondary school. In the early stages of the study the researcher tried to recruit a second school, but was unable to find one in the area with the right profile. For this reason the researcher prioritized to study S1 in greater detail, as well as the young people, both in and outside of school (see in greater detail below).

Policies and curricula

The assistant principal is responsible for the education of newly arrived students. The teachers who work in the reception class are all qualified in the area of multicultural education and/or Norwegian as a second language. Together they cover all school subjects, which means that they are able to adapt these subjects to the needs of the newly arrived students. When the students arrive, they normally spend all their time in the reception class. Dependent on their previous schooling, they are gradually transferred

to the mainstream. During this phase, one of the teachers in the reception class assists them in language learning in different subjects. A common working method is the usage of what is called 'concept sheets' (begrepsark). Subject teachers are responsible to pick out central concepts for each teaching period. The language teacher goes through the concepts in advance and helps the students write an explanation in Norwegian and find the equivalent in the student's home language, the latter sometimes in collaboration with the bilingual teacher/parents. Sometimes the language teacher also finds illustrations.

In recent years, the school has had much focus on raising the entire staff's awareness of the special needs of newly arrived students, specifically of those with little previous schooling. The school's five bilingual teachers have been central in this work, as well as the school's councillor. The bilingual teachers were for example invited to talk about school systems in the students' home countries (e.g. Quran school), and about their work with this particular group during bilingual subject teaching/mother tongue lessons.

The school works closely together with the parents, by e.g. organising language homogeneous meetings with parents from war countries who have very little schooling themselves.

Leadership

The leadership at S1 prioritises networks and developmental projects in the area of multicultural and multilingual education. They are supported by the municipality in this work. They also regularly send teachers to courses and conferences connected to this field. S1 as a multicultural school is part of their policy and vision, and it is regularly put on the agenda.

Teachers

Some of the teachers do a lot of work 'behind the scenes'. In one case, the student was not able to get an apprenticeship, according to the teachers because of his foreign-sounding name. One of the teachers used one of his contacts, which resulted in an apprenticeship. The student is not aware of the teacher's help.

Some of the teachers were particularly good at building on and acknowledging the students' linguistic and cultural background when e.g. giving feedback in school assignments.

Students

The young people in the study are between 16 and 20 years of age. They were selected on the basis of being previous students in the compulsory schools in the study. They have been in Norway for approximately five years and come from countries such as Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iraq and Somalia. Some of them came to Norway on the basis of family reunification, whereas others arrived with their family after having been on the run for several years.

The researcher aimed at developing participant sensitive methods together with the young people, which would allow her to 'get to know them', as she framed her research aim for them. Through a process of negotiation, one of the students suggested that he could write reflective texts at the end of the interviews, whereas others invited her as her Facebook friend, which in both cases allowed her to study identity negotiations in their writings. The researcher also attended soccer practice, went to the beach with some of the students and conducted home visits.

During interviews, the young people gave a somewhat glossy picture of their (successful) lives. In addition to possibly being in response to the fact that they were recruited as 'successful immigrant students', their stories may be interpreted as being in dialogue with wider school and societal discourses

which have a tendency to report on difficulties connected to first generation newcomers. The students' writings nuanced the positive picture as they showed traces of struggle for equity and justice.

The students like going to school, and they emphasise the importance of their teachers for their success. Moreover, they describe their teachers as kind, caring and knowledgeable. They describe school in their home countries as different, certainly in terms of discipline and access to computers and books.

The ultimate goal of the Learning Spaces project it to develop guidelines and school reform based on what is learnt from 'successful immigrant students' and 'successful school communities'. Applying a critical perspective, the researcher needs to engage in students' struggles and put their range of knowledges, understandings, languages, and ways of being at the centre of their actions. This involves being "responsive and responsible to, while both trusting and avoiding construction of the Other" (Cannella & Lincoln, 2011, p. 83).

The students see themselves as socially successful. They have many friends, both in and outside of school. None of them, however, have friends who can be characterised as 'ethnic Norwegian', nor do they think this is a problem as they do work and interact with students from different backgrounds in class.

Some of the students help each other to find books and texts in their home language as a supplement to the Norwegian language school literature.

Challenges

A remaining challenge for the school is to involve all teachers in the schooling of newly arrived students. The school's management tries to meet this challenge by dividing the staff monthly into smaller groups (across grades and subjects) and having the teachers discuss common challenges and opportunities. In addition, each grade has a leader. This leader has a particular responsibility to make sure that this group receives special attention during the weekly team meetings.

Finland

Country context

Finnish students' success in international comparisons of student assessments (such as PISA) in the last decade has been celebrated at the national level and remained a topic of interest internationally. Finnish students' performance has been among the best in all the domains in each PISA cycle, albeit on the decline in the latest one (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, 2013). According to the Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE), education is seen as a key to competitiveness and well-being of the society. Education has long had a reputation as a basic right of all citizens and in this context is provided free of charge. The right to education and culture is also recorded in the constitution. Quality, efficiency, equity and internalisation stand out as key terms in the Finnish education policy. In spite of all the fame that Finnish education has recently received, it does not mean that there is no room or need for development. According to recent studies by Finnish researchers Bernelius (2013), Riitaoja (2013) and Kalalahti & Varjo (2012), among others, educational equality in Finland has weakened due to increasingly neo-liberal policies. Studies also show that Finland has been facing threats of youth marginalization (FNBE, 2014), lower performance of boys, Swedish-speakers, and immigrants (Kilpi-Jakonen 2011), and reduced well-being at comprehensive schools (Harinen & Halme, 2012). Migration to Finland is constantly growing; as the immigrant population grows we need more information for monitoring integration and success in the world's 'best' education system. In 2013 immigration stood at 17,000

people. At the end of 2012, a total of 195,511 foreign nationals were residing in Finland — 3.6 per cent of the whole population. In 2012, Finnish citizenship was granted to 9,518 people (Ministry of the Interior, 2014). Elina Kilpi-Jakonen shows that, regardless of current policies and measures, children of immigrants tend to have lower levels of school achievement at the end of comprehensive school than the majority and that their lower parental resources are partly the reason. Refugees have the lowest levels of achievement overall. But there seem to be exceptions: Asian immigrants outperform the majority, while children of one Finnish-born and one foreign-born parent do not differ from the majority (Kilpi-Jakonen, 2012). Multiculturalism and discussion around diversities in education are fairly recent in Finland. This is particularly relevant in times like ours when Finland is suffering like most countries in Europe from repeated economic crises that have led to anti-immigrant, xenophobic and racist discourses in the media and on the street. Dealing with diversities of any kind in schools often produces differentiation and hierarchization in spite of teachers' professionalism and goodwill to treat students fairly and equally. Teachers seem to lack tools to analyse and detect discourses that create othering.

Preschools (P)

P1, a part of a daycare center, is located in the capital area with around 25% immigrant population. The daycare center was established in 1993, with 40% of the children of immigrant background. The center is organized into five divisions by age. Each division has a team of diverse professionals working with the children. In 2013-2014 there were 75 children. 49 spoke other languages than Finnish or Swedish as their mother tongue and two had Finnish plus another language as home language. This means that 68% were multilingual children. There was one special education kindergarten teacher; five qualified kindergarten teachers; and nine nurses (one of them a so-called Finnish as a second language nurse); one day care assistant; and one director working in the day care center. The core values of the daycare center as well as in the preschool group are: safe learning environment and every day life, and social justice and trustworthy co-operation with parents. Because of the large number of multilingual children, language abilities are taken into account in daily activities. The preschool staff encourages parents to keep their mother tongue alive in the families. Finnish as a second language tuition is provided in everyday situations and in separate groups. There were 22 children in the preschool group in the fall of 2013, two full-time kindergarten teachers and one nurse/assistant. As an extra resource in that team, there was another nurse who was working with two groups and one special education kindergarten teacher. 19 of the 22 children in the group spoke Finnish as a second or third language. Most of them were born in Finland. The preschool group has a large class space, which could be divided into two rooms. All divisions share a bigger space, where the preschool children eat their meals. The space can also be used in different activities, such as art and free play and be divided for small group activities. Everyday activities included free and organized play both indoors and outdoors, organized activities and learning situations, and daily routines around meals and rest.

P2, a part of a daycare center, is located in the capital area with around 25% immigrant population. The daycare center was founded in 1992 and has from the beginning specialized in sports-based activities both indoors and outdoors. The daycare center is organized into six divisions by age, and each division has a team of diverse professionals. In 2013-2014 there were 66 children in the daycare center. 16 spoke a language other than Finnish or Swedish as their mother tongue and 13 were from families with two

mother tongues (where the other language was Finnish). There were four qualified kindergarten teachers, five nurses (one of them of immigrant background), one student (studying to be an assistant) and one principal. The core values in this daycare center as well as in preschool group are openness, flexibility, honesty, sense of community and change. There were 21 children in the preschool group in the fall of 2013, two full time kindergarten teachers and one nurse. 10 of the 21 children in the group spoke Finnish as a second or third language. Most of them were born in Finland. The preschool group has a small class space for meetings in the morning and rooms for small group activities during the day. Daily activities are planned based on the childrens' diverse backgrounds and ethical views of the families are taken into account. Everyday activities include free and organized play, both indoors and outdoors, organized activities and learning situations, and daily routines around meals and rest.

Curriculum

In **P1** the curriculum as a part of early childhood education curriculum is based on the idea that each child is encountered as an individual with her/his needs and skills. The preschool education focuses on developing practices towards justice and human rights. Each child has equal rights to access care, knowledge and teaching. The children's mother tongues and religions are taken into account when planning activities and learning situations. Finnish as a second language is offered to the children.

In **P2** the curriculum as a part of early childhood education curriculum is based on the idea that each child should get learning experiences. The children's mother tongues and religions are taken into account and Finnish as a second language is offered to the children. Sports-based activities are emphasized in the preschool curriculum so sports and field trips to nature are in focus.

Organization and leadership

The structure and organization of the day care centres or preschool groups does not differentiate immigrant children. They are fully integrated and the focus is on the children's well-being. Children's needs and backgrounds are taken into account in everyday life in the day care as well as in teaching/learning situations. This was also strongly expressed by the parents. Each child is seen as an individual as the Principal of the Preschool 1 says: "Each child is an individual – not a representative of some culture".

The leadership in both preschools is supportive and participative. Principals are innovative themselves, but they are encouraging and give space for the staff to create new ways and methods in education. Principals are also supporting staff to educate themselves. All members of the day care community are encouraged to influence preschool policy. Parents and staff express how their voices are heard and how they are encouraged to develop new ideas and share with others.

Leaders of both preschool groups are qualified kindergarten teachers. The head teacher in the preschool team is responsible for planning the contents in preschool education together with the other team members, but the goals of the national Core Curriculum for Pre-Primary Education are guiding the education of the preschool group.

The principals in both day care centres strive to build a learning environment for diverse children and their families together with the staff. Co-operation between community and staff is also strong.

Teachers

Two kindergarten teachers in Preschool 1 and three teachers in Preschool 2 were interviewed as well as the principals in both daycare centers. The teachers were very motivated in relation to their work and

the principals were motivators and also innovators. Each teacher emphasized openness between parents and staff and equal education as a starting point to their work. It was self-evident to the teachers that each child is an individual and should have different goals and contents in education based on her/his needs and skills. Overall the atmosphere among the teachers seemed good and relaxed. Both principals were motivated to lead their day care center and were eager to find new ways to see education. In daily teaching-learning situations differentiation and learning by doing proved to be crucial. Active learning and learning by doing were key ideas in both preschools. The children often worked in small groups. Different kinds of grouping were used depending on the learning goal. One main idea in the grouping was that children should get experiences of success every day. Teachers emphasized joint values and goals, professional skills and expertise and strong teamwork as main factors in successful education. All the teachers had quite a long career but they were eager to take part in in-service training and educate themselves. Because both day care centers were placed in areas with a large number on immigrants, teachers already had a lot of experience in working with immigrant children.

Challenges

One challenge appeared in the data from the preschools. More competencies in teaching Finnish as a second language in the group are needed because of the large number of children who speak Finnish as a second or third language. The specialized teacher of Finnish as a second language was able to work in Preschool 1 one day per week, but in Preschool 2 Finnish as a second language is mainly included in other daily activities as it is also in Preschool 1. It seemed to work fine but guidance and professional skills in language teaching are needed when there are many children learning a new language in the group.

Compulsory schools (C)

C1 was founded in 1915, so it is old and monumental. There are currently about 200 students in first through sixth grade and the number of staff is around 20 with class teachers, subject teachers, special needs teachers and school assistants. The demographic structure of the population in the area has changed a lot during the last twenty years. There is for instance a big Somali minority. Around 25% of the students speak Somali as their mother tongue. Among other languages spoken at school are Arabic, Turkish, Kurdish, Russian, Estonian, Pasto, Bengali, Lingala, French, and Portuguese. The school year that the data was collected, a little over 50% of the students spoke a language other than Finnish as their first language. There were also many students that had Finnish as a third language. The number of bilingual families was also higher in this school than the average in Helsinki. This school has a French immersion classroom and all the children have the opportunity to be taught in French. This is very special and has helped to create a school with a good reputation and not just making it known for its 'immigrants'. The curriculum is based on the idea of a learning community where each student has an equal right to belong to the school community. The school focuses on developing practices towards justice and human rights. Each child has an equal right to access knowledge and teaching. The teaching of the Finnish language, mother tongue languages and religion is offered to all the children with immigrant backgrounds. Another emphasis in the curriculum is nature and sustainable development.

C2 is a teacher training school, which means that the student teachers practise teaching in this school, and it is part of the University of Turku, Department of Teacher Education (South-west Finland). The school is independent from the city school system. It has 900 students with 25% students whose first language is other than the school language. It is both an elementary and lower secondary level school. It is located in a neighborhood with a large population of what we consider as "people with immigrant backgrounds", although many families have lived there for a long time and their children were born in Finland. This is also considered to be a challenging neighbourhood in a socio-economic sense, as it has a large area of city housing. The principal of the basic education mentioned in an interview that it is very important to them to be a school for the whole district. A sign of this is that they keep the school doors open during school days. The main aim of the basic education in this school is to support and take care of each student's achievements in their studies in every possible way. The school policy states that the goal is that each student gets the best possible school report at the completion of compulsory education and continues education further. The fact that the university school is in the middle of this neighborhood adds value to the area. The school wants its profile to be that of "a school in a middle of the village". They are also working on the issues such as school dropouts by organizing hobbies and after school activities.

C3 is a Primary school (preschool and grades 1-6) located in the heart of the city. The school building is one of the oldest in the city and has a prestigious reputation. Besides the Finnish classes, it runs a bilingual French-Finnish programme. Along with the Finnish students and a wide variety of immigrant background students there is a vast number of expatriate families. As one of the mothers described the students: "with these kids, it is just as normal to go and visit a nearby town as it is to pay a visit to Italy, China or Morocco".

C4 is a Comprehensive school (grades 7-9) located in a suburb of the city. The area is characterised with high unemployment figures. The school has shown special interest in developing various support systems in order to be able to cater for students' needs. The principal has been a pioneer in the city to develop immigrant children's education.

C5 A Comprehensive school (grades 1-9) located in a suburb having the highest percentage of foreign citizens living in the city. The area is also characterised with an active educational campus hosting the university, the university of applied sciences and vocational education establishments. The number of immigrant background children has grown steadily over the years and now one quarter of the students have an immigrant background and over 20 different mother tongues are spoken.

In what follows we present three cases of 'good practices' in these institutions:

Case 1: Second grade – inclusion as a good practice

The class is an inclusion class that we consider as a great model of inclusion. It is collaboratively taught between a class teacher and a special needs teacher. There are three special needs students in the class, and 25 children altogether. Half of the students in the class speak Finnish as second or third language. Most of them were born in Finland. One third have parents with different mother tongues. The teachers have two classrooms at their disposal so they can flexibly divide the group or work altogether in the same classroom. In this classroom each student is special, similar, different, Finnish or immigrant in diverse ways.

When the class starts in the morning they begin by greetings like: *Hyvää huomenta! Bonjour! Good Morning! Salam alaikum! Sabah al-khair! Günaydin! Kim jaa! Strastuitze! Bon dia! Tere!* From the start the teachers have been making a big issue in the class about how great it is that they speak so many languages. They also discuss a lot about different kind of families. Some families in the class have many children. The teaching in the classroom is flexible and they work a lot in small groups.

Case 2: Supportive measures in action

The basic initiatives that are targeted to students with diverse cultural backgrounds like Finnish as a second language, Home/Native language teaching, preparatory class / year and teaching about different religions were applied in all schools. Integrating these practices seamlessly in the schools' daily life might be challenging. At the time it appeared that these important support mechanisms brought some unnecessary division between students e.g. "those students studying Finnish as second language and those not". To avoid this, in school C (Tampere) remarkable timetable arrangements were made in order to be able to move students in a flexible way between home room Finnish classes and Finnish as second language classes. In school B (Tampere) the flexibility of the core curriculum was taken the furthest by giving students the possibility to pass courses more in an individual order without needing to repeat the whole year again if they failed one ore two subjects (*luokaton yläkoulu* in Finnish). This was done in order to give students more time to learn the Finnish language.

Case 3: Teacher with an immigrant background as a role model

In Turku we found teachers with an immigrant background working during the school hours, and not only as mother tongue teachers outside the normal school hours, which is typical in the other schools. One good example is Samran, who at the time of the interview was about to finish his own Master's degree studies at the University of Tampere. During his teaching experience he started wondering why some young people with a similar background to his own (immigrant/refugee background) succeed and some do not. Therefore his Master's thesis topic relates very much to our Nordic project task as his study focuses on why some students succeed and some do not, in this case for those students who have the immigrant background. His results show that: 1) language is one very important factor; 2) family support is also mentioned among his research participants; and 3) the fact that successful young people know who they are and where they come from, and why they for example have been refugees. For the parent involvement he states that even if the parents do not have an academic background they can offer support by being interested in their children, provide food, etc.

Samran has also observed for many years the struggle for some students to study in the Finnish school system without sufficient skills in the Finnish language. To him these students are too often placed in special education classes, not because of any learning disability, but more because they for some years have been completely "outside" of what happens in the classroom when they do not understand enough. According to him, six months of preparatory class is not enough. Also the learning materials for mother tongue teaching are very old, and do not relate to these young people's life in Finland. For years, he has developed his own materials where he has produced explanations for difficult Finnish terms in math, history, geography etc. He has noticed that if the students do not understand these terms, they lag behind in learning. In the university school they can actually give mother tongue teaching support as co-teaching during the normal classes, which he finds to be the best way of delivering mother tongue teaching at school.

Teachers

Teachers were mainly very motivated to do their work as teachers. Overall the atmosphere among the

teachers seemed good and relaxed in each school. The way in which they worked with immigrant children varied. It was also easy to identify teachers who were interested in promoting justice in their work. There were teachers who were more involved and interested in the life of children with immigrant backgrounds, while other teachers showed some kind of ignorance towards them. The words collaboration, co-operation and flexibility characterise the teachers' work. They were willing to explore new ways of learning and organising their work in order to meet the needs of students. They worked in multi-professional teams e.g. subject teacher, transition class teacher and Finnish as a second language teacher in order to develop their teaching.

Students/children/parents

A good student-teacher-parent relationship is valuable. It was touching to hear students talking affectionately about their teachers. Students were comparing how school life had been in their previous schools, and how it was now. Parents play an important role and the parents who were interviewed were satisfied with the schools. In one of the schools they organised breakfast events for parents every now and then to encourage parents to visit the school and meet with the teachers and other parents.

Challenges

The principal has changed in one school during the project so it is difficult to know how sustainable the ideologies that were emphasized during her long leadership period were. Also one concern that we researchers identified is that some teachers took on almost alone the responsibility to develop the practices towards more just schools. These types of visionaries may burn themselves out, and the practices may fade away if that one teacher leaves the school. Also there was a difference in how gender diversity and equality were considered among the teachers. One of the major challenges is to continue developing a comprehensive school that can cater for a growing mixture of differences but still be able to host a strong sense of belonging. How to make use of the versatile cultural capital that students' families possess is a challenge.

Upper secondary schools (U)

U1 Founded in 1869, this school is one of the oldest in Finland and the first Finnish-speaking school for girls. Since 1924 it has been training future teachers, and in 1969 the school became co-educational. In 1974 it became part of the teacher-training unit of the Department of Teacher Education of the University of Helsinki, and along with that role the school has also provided further education for in-service teachers. The school consists of the 10-year comprehensive school (ages 6 to 15), including pre-school, primary school and lower secondary school levels (Basic Education), and the upper secondary school (ages 16 to 18). In 2003 the school moved to eastern Helsinki (8 km. from the centre), where a modern school building was built as an integral part of the Helsinki University Campus at Viikki. Students (ca 940; 250 in upper secondary), teachers (approximately 100) and teacher trainees (approximately 250) from the pre-school level to the upper secondary school level now operate in the same school building. The number of 'canonical' immigrant background students is somewhat limited at Viikki upper secondary (less than 10%). This is probably related to the 'elite' status of the school and to the strict selection based on grades. The school does have many foreign and bi-national students from somewhat privileged backgrounds. The school provides a safe and open-minded environment for all. The

educational philosophy of the school is to teach its students the skills and knowledge needed in the future. Traditions are respected and observed, but the school also emphasises the importance of experimentation and research in a natural school context. Consequently, together with the National Board of Education and other development organizations, the school participates in many local, national and international projects including projects in teacher education.

Leadership

The upper secondary section of the school has its own principal whose role is to make sure that every upper secondary student feels included. The issue of bullying is taken seriously and the school follows the equality and social justice plan of the University of Helsinki. The principal makes personal efforts to include discussions around these two topics as much as possible and to make sure that these are respected values by all. Problems are thus discussed and solutions found in cooperation with all the people involved. The principal is responsible with her colleagues for several well-established programmes that have been set up in the upper secondary school and the school in general. One example is the PARKKI room (2008-), a place where students can come to talk about their feelings and discuss potential bullying. The PARKKI room also offers school support for those in need. This can be short or long term. Another example is VERSO (2006-), which aims at reducing bullying and finding solutions for it. Two older students – in connection with the principal – try to solve the issues together with the people involved. A system of tutoring in upper secondary also helps to create a sense of community and belonging and to support those in need. Finally the principal, as well as the shared leadership represented by teachers, works closely with parents by meeting them regularly or by being in contact through the parent association. In general the principal felt that there were very few issues concerning 'immigrant-background' students in the upper secondary school – the reason being that they had been competitively selected to enter the school and thus quite successful. Some of the immigrant students had done an extra year of compulsory school to make sure that e.g. their Finnish was at a very high level.

Teachers

We interviewed two language teachers who teach upper secondary school students, one working as vice principal at the upper secondary level. Along with these, we interviewed two school counsellors, one psychologist, and one special education teacher. They all felt the same as the principal above and argued that immigration was not really an issue at upper secondary level. Again the few immigrant background students who study at the school were well prepared to face the competitive stress of the upper secondary years.

Challenges

The main challenge in terms of general upper secondary school, not only at the school under review but in general in Finland, is the minimal number of immigrant background students who enter this level of education. The criteria to enter some upper secondary schools are very strict, which reduces the chances of many immigrant students. This is a significant challenge as this level is the key to enter higher education. Very few students of immigrant background are able to competitively enter Finnish universities. One solution could be to impose positively discriminatory principles for such students, to make sure that the path to higher education is not 'cut' from the start. Finally it is important to state that upper secondary schools in Finland do not share the same prestige and there seems to be a relation between lower prestige schools and a larger number of immigrants. That is a trend that municipalities such as Helsinki are currently trying to reverse.

Sweden

Country context

Sweden is today considered a 'Multicultural Society'. The trend started in the 1950s with labour market related immigration and continued with the numerous groups of political refugees that have arrived in Sweden during the past three decades.

The Swedish educational policy has since the beginning of the 70s been part of immigration politics, and since the 90s part of integration politics in Sweden (Prop. 1975:26; Prop. 1997/98:16). In 1975 Sweden got its first official policy act directed at immigrants and ethnic minorities, an act that was based on multicultural principles. Resources and support were extended to ethnic groups to preserve their language and culture. In the 1990s this multicultural policy was strongly criticized. The argument was that a multicultural policy contributes to create an atmosphere of "us, the Swedes, and the other, the immigrants" and hindered the integration of immigrants. This led to the formulation of a new integration policy in 1996. In the integration policy there is a greater focus on diversity and universal principles. In public discourse, media, debates, etc. diversity is still often associated with immigration from outside "Western Europe" (Lunneblad & Johansson 2012). However in the official documents, diversity has a broad definition, as the aim of the Swedish integration policy is to give general support to the whole population rather than to specific groups. The educational act is in line with this policy. The one exception here is children with another mother tongue than Swedish. Children in pre-school, students in compulsory school and students in upper secondary school are all entitled to mother tongue teaching, if *the language is used in the family*. In addition to this, students in upper secondary schools need to have *"very good knowledge"* of the mother tongue language in the family context in order to be entitled to support. In today's educational policy acts, preschool and school are defined as an arena for social and cultural interactions, aimed to prepare the coming generations for a life in an increasingly internationalised society. However, since the 1990s, there has also been a growing awareness of the ethnic and cultural differences and racism in Swedish society. The past 10 years have seen a growing debate about the relation between immigration and internal national problems related to segregation and xenophobia (Lunneblad & Johansson 2012).

Preschools (P)

P1, the *City Pre-school* is a preschool situated in an urban area of Sweden, in a city with around 20% immigrant population in 2010. The *City pre-school* is part of *City School (case 3)*, both established in 1980. The school is a so-called "free school". The schools in the project in Sweden are run by the municipalities. A free school is controlled by central and local governments by means of the national curriculum, financial funding and school inspections, while at the same time educational quality is seen as something achieved through competition between schools. The schools get paid for each student that attends the school and if the student chooses to start at another school the funds follow the student. This has created what has been described as a quasi-market of municipal and free schools where parents and students choose their schools. The City preschool and school is located in a suburb

of an industrial city, 15 minutes by tram from the city center. However, since there are few settlements between the city area and the suburb, it is considered as separated from the rest of the city. Municipal statistics indicate that the number of unemployed adults is higher and the average income is lower than in the surrounding municipality and nearly 35% of the inhabitants receive economic support from the social welfare. The suburb has approximate 48,000 inhabits, 70% of whom are born outside Sweden. The students and children at City school and preschool have one or two parents born outside Sweden. Apart from Swedish, 15 different languages are spoken among the children/students in city preschool and school, including sign language. The largest language groups are Arabic, Tigrinja, East Syriac, West Syriac and Polish.

The preschool building and the school building face each other with a common yard in the middle and older and younger children as well as teacher staff from different educational levels may visit each other during the day.

22 children attend City preschool. The pedagogues include two female preschool teachers with university degrees in education, one female nursery teacher and one female assistant. None of the pedagogues have an immigrant background. Staff retention rate is high. The preschool consists of one group of children 1.5 – 5 years of age. The school and preschool have a religious (Christian) profile; children with different religious backgrounds are welcome but the pedagogues are required to have a Christian faith.

P2, the *Village preschool* is situated in a small "white collar" town. In the greater municipality are also farms and forests. Municipal statistics indicate that the number of unemployed adults is lower and the income is higher, both compared to other rural communities and to Sweden taken as a whole. The municipality has a population of 38,000 inhabitants, of which 10% were born outside Sweden. The preschool has five groups of children divided by age (4 groups with children 1-3 years of age and one group with children 3-5 years of age). The number of children is around 110, 40 % of whom have another mother tongue than Swedish.

Pedagogues working with the observed group of children aged 3-5 are two preschool teachers with university degrees in education and one nursery teacher. A core value of the preschool is *equality & equity*. The preschool has frequent evaluations together with parents and children, regarding their work with equal rights and the "no violation" policy. The result is published on the preschool's website, and there is also a copy for everyone to read in the preschool's entrance where parents leave and pick up their children.

Some examples put forward from the children in the latest report from 2014/2015, is that they felt sad if they were excluded from play or if someone teased them. The pedagogic strategy to meet this, according to the report, is to work with "feel-good/well-being rules". This means that the pedagogues are supposed to work with these issues on a concrete level together with the children and take into account the children's different experiences.

Policies and curricula

Both preschools follow the national curriculum for pre- schools, Lpfö – 98 (Skolverket, 2011). The city pre-school has a Christian profile, but this is not stressed in local policy documents. Rather, certain values are repeated on webpages and local documents such as making every child visible, taking care and helping each other and the importance of creating good relations (between children, children and teachers as well as between preschool and home/parents).

In line with the national curriculum for preschools, local policy documents describe multiculture as a positive resource in preschool. One example is from the quality report at City preschool, where children's backgrounds are described as part of an identity work, where multiculture also is part of the Swedish identity.

> The [city school and preschool] tries to find ways in order to create Swedishness and a sense of belonging to Sweden where our multicultural background is an asset (Quality report, 2012 p. 14).

Policy documents describe the preschools as child centered with a focus on the competent child. Children are competent enough to give their opinions about questions important to them and it is the adults' responsibility to listen and make their participation possible.

Learning, participation and organization are some key words mentioned in local policy documents. Learning is here understood as a combination of learning and care (Edu Care), described as a fun/creative (life-long) learning for children as well as for adults. Participation is seen as a way to gain influence in daily activities in preschool, as well as to influence the future. The focus on organization is described as the necessity to build organizations that take into account experiences and knowledge of individuals and by that generate future knowledge and hope.

Another factor leading to success is a policy of equality, equity and non-violence. In the village pre-school this work was manifested in a policy document, evaluated and revised every term by parents, pedagogues as well as by the children themselves.

Leadership

Preschool leaders in our study pointed out the importance to create teams of pedagogues that could work well together in order to create reflective learning spaces. Some examples mentioned are further pedagogical training and knowledge production through teachers' self-reflection in relation to their daily work.

An important question is how further pedagogical training should be organized. If further education in multicultural teaching is offered to a single teacher at the preschool, it might be a challenge to transfer this knowledge to the whole working team and to the entire preschool organisation. It is therefore a better idea, according to the leaders, to spread the further education among a team of teachers (at least 2) who work together and support each other in order to teach the others. Single visionaries can become very lonely and when they leave, it might be difficult for remaining teachers to uphold this individual and specific knowledge.

Related to this is the importance of analysing the work with children with another mother tongue than Swedish, as part of every pedagogue's/teacher's obligation. Hence, this is not a specific question for specific teachers/pedagogues but, just like issues about gender equity, important for everybody in school/preschool. This perspective is also in line with the national curriculum.

Teachers

Preschools in Sweden have a divided general purpose. On the one hand they need to be a learning environment for children, and on the other hand, they need to adapt to (both) parents' working hours. Both City preschool and Village preschool had general opening hours from 06:30 until 18:00 in order to meet parents' need for childcare, but individual children stayed for approximately 4-8 hours depending on their parents' working hours. All children, regardless of their parents' working situation, have the right to 20 hours of childcare/preschool each week.

Both preschool teachers and nursery teachers work together in a team, even if the preschool teachers take more responsibility for planning and evaluation of activities in relation to the national curriculum. The focus on Edu-Care means that care and learning cannot be separated. Hence, practices traditionally linked to care, such as meals or changing diapers, are seen as central for learning and preschool teachers work during the whole day – not just in activities traditionally linked to learning.

After breakfast at 8 o'clock, children may play indoors until 9.30 when they have circle time. Preferably, all children should be at preschool in time for this activity, since one of the goals here is to make every child visible. A concrete example of this is that all children get the opportunity to speak at circle time in our preschools, due to the habit of giving the word to each child rather than directing the questions to the whole group. Then follows play outdoors or planned activities such as excursions to the forest or explorative work centred on a theme such as "spring" or "my family". Lunch is at 11:30 and then the youngest children take a nap and the older children take a rest while listening to one of the pedagogues reading books. At 15:00 a snack is served. In the afternoon play-time is scheduled, indoors or outdoors. Hence, there is a mix of activities where teachers have more influence, such as explorative work or circle time, and activities where the children as a group have more influence, such as play situations. Notable is also that most of the time (in terms of hours) in preschool is centred on play. However, preschool teachers do not always participate in play, but rather act on certain conflicts between children. A success factor from our preschools is therefore that pedagogues work in a reflective way with inclusion in play, supporting children who need to learn how to play together with other children and/or supporting children to communicate with other children.

Children (parents)

First, the Swedish language was seen as the "proper" language to use. This meant that children using other languages than Swedish where at risk of becoming excluded. Hence, a factor for success was to encourage the children to speak (all) their language(s), the more the merrier. The way the pedagogues at City preschool encouraged the children in terms of language also had a bearing on the way the children talked about their background. To speak many languages and "having five countries" became just as high status as "having five years".

Challenges

Challenges put forward by the practitioners in preschool were often related to big groups of children and difficulties to work with each child's needs in these large groups. Another challenge was the lack of mother tongue teachers directed towards preschool. Not all students with another mother tongue than Swedish get the support that they are entitled to. In Sweden all students are entitled to mother tongue language training if the language is used in the family. However in the preschools where we conducted our study, far from all children were offered such support. Furthermore, there is also a need for further training for preschool teachers and nursery teachers in terms of multicultural education.

Compulsory Schools (C)

We have two schools in our project, the Village school (C4) and the City school next to the preschool (C3), also described in the previous section about preschool. The students in both these schools have better grades compared to other schools where parents have the same socioeconomic background and income (according to SALSA database). The City school has 15 languages and offers mother tongue in 12 of them. Half of the students in City school study Swedish as a second language. The Village school is a municipality school with 420 students, ages 6 – 16. Approximate 25% of the students at Village school have a different mother tongue than Swedish.

Policies and curricula

The national school act states that children with a mother tongue different from Swedish have the right to mothertoungeteaching. However, on a loca level it is often the policy that there need to be a group of about 3 children speaking a specific language, in order to organize such teaching. Hence, in reality it might be the case that the school decides if a student may study Swedish as a second language.

Productive relations between parents and school are often presented as important in local policy documents. Central in the policy of City school is for example relations between the staff and the parents. Leaders, teachers and students in the two schools interpret diversity *as a resource for the school, rather than a problem*. In the schools' narratives, inclusion was articulated as way of showing respect for cultural differences and finding ways of communicating between cultures and people. School leaders, teachers and students talked about respecting difference, and thinking positively about diversity. At the same time, teachers and management use different local strategies of leadership, depending on their specific school culture and traditions (cf. Ball et al 2012). The city school emphasises the importance of shared norms, values and a Christian identity. Linguistic and ethnic diversity at this school could sometimes be interpreted as a threat to the school culture. This was the case when norms and values among the students were considered as "incompatible" with Christian values. From a normative and theoretical point of view, the notion that diversity can be a threat can be interpreted as discriminatory (Bennett 2001, Giroux 1996). Village school stresses the importance of mother tongue role models as well as the contribution that youth recreation leaders make to social cohesion in after school activities. In conclusion though, both schools managed to form inclusive school cultures, even though these cultures were manifested in different ways and with different emphases. Irrespective of differences, an important factor for inclusive education seems to be seeing diversity in a positive light rather than as a problem

Leadership

The schools have different leader and organizational structure. The school leader at the City school, worked more on their own, compared to the school leaders at the schools govened by the municipality. Those school leaders were also were part of team with other school leaders and there was aims formulated at other levels of leadership in the municipality. There were also some commonality among the schools, all school have a reception class for the students that were new in the country. However as the schools were organized in many different way, in regard to the numbers of students, professionals at school, but also that the schools were situated in areas that have very different conditions. It is therby

difficult to draw some conclusion about the impact of leadership and organisation. However interviews and conversations with school management and teachers highlight the on-going process of creating an inclusive school culture as something import at all schools. Research about organisation have also highlighted an inclusive leadership as successful way, from the management point of view, “member identification presents a les obtrusive, and potential more effective, means of organisation control than methods that relay upon external stimuli (Alvesson & Willmott 2002 p 629). However this should not be understood as top down processes. Rather we want to understand this work as a process where different actors are involved defining the school culture and what it means to be part of the schools.

Teachers

The headmaster, teachers and students at Village school often stressed the importance of activities and social engagement outside the regular curriculum. One of the activities that is repeatedly mentioned is the cabaret. The school has staged a cabaret every year since the early 1990s. The number of students participating varies from year to year but approximately 50% of the students are involved at some point. In the narratives about the school, the cabaret is described as one of the activities that create the school's identity. The youth recreation leaders organize and are in charge of activities that create opportunities for students to do something together, including students who might not otherwise have gotten to know each other. But the school leader also describes the recreation leaders as having a preventative function: a part of their work is to supervise and ensure that there is no graffiti, littering, or bullying between students that can lead to destruction, violations and unwanted peer cultures. The cabaret can be interpreted as a brand for the school. Continuity over time allows for identification with the school, both for former students and for present students. Also in the students’ and teachers’ narratives about the school, the cabaret is highlighted. One of the things both students and teachers talk about is how the work with the cabaret creates opportunities for students from different ages and groups to get to know each other.

Students

Students in our schools often had to counteract a bad reputation given to the school. One example of this is from Village school, also known to be an “immigrant school”. This has to some extent given the school a bad reputation. In a group interview with the students this was something that was displayed.

> Miranda: There are many immigrants at this school. More than in other schools in this city. And then there is this racist talk ... It can’t be a good school...
>
> Peter: They say we are an immigrant school so we must be crap. Just because we receive many “newcomers” here, and that we help them with the Swedish language. Many other schools don’t do that. And then they think that our school is crap.
>
> Lisa: They think they are better, and that we have lots of fights and poor grades. But I think it is very good that we see diversity as something positive.
>
> Miranda: We take care of everyone, so no one is excluded. That's what this school is about, getting everyone together.

In the students’ discussion they argue that what others assume is negative about Village school, is really what is positive. According to the headmaster, there is also a conscious effort to make diversity a part of the school identity. The headmaster explains that the mother tongue teachers play an important role in how ethnic diversity is observed at school:

> We have discussed this a lot, how to make the mother tongue teachers part of the school. I'm their headmaster so I arranged that they got their office here. I can see this as a win-win situation for me, and for the entire school. I see this dynamic; just ... You see a Somali teacher playing billiards in the hallway during the break. You see someone who looks different. You see, Joseph from Kurdistan in a blazer and tie. It belongs to the culture of this school.

This approach aims to improve the status of the mother tongue teachers and make them become role models. The symbolic value of artefacts, such as photographs, was also part of creating an inclusive school. At the entrance to the school there are photographs of the staff. Among the photographs are also pictures of the mother tongue teachers. In Sweden mother tongue teachers often teach at several schools and spend a great deal of the day traveling between schools. This was also the case for the mother tongue teachers teaching at Village school. But because most of the students with Swedish as a second language studied at Village school, the headmaster managed to arrange things so the mother tongue teachers had their “office” at the school.

In the narratives about the school, school leaders, teachers and students express that there is an inclusive school culture. However our data also reveals that even if there are no ethnic based groups among the students, many of the students who are seen as immigrants have difficulties finding “Swedish peers” outside school.

Parental involvement was something that was seen as important at all schools. In our material rveals nothing that doesn't indicate that there in general were good and friendly relation between the teachers as the parents. However examining this on a deeper level the results indicate that although the educators try to create a dialogue and communicate with the parents, they were not always succeeding. The results indicate that are situations when the dialog breaks down and the communication become more of information from school to parents. In those cases the teachers often use different strategies to implement their views and ideas. In conclusion, it is not merely the clash between different perspectives that contribute to distortions in the communication between schools and parents, we also how unequal social conditions create distance and alienation.

Challenges

One of the challenges we can see in the Swedish context is that not all students with another mother tongue than Swedish get the support that they are entitled to. In Sweden all students are entitled to mother tongue language training in school if the language is used in the family. However in the schools where we conducted our study, far from all students were offered such support. The linguistic and ethnic diversity at the school was sometimes also interpreted as something negative. The main argument was that there was not resources enough to give newly arrived students the support they needed. There were also arguments among some teachers that newly arrived students started before they were ready to be taught in the “ordinary” class. The teachers complained that the newly arrived students lacked knowledge in the Swedish language and could not take part of the lectures and discussions in the classroom. The teachers also argued and that they did not have time to give the newly arrived students the extra support they needed. This resulted in stress and frustration among the teachers and tension between school management and the teachers that taught in reception classes.

Discussion

Below we summarize and discuss the findings from the four research areas and provide guidelines and recommendations for school development.

Our research findings reveal a variety of interesting educational practices within and across the four countries, although there are many similarities in policies, structures and organization.

Policies and curricula

The policies of the preschools in all countries are child centred and emphasize holistic view of learning that focuses on care, play and active participation. They emphasize creating a community for all children. This is reflected in active communication with parents and children across languages and cultures.

The policies of the compulsory schools (elementary and lower secondary) emphasize diversity and inclusion and cooperation between teachers. Cooperation with parents is also an important part of the policies. Structures differ slightly between the schools although they generally organize introductory divisions or reception units around the immigrant children. There are, however, examples of schools that have a model of direct integration. In most of the schools the students belong to a regular class and have their supervisory teacher, and their attendance in the units depends on their needs and pace of learning.

In the upper secondary schools the policies emphasize that the student acquire knowledge to be able to think independently and critically so they can actively participate in society. The schools have a variety of programmes and support to facilitate the integration of immigrant students. Policies indicate understanding and empathy for immigrant students.

Leadership

Leadership in the preschools is democratic and the structure and organization does not differentiate immigrant children. Leaders are supportive and participative and strive to ensure democratic participation of all children. The leaders in some of the schools work in very demanding conditions, for example with low staff retention and staff that does not have preschool teacher education. In some cases the leaders and teachers lack the initiatives of reaching out to the immigrant parents.

Leadership in the compulsory schools generally has a democratic approach and can be characterized as participative and supportive. The leaders' aim is to create an inclusive school culture and support diversity and social justice. They emphasize respecting difference and thinking positively about diversity.

In the upper secondary schools, organizational structures have been created for teaching the majority languages. These are independent units or departments led by heads of departments that have knowledge and interest in the matters of immigrant students. The leaders are preoccupied with the social isolation of the students and have developed ways to counteract this.

Teachers

The teachers in the preschools generally emphasize individually based care and learning, diversity and equality. Educational practices are generally child-centred and based on diversity, with the aim of involving all children in active participation. Some of the teachers have specialized in education for diversity, but this does not apply to all teachers. Some missed learning opportunities were observed,

where the teachers lacked the initiative to involve immigrant children in the activities. Scaffolding opportunities were not used to the full extent.

Teachers in the compulsory schools generally emphasize the importance of creating a welcoming and trusting learning environment for students. They understand the importance of linguistic diversity as a resource, while also acknowledging the importance for the students' future of learning the majority language. The teachers also emphasize cooperation with parents.

The varied experiences of the teachers in the upper secondary schools of living and studying abroad provided them with an understanding and insight into multicultural issues. Some of the teachers had a strong vision for teaching immigrant students. However, their practices varied and while some teachers emphasized the majority language acquisition, others had a more holistic view, emphasizing the students' personal and social development, as well as academic learning.

Students and children

Most of the immigrant children in the preschools were active and seemed to be included in play. In some of the preschools, the majority language was the "proper" language to use, while other preschools encouraged the use of many languages. There were some cases of missed learning opportunities, where the teachers lacked the initiative to involve immigrant children in the activities and the children seemed to be marginalized.

The students interviewed and observed in the compulsory schools emphasize their teachers and their schools as reasons for their success. Some describe their teachers as caring, kind and genuinely concerned with their well-being and success. Generally, the students appear to be active in their schools and both academically and socially successful. However, challenges appear in both of the models, the reception model and the model of direct integration. Some of the students in the reception model find it difficult to relate to and make friends with children in the regular class. And some of the students in the model of direct integration feel insecure and find it an overwhelming experience.

Overall, the students in the upper secondary schools appeared to be very positive about their schools and many of their teachers. They appreciated that their teachers showed personal interest in them and cared for their well-being. They also talked about the importance of having a demanding school environment. Most of these students had friends from immigrant backgrounds, while some also had Icelandic friends.

Guidelines and recommendations for school development

- Educating teachers for diversity:
    - Formal training and education on multilingualism and communication across linguistic and cultural differences.
    - Formal training and education in multicultural education.
    - Formal training and education in teaching (Finnish, Icelandic, Norwegian, Swedish) second languages.

- Immigrant students' education should be the responsibility of all teachers, not only teachers in introductory or reception units. Therefore all teachers need to be involved in the education of newly-arrived students.
- Teachers and leaders need to be more ambitious in the education of minority language children.
- Importance of building on all languages and supporting multilingualism.
- Increase the number of mother tongue teachers for teaching mother languages and supporting immigrant children.
- Importance of a holistic approach where social as well as academic success is emphasized.
- Importance of sustainable leadership and measures for sustaining knowledge and good practices.
- Cooperation between schools (teachers and leaders) and sharing of experiences, practices and ideas.
- Cooperation with parents.
- Continued professional development.
- Improve access of immigrant students to upper secondary school.