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& CARL BEAUDOIN

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EDITORIAL: PREPARING TEACHERS FOR DIVERSITY IN THE  
NEOLIBERAL AND NEOCONSERVATIVE “NORTH” — RE-IMAGINING  
TEACHER EDUCATION

The very first issue that the *MJE/RSEM* published sixty years ago was on activism. How appropriate that sixty years later, to mark the longevity of the journal’s contribution to the field of education, we are publishing a special issue that also engages with activism. When we, as guest editors, first issued the call for this special issue, sociocultural and political changes were transforming the global landscape of education (Nieto, 2017; Sleeter, 2024; Vertovec, 2023)—and nearing the issue’s publication, they are doing so again, and with renewed force. Teachers have increasingly been expected to critically understand, respond to, and teach through and for diversity in ways that go beyond surface-level approaches. Recognizing that diversity is a complex construct that encompasses but is not limited to culture, language, religion, gender, sex, age, ability, race, and ethnicity (Banks & Banks, 2019), educators face the challenge of fostering inclusive and equitable learning environments. This involves not only acknowledging and valuing students’ diverse identities and experiences and ensuring that students’ cultural and linguistic experiences and perspectives are reflected in the curriculum, but implementing pedagogical approaches that provide meaningful learning opportunities for all students (Beaudoin, 2024).

Our special issue focuses on reimagining teacher education in Northern contexts in times of growing neo-conservatism and neoliberalism that threaten the expectations mapped out in our opening paragraph. Our particular focus is on the “North”, broadly defined as the Global North, though not necessarily understood geographically; we consider perspectives from diverse sites: Canada, Finland, Germany, Iceland, and Norway, this in the form of nine articles and one Note from the Field. The issue is timely, as neo-conservatism and neo-liberalism gain new ground globally and in education. Neo-conservative groups tend to construe diversity as a threat to political and social stability, framing it negatively as

interfering with the vision of one nation-people-language (Nowicka, 2018; Perry & Scrivens, 2019). Such ideologies impact the aspiration to inclusion, well-being, and sense of belonging of students and teachers of diverse and minoritized backgrounds in education (Shirazi & Jaffe-Walter, 2021). Diversity in education is also being undermined by neoliberal policies and discourses, which (mis)appropriate education for marketing purposes so as to benefit institutions, rather than by confronting and changing “racial and other forms of inequalities that exist in our social system” (Kubota, 2015, p. 9).

We turn to explaining how each article and one Note contribute to this special issue.

Benediktsson’s study explores career aspirations and educational experiences of seven Danish-born student teachers of a transnational background in their final year of study who will become teachers in compulsory schools in Denmark. Through interviews, Benediktsson found that the student teachers, though generally satisfied with their experiences, reported encountering different forms of discrimination in their programs. The teachers were nevertheless determined to challenge social injustice and bring positive change to the compulsory education system.

Lukala and Dervin investigate the positioning of “the migrant student” in a European Union-Finland project which aims to prepare teachers for social justice migrant education. Given that the project operates within a neoliberal economic-political supranational institution, the authors were interested in examining potential tensions between principles of social justice, on the one hand, and neoliberalism, on the other hand, as reflected in project documents. The findings revealed that “the migrant student” is often portrayed as different, disadvantaged, and problematic, highlighting the issue of othering. The article addresses the consequences of such portrayals and offers recommendations for the ethical treatment of marginalized groups.

Keeping with the focus on migrant students, through a case study and narrative analysis, Pélissier and Théberge research whether and how educational practices in Ontario’s French-language schools are adapted to support newcomer students amid growing cultural diversity. As immigration reshapes the Ontario Francophonie, sustaining linguistic and cultural vitality depends on inclusive, responsive schooling. Despite existing policies promoting diversity and equity, the complexity of minority and multilingual contexts demands deeper understandings. Pélissier and Théberge identify practices that foster inclusion and

academic success, while highlighting the role of interculturality in meeting the varied needs of immigrant students and that can therefore constructively inform teacher training.

At a time when neoliberalism and neoconservatism compel teachers to focus narrowly on their own contexts, Strong-Wilson and Al-Madhoun ask how cross-national conversations between Canada and the Northern countries can break down boundaries and provide important insights for teaching to social justice. The authors discuss how to critically introduce and respond to literature's presence in the elementary and secondary classroom, especially given national identities formed through Northern/Nordic exceptionalism.

Brinkmann and Gerwers analyzed how identity-based pedagogies focused on diversity and inclusion can relate to student teachers' beliefs about resisting neoliberal and neoconservative structures in the educational system. Eleven student teachers participated in an asynchronous discussion forum in a university-level Spanish language pedagogies course; the discussion was then analyzed. The researchers found that the student teachers were engaging with different aspects of diversity—equity, othering, and agency—and that this was especially the case for student teachers who had personal experiences of poverty and racism.

Drawing on the authors' experiences as professor or student of French as a Second Language at a university in Ontario, Canada, Lamaison and Sarchese suggest ethical and cultural accommodations to support the learning of D/deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals in oral language classes. The study was informed by a critical analysis of existing resources for teachers at Ontario universities. The analysis revealed that despite commitments to social justice through legal guarantees for people with disabilities, a large number of individuals continue to encounter major barriers to inclusion. The authors provide pedagogical and practical advice for better accommodating D/deaf and hard-of-hearing students in both classroom and online settings.

Fuglseth addressed how teachers can respond to and resist growing neoliberal and neoconservative orientations in Norwegian education. The author revisits *Bildung*-pedagogy, a theory rooted in Enlightenment ideals of autonomy, responsibility, and diversity, to suggest how old principles can meet new challenges, particularly regarding religious and cultural diversity in Norway. Through a textual analysis of the Norwegian national curriculum, Fuglseth shows that the curriculum reflects neither clear neoliberal nor neoconservative models. A new theoretical model of knowledge presentation for teachers is proposed.

Potvin, Tremblay, Doré, Low, Lefrançois, and Demers explored the impact of Quebec's *Loi sur la laïcité de l'État* (Loi 21/Bill 21), passed in 2019 amid rising tensions over religious neutrality and reasonable accommodation. Extending restrictions on religious symbols to teachers and school leaders, Bill 21 reflects broader neoconservative trends limiting individual rights. Using a sociology of law approach, the authors analyzed a 2020 survey of 972 education professionals and students, results from which highlighted the negative impact of the Bill. The authors critically situate the findings within broader debates over secularism, diversity, and rights in Quebec.

In Iceland, Óskarsdóttir and Emilsson Peskova focus on the need to prepare student teachers to work with learners from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds in schools. Using a policy framework analysis, the authors argue that effectively practicing inclusive pedagogy in multicultural and multilingual school environments – where neoliberal and neoconservative influences are increasingly present – requires developing teachers' knowledge, awareness, and perspectives on diversity, as well as equipping them with robust pedagogical tools.

Finally, the special issue includes a Note from the Field by Miquelon. We appropriately conclude with the student. Miquelon reflects on reader autobiography as a genre that can be used in the classroom to enhance students' personal engagement with their reading. By promoting cultural diversity in the literary corpus, this autobiographical approach offers students opportunities to see themselves reflected in their school readings, all the while discovering diverse life paths.

We hope you will enjoy reading this special issue.

THOR-ANDRÉ SKREFSRUD, VANDER TAVARES, & CARL BEAUDOIN

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*Editorial*

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## ÉDITORIAL : PRÉPARER LES PERSONNES ENSEIGNANTES À LA DIVERSITÉ DANS LE « NORD » NÉOLIBÉRAL ET NÉOCONSERVATEUR, RÉIMAGINER LA FORMATION DES PERSONNES ENSEIGNANTES

Le tout premier numéro publié par le *MJE/RSEM* il y a soixante ans était consacré à l'activisme. Il est donc tout à fait approprié que, soixante ans plus tard, afin de souligner la longévité de la contribution de la revue au domaine de l'éducation, nous publions un numéro spécial qui aborde également la question de l'activisme. Lorsque nous avons lancé l'appel à contributions pour ce numéro spécial, plusieurs changements sociaux, culturels et politiques récents bouleversaient déjà le paysage éducatif mondial (Nieto, 2017; Sleeter, 2024; Vertovec, 2023). À l'approche de la publication, ces changements s'intensifient encore. On attend davantage des personnes enseignantes qu'elles comprennent de manière critique la diversité, qu'elles y répondent, et qu'elles l'enseignent, au-delà des approches superficielles. Reconnaisant que la diversité est une notion complexe qui englobe, sans s'y limiter, la culture, la langue, la religion, le genre, le sexe, l'âge, les facultés, la race et l'ethnicité (Banks et Banks, 2019), les éducateurs sont confrontés au défi de promouvoir des environnements d'apprentissage inclusifs et équitables. Cela implique non seulement de reconnaître et de valoriser les identités et expériences diverses des élèves, et de veiller à ce que leurs expériences et perspectives culturelles et linguistiques soient reflétées dans le curriculum, mais aussi de mettre en œuvre des approches pédagogiques qui offrent des occasions d'apprentissage significatives pour tous les élèves (Beaudoin, 2024).

Ce numéro spécial se concentre sur la réinvention de la formation des personnes enseignantes dans des contextes nordiques, à une époque où le néoconservatisme et le néolibéralisme en hausse remettent en question les aspirations exprimées dans notre introduction. Notre point central porte sur le « Nord », compris au sens large comme le Nord global, bien que cette notion ne soit pas forcément définie de manière géographique; nous considérons des perspectives issues de divers lieux : le Canada, la Finlande, l'Allemagne, l'Islande et la Norvège, à travers neuf articles et une Note du

terrain. Ce numéro paraît à un moment opportun, alors que le néoconservatisme et le néolibéralisme gagnent du terrain partout dans le monde, y compris en éducation. Les groupes néoconservateurs ont tendance à considérer la diversité comme une menace à la stabilité politique et sociale, la présentant de manière négative comme un obstacle à la vision d'une nation, d'un peuple, d'une langue (Nowicka, 2018; Perry et Scrivens, 2019). Ces idéologies entravent les aspirations des élèves et des personnes enseignantes issues de milieux diversifiés et minorisés à l'inclusion, au bien-être et au sentiment d'appartenance dans le système éducatif (Shirazi et Jaffe-Walter, 2021). La diversité en éducation est également dégradée par les politiques et discours néolibéraux, qui (ré)approprient l'éducation à des fins de publicité pour en faire bénéficier les institutions, au lieu de confronter et de transformer « racial and other forms of inequalities that exist in our social system » (Kubota, 2015, p. 9).

Nous nous tournons maintenant vers une explication de la manière dont chaque article, ainsi qu'une Note, contribuent à ce numéro spécial.

L'étude de Benediktsson explore les aspirations professionnelles et les expériences éducatives de sept personnes enseignantes-étudiantes, nées au Danemark, mais issues de milieux transnationaux, en dernière année de formation pour enseigner dans les écoles obligatoires danoises. À travers des entrevues, Benediktsson a constaté que, bien que globalement satisfaits de leur parcours, ces personnes enseignantes-étudiantes ont rapporté avoir été confrontées à différentes formes de discrimination dans leurs programmes. Malgré cela, elles sont déterminées à lutter contre l'injustice sociale et à apporter un changement positif au sein du système scolaire obligatoire.

Lukala et Dervin examinent la manière dont « l'élève migrant » est positionné dans un projet Union européenne-Finlande visant à préparer les personnes enseignantes à une éducation migrante axée sur la justice sociale. Étant donné que le projet s'inscrit dans une institution supranationale politico-économique de type néolibéral, les auteurs s'intéressent aux tensions potentielles entre, d'un côté, les principes de justice sociale et, de l'autre, le néolibéralisme, tel qu'ils se reflètent dans les documents du projet. Les résultats ont révélé que « l'élève migrant » est souvent présenté comme différent, défavorisé, voire problématique, ce qui met en lumière la question de la marginalisation. L'article aborde les conséquences de telles représentations et propose des recommandations pour un traitement éthique des groupes marginalisés.

En poursuivant la réflexion sur les élèves migrants, Pélissier et Théberge examinent, à travers une étude de cas et une analyse narrative, si, et

comment, les pratiques éducatives dans les écoles de langue française de l'Ontario sont adaptées pour soutenir les élèves nouvellement arrivés dans un contexte de diversité culturelle croissante. Alors que l'immigration redessine la francophonie ontarienne, le maintien de la vitalité linguistique et culturelle repose sur une éducation inclusive et réceptive. Malgré des politiques existantes en faveur de la diversité et de l'équité, la complexité des contextes minoritaires et multilingues exige des compréhensions plus approfondies. Pélessier et Théberge identifient des pratiques qui favorisent l'inclusion et la réussite scolaire, tout en mettant en lumière le rôle de l'interculturalité dans la réponse aux besoins variés des élèves immigrants – des constats susceptibles d'enrichir la formation des personnes enseignantes.

Dans un contexte où le néolibéralisme et le néoconservatisme incitent les personnes enseignantes à se concentrer exclusivement sur leur propre environnement professionnel, Strong-Wilson et Al-Madhoun s'interrogent sur la manière dont des dialogues transnationaux entre le Canada et les pays du Nord peuvent permettre de dépasser les frontières et d'offrir des perspectives essentielles pour un enseignement en faveur de la justice sociale. Les auteurs explorent comment introduire et interroger de manière critique la présence de la littérature dans les classes du primaire et du secondaire, particulièrement dans des contextes nationaux marqués par un exceptionnalisme nordique.

Brinkmann et Gerwers analysent comment des pédagogies fondées sur l'identité, centrées sur la diversité et l'inclusion, peuvent entrer en résonance avec les croyances de personnes enseignantes-étudiantes quant à la résistance aux structures néolibérales et néoconservatrices du système scolaire. Onze personnes enseignantes-étudiantes ont participé à un forum de discussion asynchrone dans le cadre d'un cours universitaire sur les pédagogies d'enseignement de l'espagnol; la discussion a ensuite été analysée. Les personnes chercheuses constatent que les participants s'engagent avec différents aspects de la diversité – équité, marginalisation et agence – en particulier chez ceux ayant vécu personnellement la pauvreté ou le racisme.

S'appuyant sur leurs expériences respectives en tant que personnes professeures ou étudiantes en français langue seconde dans une université ontarienne, Lamaison et Sarchese proposent des ajustements éthiques et culturels pour mieux soutenir l'apprentissage des personnes S/sourdes ou malentendantes dans les cours de langue orale. Leur étude repose sur une analyse critique des ressources actuellement disponibles pour les personnes enseignantes dans les universités de l'Ontario. Cette analyse

révèle que, malgré les engagements en faveur de la justice sociale et les garanties légales offertes aux personnes en situation de handicap, un grand nombre d'entre elles continuent de faire face à des obstacles majeurs à l'inclusion. Lamaison et Sarchese offrent des conseils pédagogiques et pratiques visant à mieux accueillir les élèves S/sourds ou malentendants, tant en présentiel qu'en ligne.

Fuglseth s'interroge sur les moyens dont disposent les personnes enseignantes pour réagir aux orientations néolibérales et néoconservatrices croissantes dans le système scolaire norvégien, et y résister. Fuglseth revisite la pédagogie *Bildung*, une théorie enracinée dans les idéaux du siècle des Lumières – l'autonomie, la responsabilité et la diversité – pour explorer comment des principes anciens peuvent répondre à de nouveaux défis, en particulier en ce qui concerne la diversité religieuse et culturelle en Norvège. À partir d'une analyse textuelle du programme scolaire national norvégien, Fuglseth montre que ce dernier ne reflète ni un modèle néolibéral ni un modèle clairement néoconservateur. L'article propose un nouveau modèle théorique de présentation des savoirs destiné aux personnes enseignantes.

Potvin, Tremblay, David, Doré, Lefrançois, Low et Demers ont étudié les effets de la *Loi sur la laïcité de l'État* du Québec (Loi 21), adoptée en 2019 dans un contexte de tensions croissantes autour de la neutralité religieuse et des accommodements raisonnables. En élargissant l'interdiction des signes religieux aux personnes enseignantes et/ou dirigeantes d'école, la Loi 21 s'inscrit dans un courant néoconservateur plus large qui tend à restreindre les droits individuels. Adoptant une approche de sociologie du droit, les personnes auteures analysent une enquête réalisée en 2020 auprès de 972 personnes professionnelles de l'éducation et élèves dont les résultats soulignent les effets négatifs de la Loi. Potvin, Tremblay, David, Doré, Low et Demers replacent ces données dans le cadre plus vaste des débats québécois sur la laïcité, la diversité et les droits.

En Islande, Óskarsdóttir et Emilsson Peskova s'intéressent à la nécessité de préparer les personnes enseignantes-étudiantes à travailler avec des élèves issus de milieux linguistiques et culturels divers dans les écoles. À partir d'une analyse des cadres politiques, Óskarsdóttir et Emilsson Peskova soutiennent que la mise en œuvre efficace d'une pédagogie inclusive dans des milieux scolaires multiculturels et multilingues, qui sont de plus en plus influencés par des idéologies néolibérales et néoconservatrices, nécessite le développement chez les personnes enseignantes de connaissances, de conscience et de perspectives sur la diversité, de même qu'une maîtrise de méthodes pédagogiques solides.

Enfin, ce numéro spécial se conclut par une Note du terrain, rédigée par Miquelon. Il est approprié qu'on finisse avec l'élève. Miquelon songe à utiliser l'autobiographie comme un genre littéraire pour susciter l'intérêt personnel des élèves envers la lecture, dans le cadre de leurs travaux en classe. En valorisant la diversité culturelle au sein du corpus littéraire, cette approche autobiographique permet aux élèves de se reconnaître dans les textes scolaires tout en découvrant la pluralité des parcours de vie.

Nous espérons que vous prendrez plaisir à lire ce numéro spécial.

THOR-ANDRÉ SKREFSRUD, VANDER TAVARES ET CARL BEAUDOIN

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# “SHE SAID THAT I WAS A PATTERN-BREAKER”: CAREER ASPIRATIONS AND CHALLENGES FOR STUDENTS OF A TRANSNATIONAL BACKGROUND IN TEACHER EDUCATION IN DENMARK

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**ABSTRACT.** This article explores the career aspirations and educational experiences of Danish-born students of a transnational background who are nearing completion of their studies to become professional teachers in compulsory schools in Denmark. The theoretical framework of the study is grounded in the tenets of critical multiculturalism and transnationalism. The findings obtained from individual qualitative interviews with seven students indicate their overall satisfaction with teacher educators and the learning environments within their campuses. However, the participants also reported experiencing varying degrees of unfair treatment, labelling, and prejudice. Despite having encountered different forms of discrimination, the participants have ambitious career aspirations, often manifested in their determination to challenge social injustice and bring positive change to the compulsory education system.

« SHE SAID THAT I WAS A PATTERN-BREAKER » : ASPIRATIONS  
PROFESSIONNELLES ET DÉFIS DES ÉTUDIANTS ISSUS D'UN MILIEU  
TRANSNATIONAL DANS LA FORMATION DES ENSEIGNANTS AU  
DANEMARK

**RÉSUMÉ.** Cet article explore les aspirations professionnelles et les expériences scolaires d'étudiants nés au Danemark et issus d'un milieu transnational qui terminent leurs études d'enseignement dans les écoles obligatoires danoises. Le cadre théorique de l'étude s'appuie sur les principes du multiculturalisme critique et du transnationalisme. Les résultats des entrevues qualitatives individuelles menées auprès de sept étudiants montrent leur satisfaction globale à l'égard des formateurs d'enseignants et de leurs environnements d'apprentissage. Cependant, ils ont également mentionné avoir subi des traitements injustes, de l'étiqouetage et des préjugés. Malgré avoir été confrontés à différentes formes de discrimination, les participants ont des aspirations professionnelles ambitieuses, souvent manifestées par leur détermination à combattre l'injustice sociale et à apporter un changement positif au système d'éducation obligatoire.

It is a sunny April morning in one of Denmark's university colleges. I am sitting in a classroom and interviewing a student teacher who has agreed to participate in my research project about student teachers' perspectives on multicultural education. The interviewee is nearing completion of her 4 years of studies to become a professional teacher. She is feeling a mix of excitement and anticipation about the next chapter in her life. The room has glass walls allowing us to see other students passing by on the way to the library or sitting around the tables and chatting. The environment feels lively and welcoming. The interviewee was born in Denmark, but her family has a transnational background. She shares a story:

I met a teacher at my workplace. I worked in a clothes shop. I worked in the bags section back then. And that teacher came in and said, "I need a teacher's bag," and I was like, "This one is a good teacher's bag." Then we chatted about how I knew that because I was studying to become a teacher. And then I asked her about education, what she had taken and things like that. And then she said that I was a pattern-breaker. (Participant M3)

The interviewee explained that she was confused about the final remark on her being a pattern-breaker. Despite her initial confusion, she understood exactly the origins of that remark. It was an indication of low expectations and existing prejudice toward young people of a transnational background who are being assigned patterns of behaviour and societal labels of inferiority solely based on their appearance.

For the purpose of this study, the term *transnational background* is used to refer to Danish-born individuals whose parents or grandparents, after immigrating to Denmark, maintained ties across cultures. These ties are manifested in various ways, such as maintaining cultural traditions, speaking heritage languages at home, or upholding social connections with communities in their places of origin. Although Denmark is often portrayed in the media as being a welfare state with the world's happiest people, many researchers point out the issues of inequality, injustice, labelling, and racism toward individuals with transnational backgrounds, especially non-Western backgrounds (e.g., Jensen et al., 2017; Kristensen, 2022; Larsen, 2012; Vertelyte & Staunæs, 2021). These discriminatory discourses pose significant barriers for young people in their pursuit of educational opportunities and labour market access.

Focusing on Danish-born student teachers of a transnational background, this article examines how they make sense of their educational pathways, articulate their career aspirations, and envision their professional futures in Denmark's compulsory school system. In the context of this article,

*career aspirations* are defined as the range of professional goals and ambitions that these students strive to attain in their future careers. These aspirations include a commitment to social justice, cultural responsiveness, and continuous professional and personal development to successfully address the diverse needs of all children. According to previous studies, student teachers' career aspirations often correlate to the personal experiences and challenges they faced during their compulsory education (Flores & Day, 2006; Miller & Shifflet, 2016). The guiding research questions are as follows:

1. What are the career aspirations of Danish-born student teachers of a transnational background?
2. How do childhood memories and previous schooling experiences influence their career aspirations?
3. What challenges do these students encounter during their teacher education journey and the on-site schoolteacher training?
4. How do they navigate and overcome these challenges?

The article addresses these research questions by analyzing qualitative interviews with seven student teachers of a transnational background at two university colleges in Denmark. Considering the complexity involved in embracing transnational identities, there is a clear indication of the necessity for encouraging student teachers to engage in self-reflection and explore cultural nuances, solidifying their professional identities and pedagogical approaches (Carter Andrews, 2021; Ladson-Billings, 2021). Recognizing this, the present study puts forward empirical evidence underscoring the need to nurture teachers who not only are professionally competent but also are equipped with critical multicultural viewpoints. The article offers a unique insight into the experiences of student teachers of a transnational background, an area that remains under-researched. To date, there is a notable lack of studies specifically exploring this particular demographic in Denmark.

The next section will introduce a conceptual exploration of the tenets of critical multiculturalism and transnationalism, which underlie the theoretical framework of the study. An overview of the Danish political and educational context will subsequently be presented by summarizing the latest relevant research studies. Following this, the methodology will be explained and the findings will be explored through analysis of the interviews with the participants. Finally, the article concludes with a comprehensive discussion of the findings, offering valuable insights and arguments that underscore the necessity for targeted improvements in

teacher education programs in Denmark to align with the changes and diversification of the student body.

### **CRITICAL MULTICULTURALISM AND TRANSNATIONALISM**

The study's theoretical framework draws on the body of knowledge regarding critical multiculturalism and transnationalism. Critical multiculturalism evolved as a response to liberal multiculturalism, which originally aimed to improve social harmony by recognizing and respecting ethnic, cultural, and linguistic differences through a problem-solving approach (May & Sleeter, 2010). Multicultural education, which was grounded in the principles of liberal multiculturalism, quickly gained popularity in educational institutions in the Western world as a seemingly practical way to address cultural diversity. However, critical analysis of the liberal multicultural approach to education quickly identified various flaws that manifested in overlooking the underlying power dynamics that perpetuate structural inequalities such as racism, institutionalized poverty, and discrimination (May & Sleeter, 2010). Critical multiculturalism goes beyond the unelaborated celebration of diversity and critically examines power structures and social injustices within multicultural societies by emphasizing the need for policy reforms and transformative practices (May & Sleeter, 2010). This article utilizes the ideas of critical multiculturalism to underscore the significance of social justice and reform in teacher education. Such an approach is essential for educational institutions to recognize and value the unique experiences of students of a transnational background, thereby ensuring the provision of relevant support and the establishment of empowering learning environments.

The issue of labelling youths from minority backgrounds has been specifically looked at through the framework of critical multiculturalism. Winn and Behizadeh (2011) pointed out that labelling youths, especially youths of colour, as public enemies leads to increased security measures, such as hiring more security personnel, installing surveillance equipment, and employing police officers, all of which transform schools into prison-like environments and promote a school-to-prison pipeline narrative. Overall, this narrative refers to a pattern in which suspensions, expulsions, and other disciplinary practices are disproportionately imposed on students from marginalized communities (Dunn et al., 2022; Winn & Behizadeh, 2011). Hence, it is highly relevant to critically assess the impact of labelling and stereotypes, both positive and negative, on school environments. Czopp (2008) underscored the importance of enhancing awareness regarding the potential adverse effects of positive stereotypes, which are intended as compliments, on intergroup interactions. Such

stereotypes, although well-meaning, can be perceived as inappropriate or offensive, necessitating a deeper understanding of their impact on social dynamics. For instance, some African American participants in Czopp's study reacted negatively when White participants praised Black people for their athleticism, perceiving this stereotype as meaningless and biased, and criticizing it for failing to imply anything of social significance about cultural diversity or being Black. To understand different dimensions and the impact of existing cultural stereotypes in Danish teacher education, the presented study explores the views of students of a transnational background, giving them an opportunity to critically reflect on their own educational experiences.

In the European context, Islamic religious culture increasingly encounters suspicion and hostility, a phenomenon highlighting the need to re-examine the role of religion and religious marginalization in perpetuating inequality and patterns of social exclusion (Drouhot & Nee, 2019). This situation exemplifies the broader issues of labelling and stereotypes discussed earlier, where religious identity becomes a marker for exclusion and discrimination, akin to ethnic or racial categorization. Critical multiculturalism, as conceptualized by May and Sleeter (2010), provides a framework for understanding these dynamics. It positions culture and intercultural relations within the broader context of power imbalances in societies, asserting that culture and identity are dynamic and multi-layered, shaped by intersecting social categories. This approach allows for a critical examination of normative constructs like Whiteness and the processes of racialization, offering insights into how religious identities intersect with these broader patterns of social stratification and exclusion.

However, the dynamic view on culture and identity should not be misinterpreted as a promotion of cosmopolitanism, which has been criticized for apolitical notions of breaking free from societal influences and entering a utopian realm of increased liberty as a citizen of the world (Calhoun, 2003). Transnationalism is, therefore, a more appropriate term describing the lasting meaningful connections people maintain across different countries and cultures (Mau, 2010). Transnationalism can be viewed from two perspectives: "from above" and "from below," where the former focuses on the macro-level structures and actions of nation-states, international organizations, and corporations (Mau, 2010). In the context of this study, transnationalism from below is more relevant since it is a multifaceted phenomenon that emphasizes the everyday experiences, choices, and actions of individuals that transform social spaces and redefine territorial and social boundaries through their agency in culture-crossing processes (Mau, 2010). Nevertheless, various studies within

teacher education revealed that embracing plurilingual and transnational identities is a complex process that requires self-reflection and active exploration of cultures (Mansikka & Holm, 2011; Nuñez et al., 2021).

When cultural issues, cultural competence, and critical multiculturalism are present in teacher education programs, they are often confined to specific curriculum areas and not holistically integrated across entire programs (Vavrus, 2010). This segregation reflects a broader disconnect. Critical multicultural advocacy often confronts resistance, especially from institutional leaders who may dismiss race and racism as irrelevant, adhering to a colour-blind and politically neutral stance (Lea, 2010; Vavrus, 2010). However, embracing a more holistic approach to teacher education necessitates moving beyond this colour-blind ideology. It involves actively empowering future teachers to acknowledge and engage with diverse perspectives and experiences (Carter Andrews, 2021; Ladson-Billings, 2021). This is where the concepts of transnationalism and critical multiculturalism become crucial. In this article, these concepts are operationalized by advocating for an educational framework that not only recognizes but actively incorporates diverse cultural perspectives to equip future teachers with theoretical and practical knowledge to effectively address local and global inequities, fostering an environment that is responsive to the dynamic, multicultural nature of today's classrooms.

The presented theoretical framework not only serves as a lens for interpreting the findings but also guides the theoretical underpinnings of the research design, which is rooted in the principles of culturally responsive data collection (Berryman et al., 2013). The subsequent section will explore the Danish context and current political discourses on integration and multiculturalism, setting the stage for the presentation of the methodology.

## DANISH CONTEXT

Danish society is becoming increasingly diverse. In January 2025, first-generation immigrants made up 12.6% of the entire population, while descendants of immigrants made up 3.7% (Statistics Denmark, 2025a). Currently, the five largest groups by place of origin are immigrants from Türkiye, Poland, Ukraine, Romania, and Syria (Statistics Denmark, 2025b). Statistics Denmark defines *immigrants (indvandrere)* as persons who were born abroad and whose parents are neither Danish citizens nor born in Denmark. *Descendants of immigrants (efterkommere)* are defined as persons who were born in Denmark with neither parent being both a Danish citizen and born in Denmark. If one or both parents were born in

Denmark and have Danish citizenship, their children will not be classified as descendants of immigrants. However, if Danish-born parents both retain foreign citizenship, their children will be classified as descendants of immigrants (Statistics Denmark, 2025b). In this study, "transnational background" is the term consistently used to describe the participants. This term is preferred for its breadth and because it avoids the negative political connotations often associated with the term "descendant of immigrants."

### ***Politics, integration, and discriminatory discourses***

Danish politics concerning immigrants and integration are complex. They are characterized by continuous policy changes in the direction of increased control of immigration and focus on immigrants' labour market participation (Vitus & Jarlby, 2022). The tightening of policies results in inflexible integration efforts, leading to counterproductive outcomes due to increasingly bureaucratic procedures (Vitus & Jarlby, 2022). In his article on integration in Danish society, Rytter (2019) criticized the ambiguity of the concept of integration, which has been used to stigmatize and exclude immigrant minorities. Vitus and Jarlby (2022) add that neglecting the social and cultural aspects of integration and focusing solely on employability and economic self-sufficiency hinders the development of a sense of citizenship, belonging, and responsibility. Hence, the whole concept must be critically examined and questioned to address its consequences.

According to Jensen et al. (2017), issues of discrimination and racism are routinely pushed to the sidelines and delegitimized within the prevailing discourse on integration, leading to the exclusion of anti-racism from policy development. Active denial of the existence of discriminatory discourses such as racism manifests, for example, in the misuse of the concept of immigration – which is sometimes employed as a replacement for the idea of race – resulting in differential racism, which operates within a framework that does not explicitly involve the notion of races (Jensen et al., 2017). Despite the denial of racism in the political arena, antiracist education has gained attention among activist groups in Denmark and emphasizes the importance of acknowledging and addressing people's lived experiences of racialization and racism (Vertelyte & Staunæs, 2021). However, these issues require more public attention and critical research on how discriminatory discourses and power dynamics impact people's lives.

### *Togetherness and coercive benevolence in an educational context*

In the context of Danish education, the notion of *togetherness* (*fællesskab*) plays an important role. Togetherness in schools focuses on what students learn outside the formal curriculum, such as the school's traditions, language, and values, which shape the school's culture and common spirit (Jantzen, 2020). The notion of togetherness may be interpreted as both a sense of belonging and a motivation to contribute to strengthening the existing school culture (Jantzen, 2020; Mason, 2020). The concept of common spirit in an educational context can be traced back to the Danish philosopher of the Enlightenment N. F. S. Grundtvig (Jantzen, 2020; Mason, 2020). A common spirit among people is both dialectical and paradoxical, as it arises from shared culture and history but only exists when individuals actively participate and shape the community together. Grundtvig believed that education and enlightenment were crucial in fostering this togetherness, which influenced the Danish folk school movement, feasibly contributing to Denmark's political, social, and cultural success (Jantzen, 2020; Mason, 2020).

Although Danish education is largely grounded in the ideas of togetherness, various studies indicate issues of marginalization, labelling, and exclusion of minority students. For instance, Kristensen (2022) studied the dynamics of children of descendants' resistance against labelling in compulsory schooling. The study identified that the label "immigrant" was extensively used to identify youths with non-Danish ethnic backgrounds, even though they were born and raised in Denmark. Therefore, these youths felt a need to resist being assigned patterns of behaviour associated with the stigmatized immigrant position. A study by Helledatter Jacobsen and Piekut (2023) investigated school principals' perspectives on the uncertainties surrounding the reception of immigrants in Denmark and the potential impact of Danish policies on daily educational practices. On the one hand, the researchers revealed that the principals considered a school context to be a bubble that can secure children from discriminatory discourses. On the other, they observed a range of responses from school principals – including frustration, acknowledgement of insecurity, and even anger – highlighting their awareness and concerns regarding the unstable conditions faced by immigrant children, even in schools described as secure environments.

An interesting notion of *coercive benevolence* was suggested by Shirazi and Jaffe-Walter (2021), who analyzed how Muslim youths navigated secondary schooling in Denmark. The researchers described how schools were planning and implementing interventions aimed at promoting a sense of

togetherness, without considering their cultural appropriateness. In this context, coercive benevolence manifested as a deliberate and forceful encouragement for all students to participate in extracurricular common-spirit-building activities, such as class camp trips, without recognizing or addressing the concerns that certain students might have regarding dietary restrictions or accommodation arrangements. Overall, the study indicated that while teachers expressed criticism toward right-wing nationalist movements and anti-immigrant discourses, their everyday decisions and practices reflected racial stereotypes.

When it comes to higher education, there are few studies on the experiences of students from minority backgrounds. A study conducted by Hansen (2014) at the University of Copenhagen revealed how the learning environment in the pharmaceutical program created a division between the academic and social lives of ethnic minority students and ethnic Danish students. Minority students often felt separated from their ethnic Danish peers in various aspects, such as limited participation in social activities and segregated academic group work. The study suggested the need for targeted efforts to address the social dimension of the learning experience in order to promote minority students' sense of belonging to the learning environment.

In the following sections, a study performed in two university colleges with students of a transnational background will be presented, and its findings will be discussed in light of the theoretical framework and previous studies in the field.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The presented study is a qualitative inquiry using in-depth individual interviews as a primary data collection technique. In-depth interviews provide a rich insight into individual experiences and perspectives (Braun & Clarke, 2013), allowing for a nuanced understanding of complex issues like those faced by student teachers of a transnational background. The study follows a culturally responsive data collection approach, treating the process as a reciprocal knowledge exchange between the researcher and participants (Berryman et al., 2013). While exploring the participants' opinions and experiences, the study underscores the impact their contributions can have on social justice within the study's context.

### ***Participants***

Teacher education in Denmark is offered by six university colleges with multiple campuses all over Denmark. To attain professional teacher status,

a candidate must complete a 240 ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) credit program corresponding to 4 years of study. Upon completion, graduates receive the title of Bachelor of Education and are licensed to teach in compulsory education establishments. This article reports on the findings collected through qualitative, semi-structured in-depth interviews with seven student teachers of a transnational background, in two university colleges located in two different regions in Denmark.

The participants in this study were full-time student teachers in the final term of the last year of their studies. Prior to the study, the participants had completed their on-site schoolteacher training and most of the courses included in their program. Besides their on-site training, all participants had working experience as part-time substitute teachers in public schools in Denmark. The average age of the participants was 27 years old. They were all born and raised in Denmark. However, their cultural backgrounds were diverse. The participants' parents and/or grandparents migrated to Denmark for varied reasons, including employment opportunities, seeking refuge, or reuniting with family members. Information on the participants is presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1. *Participant information*

Participant	Pronouns	Family background	Specializations within the program
Participant A1	he/his	Eastern African	English, History
Participant A2	she/her	Northern African	Danish, Social Studies
Participant M1	he/his	Middle Eastern	English, History
Participant M2	he/his	Middle Eastern	English, Christianity / Religion
Participant M3	she/her	Middle Eastern	English, Mathematics
Participant W1	she/her	Western European	English, German
Participant Y1	she/her	Eastern Asian	Mathematics, Social Studies

*Note.* According to the requirements set by the teacher education programs in the two university colleges, all student teachers must choose three subjects as their specializations within the program. Table 1 reveals two out of three specializations to protect the identities of the study participants.

All participants self-identified as individuals of a transnational background, meaning that they have embraced both Danish culture and maintained meaningful connections with the cultures of their families' places of origin. This is reflected in, for instance, the adherence to cultural traditions, the use of heritage languages in their households, or the maintenance of ties with relatives living in their families' places of origin.

### **Ethics**

As the study was led by a Norwegian researcher, it was reported to the Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research (Sikt). This agency conducted a thorough review of the research objectives, interview questions, and approaches to handling and storing data, ultimately providing a positive assessment confirming the study's compliance with relevant data protection regulations concerning research involving human participants. The privacy considerations ensured that the participants' rights, interests, opinions, and dignity were respected.

The teacher education community in Denmark is relatively small, and as such, it is important to take extra precautions to protect the identities of study participants. This is particularly important when reporting findings from a very specific group of individuals, such as Danish-born students of a transnational background in this instance. To maintain ethical standards and comply with data protection regulations and laws, personal details irrelevant to the study, such as exact age and civil and socio-economic status, have been omitted from this article.

### **Data collection and analysis**

The interviews were conducted in person by the author of this article, who travelled to the campuses of the participating university colleges. The average length of the interviews was 48 minutes. The participants were interviewed in Danish, and the audio recordings were subsequently transcribed verbatim. During the interviews, the participants were explicitly prompted to retrospectively consider their learning experience in the teacher education program and reflect on various aspects, such as the learning environment, on-site training, and communication with peers and educators.

The interviews were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach as described by Braun and Clarke (2013). ATLAS.ti analytical software was used throughout this process. Initially, the transcriptions were extensively reviewed through close reading to become familiar with the data. A complete coding approach using descriptive codes was applied to identify meaningful units of data. The codes were grouped thematically in

categories that represented the patterns in the data, and the categories were illustrated using code networks, which later developed into themes. The themes were then examined in relation to existing research and analyzed using the study's theoretical framework.

The theme entitled “career aspirations and challenges for student teachers of a transnational background” was selected for this article. The code network associated with this theme was visualized in an artistic representation showcased in the subsequent section that presents the findings. The quotations from the interviews were translated from Danish into English by the researcher, who aimed to preserve the accuracy and essence of the original text. To ensure the translations' fidelity, an external assistant verified the translated content, serving as an additional quality control measure.

## FINDINGS

Although all participants expressed overall satisfaction with the learning environment and the educators, they shared numerous examples of challenges that they faced during their 4-year journey through the program. Many of the challenges encountered by the participants exemplify instances of labelling and prejudice based on transnational background, physical characteristics, culture, and religion. Figure 1 visualizes the main findings presented in this section.

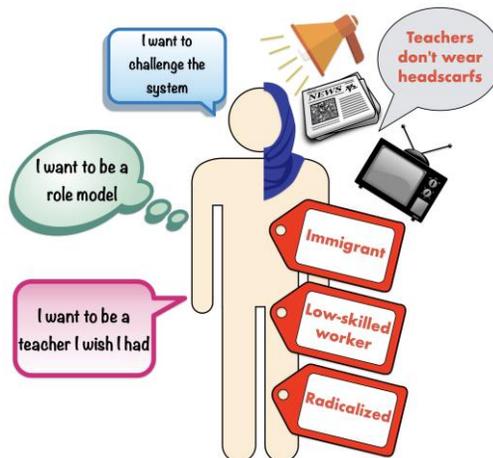


FIGURE 1. Career aspirations and challenges for student teachers of a transnational background

Figure 1 is split into two halves. The left half displays speech bubbles, indicating the participants' common career aspirations. These include their determination to challenge systemic discrimination, their ambitions to become role models for future generations, and their desire to embody the qualities of an ideal teacher, which they felt was absent in their own educational journey. In contrast, the right half of the figure illustrates the labels assigned to students of a transnational background by society and the influence of various discriminatory narratives on their lives. The upper right corner symbolizes the external voices the students continually encounter, such as the media influences or opinions that affect their decision-making or foster doubts. This includes, for example, debates over wearing religious clothing in public and how such choices might shape public perceptions of their personal and professional attributes.

At the beginning of the interviews, the participants reflected on their career aspirations. Since they were all nearing completion of their studies, they felt excited about entering public schools in a new role as professional teachers. All participants brought their childhood memories from not long ago when they were pupils in public schools. Their memories were still fresh since the average age of the participants was 27 years old at the time of the study, meaning they completed compulsory education an average of 10 years earlier. Several participants reflected on the composition of the teaching body back then. Participant M1 revealed that he aspired to become a role model for youths of a transnational background, a role model he lacked when attending compulsory schooling:

I don't live in [the city]. I live a little further out, like a suburb. You know, there aren't that many high-rise buildings. There are simpler homes. And what I have noticed out there. I feel there is ... but it may sound strange ... but there is a lack of teachers with other ethnic backgrounds. I felt that in my school. There were only teachers who were 50+ [years old], who were Morten or Svend, and they were Danes. ... I feel that it can be difficult for a younger boy or girl to have a role model they cannot relate to. (Participant M1)

As well as relating to these experiences, several participants also recalled memories of discriminatory discourses surrounding them when attending compulsory schooling. These discourses were made evident in various ways, such as low expectations toward their academic success. These participants felt that society had already predetermined their roles as low-skilled workers, thereby reinforcing stereotypes. It is important to note that categorizing individuals as low-skilled workers is itself a stereotype, as every occupation, regardless of its nature, necessitates a distinctive set of skills and knowledge. Participant A2 shared a personal story from her

adolescence, when she had already made the decision to become a schoolteacher. She confided her educational aspirations to a schoolteacher at that time, only to receive an unexpected response that triggered doubts about whether her religious clothing choices could potentially influence her professional career:

When I was in the ninth grade at school, I had a teacher who told me, “You cannot become a teacher because you wear a headscarf.” It’s a bit of a sad story. But then I thought I would show her that I could. But I had doubts – well, can I be a teacher and wear a headscarf? Should I take it off? Or should I just take English at a university level instead? But then I thought, no!, I actually want to be a teacher. (Participant A2)

This story highlights how discriminatory attitudes and behaviours can potentially undermine the aspirations and potential of individuals. Participant A2 shared later in her interview that she encountered further instances of discrimination during her on-site schoolteacher training. She was not only called out for her choice of clothing but also faced teasing from her own pupils. Despite the negative experiences associated with this discriminatory behaviour, Participant A2 expressed that it has become a source of strength for her. It fuelled her determination to persist in challenging the system and to inspire and empower Muslim girls who may have doubts regarding their own potential for success.

Two participants brought language-related issues to the discussion and stressed the need for greater awareness of the benefits of acknowledging and utilizing children’s heritage languages in the educational process. Again, this awareness could be traced back to their personal experiences. Their career aspirations at the time of the interviews revolved around introducing fresh perspectives to schools, aiming to dismantle the long-standing stereotypes that view heritage languages as obstacles to children’s development.

Back then, people didn’t know much about bilingual children, well, at least not in Denmark. My mother was prohibited from speaking [heritage language] with me because [schoolteachers] thought it was wrong at the time because it would make me dumb ... the society thought I would have learning difficulties if I spoke [heritage language] at home. (Participant W1)

Participant A1 further delved into the topic of language policies within compulsory schooling and expressed criticism toward the practice of segregating children of a transnational background into separate classes aimed at improving their proficiency in Danish. A notable concern brought by Participant A1 was the absence of consent from both the children and the parents in making such decisions:

It's very cliché, but I want to be a teacher I wish I had in my school days. I felt myself so misunderstood when I was little at my school ... I was taken out of classes to learn extra Danish. And I felt comfortable with my Danish. So, I didn't understand why I had to go to *that* Danish. So, once a day, I was taken out of my normal class to learn basic Danish. I didn't feel like I fit into that box at all, and they never asked for my consent. It was just something they decided for me, and my mother was like, "If your teacher thinks it's a good idea, then of course you should do it." (Participant A1)

The experience shared by Participant A1 offers an opportunity to examine the issue of labelling children of a transnational background within the context of compulsory schooling. This issue was further explored by other participants who discussed the use of the terms "immigrant" and "plurilingual" to categorize people from racial or ethnic minority backgrounds. Although the term "plurilingual" can be perceived as a positive acknowledgement of an individual's linguistic repertoire, in certain social contexts, labelling individuals as plurilingual may unintentionally reinforce their divergence from White-dominant society and can perpetuate a sense of marginalization or foreignness, leading to potential feelings of exclusion or non-belonging.

For example, I have a friend who is Norwegian, but she is not seen as a plurilingual student because you can't see it in her unless she speaks and she has an accent. But me, for example, they can just see, "You are plurilingual." And there are also many older teachers who associate it with ... well, if we don't have any clearly coloured people in our class, well, then we don't need cultural competencies because all these are ethnic Danes. (Participant A2)

Participant W1, who selected German as one of her specializations, shed light on another form of labelling that she encountered along her educational journey. She recounted facing stereotypes from her peers who held negative attitudes toward her specialization. Furthermore, during her on-site training, where she taught German in schools, she observed a significant emphasis on the history of World War II within the curriculum, which neglected the exploration of contemporary German culture. This discrepancy in the curriculum led Participant W1 to perceive it as perpetuating a narrow representation of German culture, ignoring its modern facets and diversity. This omission may contribute to an incomplete and distorted understanding of German society, reinforcing preconceived notions and biases held by both pupils and teachers.

I've been teaching German during the on-site training, and I noticed that my sixth grade only worked with Nazism and Danish Nazis ... They didn't work with popular culture at all when I was there. I think that we

can explore German culture without necessarily disappearing into history. And then I tried to introduce them to some popular culture, but it ... There was a huge amount of stigma around it. (Participant W1)

Participant M2, who specialized in the subject of Christianity / religion as part of his teacher education program, shared another example of prejudice in public schools. During his on-site training, Participant M2 encountered opposition from a group of parents who expressed their objection to having a teacher of Middle Eastern background teaching their children religion. The arguments put forth by these parents were rooted in prejudiced beliefs solely based on the student teacher's family background rather than considering his professional teaching competencies.

I was attending my last on-site training at a school that was very homogenous. In other words, only ethnic Danes were there. And when I came to that school, there were many people who were surprised to see someone with a different ethnic background who was going to teach. I was supposed to teach Islam in the subject of Christianity, and I got a message from the parents who assumed that I wanted to run a Quranic school and that I wanted to radicalize the pupils. I hadn't even started yet, but I already faced a lot of prejudice there, but you know ... It hurt me ... Naturally, I felt saddened by the kind of welcome I received. But I pushed through and completed my classes, and they ended up being fantastic classes where my pupils obtained knowledge about Islam. (Participant M2)

Participant M2 provided additional details regarding the support received from the school leadership and supervisory teachers in addressing the concerns raised by the group of parents. The intervention from the school leadership played a crucial role in calming the parents and facilitating a constructive resolution to the situation. Participant M2 perceived the outcomes of his teaching as overwhelmingly positive, particularly for pupils who gained valuable insights into Islam as a world religion. This positive exposure not only fostered a greater understanding of Islam but also contributed to debunking stereotypes and negative portrayals of the religion by the media. Other participants also mentioned the negative influence of the media on societal attitudes toward individuals of a transnational background. In the context of discussing labels and stereotypes, Participant Y1 specifically drew attention to the pervasive tendency of the media to equate the term "immigrant" with criminality, perpetuating prejudice within Danish society:

The media also blow things up a lot – "That *immigrant* has done this!" and the word "immigrants" ... When you ask most people who immigrants are, they would say it is someone who has an Arabic or

Kurdish or Turkish background, and they are from the Middle East. Many have asked me, "But are you an immigrant?" – "No" – "Well, you actually are because your mother immigrated here." But that is because the media have inflated this word. It's a bit of a swear word, I think. And there is an assumption that immigrants do these bad things. Well, there are second-generation immigrants who have become doctors or something. After all, there are many who are educated. And yes, of course, there are also some who become criminals, but that's also the case with ethnic Danes, isn't it? (Participant Y1)

Despite the negative encounters with prejudice and the challenges faced by the participants, it is important to emphasize the overall satisfaction expressed by the participants toward their educators and the learning environments within the campuses. The participants observed that the teacher educators, in general, exhibited professionalism, openness, and supportiveness. Reflecting on the campus culture, the participants felt a sense of welcome and inclusivity, witnessing examples of initiatives aimed at creating more inclusive learning environments for students of a transnational background.

There are parties and drinking and so on. I also feel that even though I'm a Muslim, I can go and function there. But we are being put in a bit of a box when we come to those parties, though. But I have actually noticed that they have also tried to make some events where there is no alcohol served, where they actually try to involve Muslim minority students, which I think is awesome. So yes, democracy, equality, everybody is together – I think this reflects this campus's culture. (Participant M2)

It is crucial to acknowledge these positive aspects while recognizing the ongoing work needed to create truly empowering and equitable learning environments. By building upon the positive experiences and addressing the challenges described by the students, university colleges can continue to enhance their efforts toward fostering cultural competence, addressing biases, and equipping future generations of teachers with the necessary knowledge to work in culturally diverse schools.

## **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The analysis of the interviews with student teachers in this study revealed a shared sense of enthusiasm and anticipation regarding their future careers as professional teachers in Danish compulsory education. The participants expressed ambitious career aspirations, often manifested in their determination to challenge discriminatory discourses and bring positive change to the compulsory education system. Several participants shared their aspirations to serve as role models for youths of a

transnational background. These aspirations stem from their own experiences during compulsory schooling, where they encountered an absence of role models among the teachers. Interestingly, this issue extends beyond the context of Danish compulsory schools, as Abel (2019) reports similar concerns in the United States, where despite a growing diversity among pupils, the teaching workforce remains predominantly White, female, and middle class. Hence, diversification of the teaching body can be seen as a necessary precursor to fostering empowering learning environments where all pupils feel seen, heard, and supported. For instance, teachers of a transnational background can potentially contribute to dismantling systemic inequalities and biases within the education system, such as those described by Shirazi and Jaffe-Walter (2021), who revealed that coercively promoting a sense of belonging, without regard for cultural appropriateness, can lead to adverse effects.

However, it is important to acknowledge that simply having a transnational background does not automatically guarantee preparedness to work with and support cultural diversity within educational institutions. A study conducted by Nuñez et al. (2021) with Latinx student teachers revealed that it was only during their participation in a specially designed bilingual teacher education program that they began to openly share and reflect on their understanding of the value of their own cultural heritage. Furthermore, appropriate educational support for students of a transnational background is necessary, given that a European study by Crul et al. (2012) revealed a tendency for high drop-out rates to disproportionately affect descendants of immigrants.

Power relations, in the context of this discussion, refer to hierarchical interactions and the decision-making authority within educational settings. This concept was brought to the forefront by some participants when reflecting on the agency of children and parents in making decisions about the educational process. This raises considerations regarding teacher–pupil and teacher–parent power relations and suggests that parents from minority groups may feel hesitant to voice their opinions or challenge the expertise of teachers. Parallels can be drawn with a study by Mathiesen (2015), who researched Somali-diaspora mothers' agency in Danish public schools. Mathiesen reported that Somali mothers struggled to assert themselves as advocates for their children in the face of racism, marginalization, and unfairness, resulting in a tendency to adopt a non-critical supportive role rather than engaging in opposition and resistance.

Analysis of the interviews revealed a recurrent pattern of low expectations and labelling, which were found to be interconnected phenomena, as

labelling often contributes to the development of low expectations for individuals of a transnational background. The opening quotation in the article exemplifies how a seemingly pleasant conversation can abruptly conclude on an awkward note when an unfortunate compliment is made, revealing an underlying prejudiced opinion. In this context, labelling someone as a pattern-breaker carries a concealed meaning of holding low expectations for their career prospects, attributing to them a predetermined pattern of failure solely based on their appearance. This can serve as an example of a seemingly positive stereotype that – despite the speaker's intentions – in reality perpetuates discriminatory discourses. Czopp's (2008) study on the impact of positive stereotypes indicates that there is a need for better awareness of the underlying biases of such expressions.

Furthermore, labelling based on an individual's cultural background may lead to further stigmatization and marginalization, potentially influencing their self-perception and overall well-being. The presented study provides an illustrative example wherein a participant experienced doubts regarding their career choices after being labelled as an unsuitable candidate for the teaching profession based on their choice of clothing. Here, parallels can be drawn with the work of Dunn et al. (2022), who studied how youths of colour fought discriminatory discourses within school environments by creating counternarratives in the form of artwork, such as drawings and poems. The artwork served as a powerful means to draw attention to systemic and institutional discrimination while also showcasing their resilience in overcoming these obstacles.

Resilience and determination to face injustice within educational institutions were also expressed by the participants in the current study. They criticized the impact of the media on shaping the public's negative perceptions and attitudes toward immigrants and cultural and religious minorities. The media's portrayal of immigrants as radicalized criminals contributes to the stigmatization of individuals of a transnational background and reinforces an "us versus them" narrative. This narrative then enters schools and manifests in, for instance, parents' negative attitudes toward teachers of a transnational background, as described by a participant who encountered opposition from a group of parents who expressed their objection to having a teacher of a Middle Eastern background teaching their children religion. This example demonstrates how preconceived notions and biases based on an individual's cultural background can overshadow their qualifications and expertise. A comparative European study by Drouhot and Nee (2019) indicated, for instance, growing suspicion and hostility toward the Muslim religious

culture and emphasized the necessity to reassess the impact of religion and religious marginalization in shaping inequality and patterns of exclusion typically associated with ethnic categorizations.

Despite the challenges faced by the participants, they all remained optimistic about their future careers in Danish compulsory schools. They expressed a strong commitment to promoting equality in schools by challenging discriminatory discourses and actively working toward creating empowering learning environments where all children would receive support, recognition, and respect.

## CONCLUSION

As a new generation of teachers prepares to enter Denmark's compulsory schools, this article turned its attention to a subgroup whose voices are often overlooked: Danish-born students of a transnational background. It traced how they described their educational journeys and the ambitions guiding them toward the profession. The findings of this study have implications for teacher education, particularly in the context of the increased diversification of Danish society, which also reflects in the student body in Denmark's university colleges. While the participants in this study expressed overall satisfaction with their educators and the learning environments within their campuses, they also reported experiencing varying degrees of unfair treatment and prejudice in other settings, such as on-site training and interactions with peers, schoolteachers, and pupils' parents. Hence, teacher education should aim at confronting the issues of discrimination, systemic biases, and power dynamics within educational settings. These could be addressed by resisting systemic colour-blindness and challenging active denial of the existence of discriminatory discourses, namely racism, as pointed out by Jensen et al. (2017). If not addressed, systemic colour-blindness can give rise to false ideological beliefs which further perpetuate injustice. This includes viewing racism as a historical artifact exhibited only through individual deviant behaviours, perceiving schools and classrooms as fair environments free from institutional racism, and attributing academic failure of students of colour to knowledge deficits rather than considering the impact of the learning environment and the school's commitment to social justice (Lea, 2010; May & Sleeter, 2010; Vavrus, 2010). While fostering students' academic achievements, teacher education programs rooted in the principles of critical multiculturalism should also strive to maintain commitments to promoting social justice and motivating students to think critically about systems of power within educational settings. This can be achieved by bridging the gap between students' real-

life experiences and classroom instruction, empowering them to become agents of change by applying their knowledge to actively oppose structural inequities.

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## WHEN RESEARCHERS IN TEACHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING *OTHER*: SOCIAL JUSTICE AND THE “MIGRANT STUDENT” IN AN EU–FINLAND PROJECT

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**ABSTRACT.** This article investigates the positioning of the “migrant student” in an EU–Finland project which aims to prepare teachers for social justice “migrant education.” Since the project is produced in and for a neoliberal economic-political supranational institution, the authors seek to examine the potential contradictions between the frameworks of social justice and neoliberalism in documents produced by the project teams. The results show that the migrant student is othered and mostly positioned as different, disadvantaged, and problematic. The implications of othering are thus addressed, with recommendations made for ethical treatment of the other in research and education while urging, for example, funding institutions and individual scholars to recognize and address academic othering in the Nordics and beyond.

### QUAND LES CHERCHEURS EN FORMATION DES ENSEIGNANTS *ALTÉRISENT* : JUSTICE SOCIALE ET « L'ÉLÈVE MIGRANT » DANS UN PROJET UE-FINLANDE

**RÉSUMÉ.** Cet article examine le positionnement de « l'élève migrant » dans le cadre d'un projet UE-Finlande visant à préparer les enseignants à une « éducation des migrants » socialement juste. Le projet étant produit dans et pour une institution supranationale économico-politiquement néolibérale, les auteurs cherchent à examiner les contradictions potentielles entre les cadres de la justice sociale et du néolibéralisme dans les documents produits lors du projet. Les résultats montrent que l'élève migrant est altérisé, désavantagé et problématique. Les implications de cette altérisation sont donc abordées, avec des recommandations pour un traitement éthique de l'autre dans la recherche et l'éducation, tout en exhortant les institutions de financement et les chercheurs individuels à reconnaître et à traiter l'altérisation académique dans les pays nordiques et au-delà.

In recent decades, thousands of competitive large-scale projects on teacher education / training and the “migrant student” have been completed in educational research within the European Union (EU) area. Well-intentioned, these projects aim to, for example, promote more equitable and socially just learning opportunities and facilitate students’ adaptation and integration by targeting teachers and school leaders with initiatives that adopt (amongst others) intercultural, culturally-responsive, and social justice frameworks (e.g., the QuaMMELOT project, *Qualification for Minor Migrants Education and Learning Open Access – Online Teacher-Training*, Mortensen et al., 2020). Yet, although a large amount of pedagogical and technological tools and teacher training interventions and recommendations have emerged from such initiatives, these EU projects have been less frequently examined in relation to the encounters between the migrant student, teachers, and researchers that they produce. An earlier study by Lukala (2023) represents an exception in this context.<sup>1</sup> In global research, encounters and relations between researchers and migrants have been studied in relation to (amongst others) researchers’ empathy following interviews with migrants (e.g., Maggio & Westcott, 2014), researching *with* young migrants (Billett et al., 2019), and migrant researchers researching migrants (e.g., Nowicka & Cieslik, 2014). This article contributes to this underexplored topic within the EU-Finland context by focusing on a European project regarding teacher education / training and the migrant student in which a Nordic country, Finland, is included. The lenses of the neoliberal imperative, ventriloquism, and academic othering are made use of to investigate the topic in the article.

Our starting point is based on the examination of potential contradictions between the frameworks of social justice and neoliberalism in an EU project. *Social justice* in this article is understood as (a) recognizing and acknowledging another individual’s self-determination and independence, (b) ensuring the equitable treatment and safety of all, and (c) developing a sense of agency and social responsibility (e.g., Bell, 2016; Rajendra, 2017). Within the framework of neoliberalism, entities are reduced to fit the market economy imperative. The reduced self that inhabits such a world, as Brown (2015) has argued, is the “*homo economicus*,” an “intensely constructed and governed bit of human capital tasked with improving and leveraging its competitive positioning and with enhancing its (monetary and nonmonetary) portfolio value across all of its endeavours and venues” (p. 10). Contradictory to the aforementioned aspects of social justice, under neoliberalism the individual is reduced to their skills and competences, their capital(s), which may be measured and profited from by a more powerful entity – while feigning to care about, for example,

democracy, well-being, and agency (see the idea of “cannibalistic capitalism” by Fraser, 2023). Ball (2016) has argued that neoliberal reform technologies rarely emerge as grand strategies. Rather, they reside in vocabularies, titles, templates, reviews, and output indicators. They also divide, classify, and compare, telling us how to understand ourselves and each other. Finally, they value, reward, discipline, and sanction. Attention has been brought to the power imbalance that characterizes a variety of such relationships, particularly by scholars investigating “othering.” *Othering*, according to Jensen (2011), consists of “discursive processes by which powerful groups, who may or may not make up a numerical majority, define subordinate groups into existence in a reductionist way which ascribe problematic and/or inferior characteristics to these subordinate groups” (p. 65). Such an approach fails to recognize the independence and self-determination of another, and may rather be used to justify their unequal or harmful treatment (e.g., Pietrandrea & Battaglia, 2022).

By taking the lens of othering as the primary focal point, our article seeks to investigate what seems to be “done” to social justice and the migrant discursively while adhering to this normative framework of performance, managerialism, and competition. We approach this question by investigating a project which aims to make assessment in mathematics and science education in primary and secondary education more equitable, particularly for students who have just migrated (“newcomers” in EU parlance), by offering technological tools and training to teachers in the EU. On surface level this aligns with social justice-oriented goals to ensure equitable treatment of all. The project is however produced in and for an economic-political supranational institution embedded in neoliberalism, globalization, and late capitalism – the EU (Carroll, 2022). These translate into the application of market and market-like characteristics to every aspect of society, intensifying economic competition between and within European states (and beyond), and leading to further inequalities, deindustrialization, and systematic environmental decline (amongst others, see Carroll, 2022). The influence of the EU on Finland (the authors’ context) should not be understated. As Finland has been a member of the EU since 1995, this supranational institution has influenced the 5-million inhabitant Nordic country by its educational policies, recommendations as well as discursive and ideological positions. As such, the project under review may be understood as a site of “glocal” (local + global) educational knowledge production: It is a European project, co-produced by several individual (local) member states located

both in the South and North of Europe, trying to jointly “care” for the migrant in education.

The relations and positions of these member states towards the migrant student both differ and overlap locally. In the international literature, the figure of the migrant is a plural and contested one (e.g., Kunz, 2020; Rosenberg & Stöckl, 2018; Vietze et al., 2023). In this article, we are interested specifically in how the project itself positions and constructs the polysemic figure of the migrant student in the European context. We consider how the project, which adheres to EU ideological orders, parlance, and (hidden) agendas, asks the teachers it trains to understand the “other,” and if this construction is in line with social justice and the neoliberal ideologies that impact it. Documents produced by the research teams to both introduce and discuss the project aims and achievements are analyzed. Following the analysis, we problematize the role of researchers in dealing with the migrant student in neoliberal educational and academic times and suggest steps towards addressing the other ethically in teacher education / training and research.

#### **VENTRILOQUISM AND ACADEMIC OTHERING IN A EUROPEAN PROJECT ON THE MIGRANT STUDENT**

The European project under review states as its aim to make assessment more equitable for migrant students and others by proposing an innovative technological assessment tool. Additionally, teacher education was offered to around 80 teachers who were taught to use this tool and then tested it in their respective classrooms in different EU countries. Prior to launch, the figure of the migrant student was negotiated, constructed, and produced collaboratively by a team of multilingual academics. They first came together and spent months preparing a project application that was subsequently submitted competitively to the EU, peer reviewed against thousands of other applications, and eventually approved for funding. During the writing of the more than 100-page project application, the meanings and connotations of the “migrant student” had to be renegotiated since the diverse team of interdisciplinary and international researchers did not necessarily comprehend this figure the same way. In the participating countries, although all EU member states, discourses of the migrant student might differ in terms of who it represents and how to “deal with” them in educational contexts. For example, while in some areas the idea of ethnicity might be used to refer to characteristics of the migrant in education, in others, language and multilingualism might be more common (Vietze et al., 2023).

Three central concepts are explored to examine how the figure of the migrant is represented in the project under review: ventriloquism (Cooren & Sandler, 2014), othering (Jensen, 2011), and academic othering (Krumer-Nevo & Sidi, 2012). These concepts will support us in examining how different documents derived from the EU-Finland project position the migrant student, thus providing us with a picture of how this polysemic and central figure is constructed by scholars in this context.

The concept of ventriloquism is first introduced as an entry point into the construction of discourses on the other. As powerful discursive figures in neoliberal societies, who often represent a link between decision-makers and the larger society, scholars are used to speaking for others, for instance for their research participants or specific groups in which they specialize (the migrant being one of these groups; see Krumer-Nevo & Sidi, 2012). The metaphor of the ventriloquist appears to be well-suited to discuss this important aspect of scholarly work. In general, a ventriloquist is a performer who creates the illusion that their voice is coming from a puppeteered dummy. We use this concept in reference to Bakhtin’s (Holquist, 1982) work on heteroglossia where he suggests that a multitude of voices inhabit an individual utterance (see Cooren & Sandler, 2014, too). Bakhtin (Holquist, 1982) called this process “voicing,” which was later referred to as “ventriloquizing” by, for example, Authier-Revuz (1984) and Tannen (2007). For the Russian literary scholar, an utterer may speak or write in the voice of another. By so doing, the utterer may dominate or distance themselves from those whom they ventriloquize (Sullivan, 2016). What is more, speaking on behalf of and (often) over the other may have negative consequences, despite good intentions. When the ventriloquized is an oppressed other, the act of ventriloquism may even increase or reinforce the oppression of the ones spoken for/over (Alcoff, 1991, p. 7). The utterer’s omnipotence in this realm of discourse allows them to (re)produce the other as oppressed, and enunciate the “same” as, for example, exceptional (see Authier-Revuz, 1984; Dervin, 2008, 2016, 2023).

In the material investigated here, as the main characters of the project, we hypothesize that the authors of the project documents often ventriloquize the migrant student, speaking about, for, and over this figure. In other words, the migrant student is most likely othered. Jensen’s (2011) definition of othering (turning another into an other by essentializing their attributes and personal features), as presented in the introduction, involves two central aspects (p. 65). First, the difference between the “same” and the “other” is created, rather than pre-existing – the other is defined into existence. In the project under review, the migrant student is

constructed first and foremost as the one who is not from “here,” neither from Finland nor from other European partner countries and the EU in general. The same that the other opposes is constructed (in)directly by the mere presence of the word “migrant” as European, that is, from EU locality. Second, for Jensen (2011), othering involves ascribing (mostly) negative characteristics to the other. Negative here refers to characteristics that are usually not attributed to the same in terms of, for example, characteristics, competence, and agency. In this article, these perspectives are considered as the key indicators of othering.

Research on academic othering is scarce, while othering as a research object is plentiful. There are in fact many ways in which, academics in particular, may other. In a rare article on academic othering, Krumer-Nevo and Sidi (2012) outline four such methods:

- objectification of the research participants (reducing and subjugating of their humanity, complexity, and personal perspectives);
- decontextualization (foregrounding behaviour as separate from the context that enables and sustains it);
- dehistoricization (foregrounding the present as separate from the past that led to it); and
- deauthorization (producing text that appears authorless, and thus autonomous and objective).

These work firstly to reduce the other to a few characteristics, secondly to omit information essential for understanding the participant and their situation, and thirdly to portray such depictions as objective (see the phrase “research-based”).

Working within the framework of an EU–Finland project on the migrant student, the project members, mostly EU citizens themselves, are somehow empowered to speak for this polysemic figure. Ventriloquizing and othering go hand in hand in this process and will support us in observing how documents produced around the project contribute to constructing this multifaceted and central figure (e.g., the teacher training intervention related to assessment in mathematics and science education in primary and secondary education provided by the project).

#### **MIXED METHODS TO OBSERVE THE POSITION OF THE MIGRANT STUDENT**

The analyzed material consisted of (a) an introductory document produced for European teachers and teacher trainers involved in the project and other stakeholders (37 pages), as well as (b) 40 pages of the 133-page grant

proposal of the project which correspond to the project description (budget allocations, distinguishing information of participating institutions, and time allocation information were excluded from the analysis since they were irrelevant for our purpose). Both documents had multiple authors and were written in the English language, as requested by the EU. Despite their different purposes and target audiences, these texts are consistent. We even identified similar sentences copied word for word in both documents, and due to their similarity, the two documents were analyzed together. We note that these documents were not published publicly but are accessible by anyone upon request. No page numbers are thus presented in the following analysis. Access to the documents was gained through the authors’ involvement in the project as a project manager and a project planner.

In the analysis, we bring together the aforementioned theoretical concepts of othering, consisting of defining an entity into existence and ascribing characteristics to them (Jensen, 2011), ventriloquism as a way of speaking on behalf of and animating the character defined into existence, and academic othering consisting of objectification, decontextualization, dehistoricization, and deauthorization (Krumer-Nevo & Sidi, 2012; see Cooren & Sandler, 2014, too). These are seen as contributing to the positioning of the migrant student. *Positioning* (see Davies & Harré, 1990) is understood here as a product of naming and ascribing of characteristics and actions to an imagined migrant student. We argue that examining positioning can help us identify how the migrant student is (*de*)agentivized, that is, how they are potentially “demoted” (deagentivized) or “empowered” (agentivized) by what the project documents say about them (Bernárdez, 1997).

The analysis consisted of mixed methods combining quantitative and qualitative means (Poth, 2023). A pragmatist position, whereby our careful choice of a mix of methods, data, and procedures of research aimed to support obtaining a variety of perspectives on the way the migrant student is constructed in the project documents, was adopted as the philosophical foundation of mixed methods research (Shan, 2022). All in all, we agreed that a mixed method approach could allow a robust description and interpretation of the data, reinforcing the intelligibility of quantitative results and applicability of qualitative findings. The quantitative part of the analysis concerned frequencies of agent-verb-object pairings (see Dowty, 1991), that is, all instances where action was implied on behalf of an actor (here, the migrant student). The analysis was limited to instances in which the migrant student was either the agent or the object, and these instances were further analyzed qualitatively.

The qualitative analysis was based on discourse analysis, with an emphasis on semantics and enunciative pragmatics (Angermuller, 2014). Semantics was chosen as a theoretical guide due to its distinction between the sign (e.g., the words “migrant student”) and the signified (e.g., any person who has migrated) (Chandler, 2007, p. 65). This enabled focusing on the constructed sign of the migrant student, limiting the investigation to how they are ventriloquized by the authors of the project documents. Concepts from the field of semantics, such as connotation and paradigmatic (“Why this instead of that?”) and syntagmatic (“Why this after that?”) axes of analysis also aided in understanding how the migrant student is characterized. Enunciative pragmatics then emphasized that the context, the “where,” “when,” and “who” of the utterance, is central to the analysis of the sign (Angermuller, 2014, pp. 1–3). This framework served to draw our attention to the authors of the project documents, and how their position as academics enables potential othering in particular manners. It also offered concepts, such as preconstruct (“What is non-negotiable fact?”) and presupposition (“What is taken for granted?”), which helped situate the authors and readers.

The links between the aspects of positioning and the chosen theoretical (academic othering, othering, ventriloquism) and analytical (semantics, enunciative pragmatics) devices are illustrated in Figure 1, and put into use in the following analytical sections. Due to space limitation and the mixed methods nature of this study, five carefully selected and representative excerpts are included in the analysis (see Lukala, 2023).

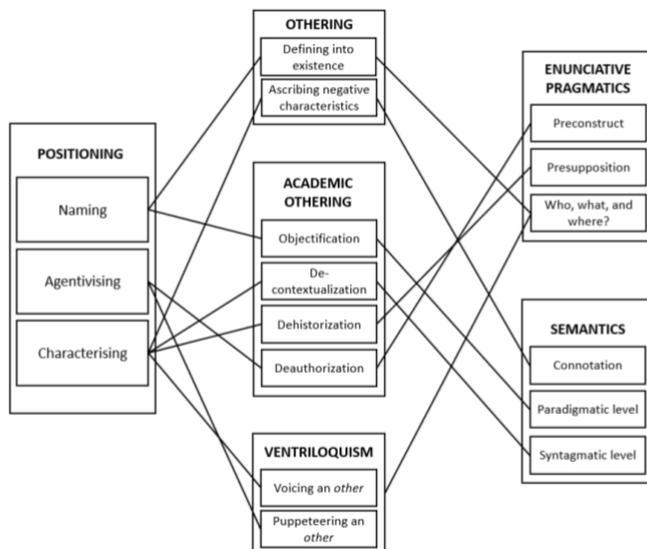


FIGURE 1. The strongest connections between the aspects of positioning, theoretical concepts, and concepts utilized in qualitative analysis

## RESULTS: TEACHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING RESEARCH “DOING” OTHERING

### *Names of the migrant student*

“Migrant student” is mentioned in total 502 times in the two investigated documents. In these mentions, the migrant student is addressed with names which combine one or more of various name components (Table 1).

Some name components include (obvious) references to the migrant student being young (e.g., student, child, youth), or them having migrated with different legal labels being used (e.g., migrant, immigrant, refugee), which defines into existence (Jensen, 2011) the target of this project – the migrant student. With these names, the migrant student seems to be objectified (Krumer-Nevo & Sidi, 2012), reduced to their migration history, age, position in a school, and / or their language. Undesirable characteristics are also associated with them, by naming them as, for example, “disadvantaged.”

TABLE I. *Frequencies of name components, thematically categorized*

Thematic category	Name component	N	Category total
Migranthood	migrant	359	577
	newly arrived / migrated	138	
	[of a certain] background	43	
	minority	11	
	immigrant	11	
	born [somewhere]	6	
	[of 1st / 2nd] generation	5	
refugee / asylum seeker	4		
Age	student	334	432
	child	73	
	young person / youth	25	
Characteristics	disadvantaged / facing barriers	9	16
	diverse / different / special	7	
Other	group	9	24
	learner	6	
	language / linguistic	6	
	population	3	
Total		1049	1049

The migrant student is revealed as an ambiguous social category in the attempts to define them (Excerpt 1), where the migrant student is denied self-determination – a process which occurs through a passive and deauthorized voice attributed instead to an unnamed entity.

#### Excerpt 1

Students of migrant background are defined as newly arrived/first generation, second generation or returning migrant children and young people. Their reasons for migration (e.g. economic or political) and their legal status may vary – they may be citizens, residents, asylum seekers, refugees, unaccompanied minors or irregular migrants.

The authors make use of the term “migrant background,” which has been criticized for its ambiguity and lack of relevance for research (e.g., Vietze et al., 2023). In this instance it carries notions of arrival, generations, and

return. As such, migranhood is constructed here as not only tied to migration, but also inheritable and irreversible, as birth or citizenship in a country does not dissolve the migrant student of their label. A category this broad includes people with an extensive range of life and migration experiences. The authors however limit the interpretations by drawing the reader’s attention to specific aspects of migration (economy, politics, legality) and to a specific type of migrant, thus objectifying them. With the names presented here, the authors also ascribe negative characteristics to the migrant (see Jensen, 2011). “Refugee” and “asylum seeker” (as well as names that appear elsewhere, such as “[students] facing linguistic barriers” and “disadvantaged [students]”) introduce the migrant student through their perceived disadvantage or need for help. Additionally, the “where” of an utterance (Angermuller, 2014, pp. 1–3) is revealed in the names, as an asylum seeker can only be a non-EU citizen, thus revealing the EU extraterritoriality of the migrant student. Notably absent in the documents are positively connotated names related to migration, such as “expatriate” or “labour migrant,” both of which are often associated with higher economic status (Kunz, 2020). With this paradigmatic decision, the authors appear to create and promote a figure of the migrant student that seems to fail to fulfil the position of a neoliberal and capital-producing subject (see Brown, 2015).

Excerpt 1 is a prelude for similar generalization and differentiation processes that are to follow in the two documents under review. In Excerpt 2, we witness how the document authors rather skilfully navigate the syntagmatic axis to homogenize migrant students under the pretence of recognizing their heterogeneity:

**Excerpt 2**

It is also important to note that they are not a homogeneous group. They have many and varied characteristics, such as their linguistic and cultural background and the socio-economic status of their families. However, they are all at risk of facing similar challenges in successfully integrating into the school environment and achieving their academic potential.

While the text, in line with social justice (Bell, 2016), directly denies homogenization of the migrant students, the subtext has the opposite effect. Firstly, by negating the word “homogenous” instead of using its antithesis “heterogenous,” the stereotype of homogeneity is introduced into the conversation, rather than deactivated (Dyvik Cardona, 2022, p. 288). Secondly, by listing the students’ “varied characteristics,” the authors single these out as worthy of mention. The selected characteristics – language, culture, and socioeconomic status – make frequent

appearances in the investigated documents to specify the ways in which the migrant student is to be understood as “diverse” or “different.” Notably, these are characteristics migrant students have, rather than actions they take. But this leaves little room for recognition of their self-determination, independence, or agency (see Bell, 2016). Thirdly, the authors claim that risks related to integration and reaching academic potential, which may be understood as behaviours associated with a neoliberal subject (see Carroll, 2022), concern all students who migrate. The generalization of the last utterance from the excerpt is an example of dehistoricization (see Krumer-Nevo & Sidi, 2012). The migrant students are detached from their individual histories, and the implications of these histories are ignored. Dehistoricization and detextualization serve to portray the behaviour as without reason (Krumer-Nevo & Sidi, 2012, p. 300). The reader is left to associate this behaviour with the only other information provided, namely, that migrant students are linguistically, culturally, and socioeconomically diverse. Although it would be naïve to ignore this important element, the overemphasis on difference, rather than, for example, difference-similarity, between the migrant student and other students, could easily lead to a differentialist bias (Dervin, 2016), an ideological perspective that can easily blind scholars and teachers in front of the other and lead to further othering.

The names of the migrant student, even when detached from the context of enunciation, indicate that the “who,” “what,” and “where” (see Angermüller, 2014, pp. 1–3) of the migrant student are seen through the eyes of the authors. This is prevalent in many names related to migration, such as “people born abroad,” “immigrant,” and “newly arrived migrant.” Attention is here brought to spatial difference: The migrant student is born “abroad,” not the “here” of the authors / readers. The “here” is where they “arrive.” In contrast, the word “emigrate” makes no appearance in the investigated texts. The migrant student is defined into existence as the other that complements the same (Jensen, 2011).

The locations of the “here” of the author / reader and the “abroad” of the migrant student are not specified. Yet, neither are they entirely absent. The project is an EU project, located geopolitically in a legal entity where most people share the same supranational citizenship (EU). It is thus not clear if the word “migrant” as used in the documents refers to EU citizens migrating to another EU country or if this only has to do with citizens from outside the EU – who have different rights and identification features. Names such as “refugee” and “asylum seeker” perhaps most notably hint at certain locations. This vagueness around the migrant student contributes to their academic othering by, for example,

decontextualizing them (see Krumer-Nevo & Sidi, 2012). By detaching the migrant student from their location, they may also be detached from the political, socioeconomic, and symbolic structures that surround them. Instead, the authors may then present factors of their choosing (such as linguistic and cultural background and socio-economic status in Excerpt 2) and allow the reader to make the connection by themselves.

The names of the migrant student, in short, demonstrate both aspects of othering as outlined by Jensen (2011): distinguishing them from the ingroup, and associating what could be described as negative characteristics to them. Earlier we noted that, according to the definitions provided by the project document authors, migranhood may be inherited and irreversible, applying these potentially negative characteristics then to a wider population than just those who migrate. Similarly, the frequent use of names such as “children” and “youth” expands the context in which these characteristics ought to be associated with the migrant student to that outside of the scope of the project, namely outside of schools. This is perhaps most relevant to the teachers partaking in the type of teacher education and training offered by the project, who are called to see the migrant student as holistically disadvantaged. Although it is common in everyday conversation to refer to students as “children” or “youth,” we believe that it would be more appropriate to consistently use the term “students.” Referring to them as such helps avoid reinforcing assumptions – such as passivity or incompetence – that may follow them both inside and outside of school, regardless of whether they were born in an EU country or not.

### ***Agency of the migrant student***

The social justice framework utilized in this study (Bell, 2016) refers to the recognition of individuals’ independence, ensuring their equal treatment and encouraging the development of a sense of agency and social responsibility. Ahearn (2001) defines *agency* as “the socioculturally mediated capacity to act” (p. 112). In dealing with an imaginary entity, the migrant student, we restrict our analysis to how the document authors deauthorize (Krumer-Nevo & Sidi, 2012) themselves and agentivize the migrant student to act. In other words, what does the ventriloquized migrant student do, and to what degree of independence?

The phrase “migrant student” appears in an agent or object position of a sentence 502 times in the documents. They fulfil the agent position, that is, are the one who are empowered to act, in 28.9% ( $N = 145$ ) of instances. The verbs of these 145 instances were investigated in terms of how much action they imply on behalf of the migrant student (Figure 2). In 25.5% of

instances their action indicated no action on behalf of the migrant student. These include instances with the verbs “have” ( $n = 11$ ), “are” ( $n = 11$ ), “lack” ( $n = 4$ ), “belong” ( $n = 2$ ), “lack behind” ( $n = 2$ ), “reside” ( $n = 2$ ), “benefit” ( $n = 1$ ), “include” ( $n = 1$ ), and “need” ( $n = 1$ ).

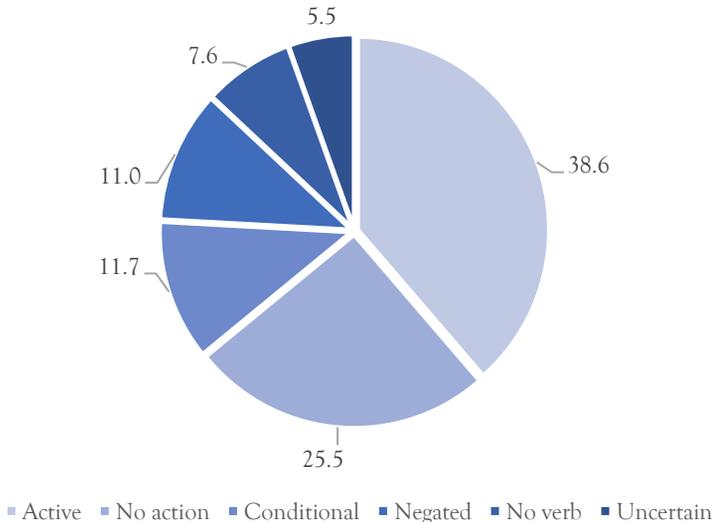


FIGURE 2. Percentage distribution of actions of the migrant student per activity level

In 11.7% of instances their actions were conditional, in that the migrant student was implied to only be able to perform the action with the help or allowance of another actor, as in Excerpt 3:

**Excerpt 3**

[The project] aims to increase newly arrived migrant students' autonomy, by allowing students to explore sciences without the restrictions of language.

Quite common (11.0%) were also instances where they were constructed as not doing anything (e.g., “[Migrant] students do not yet share a language”), and in 5.5% it was implied that their success was uncertain (“[Migrant students] may or may not have the right to participate”). In 7.6% of instances their action was reduced to word classes other than verbs (e.g., “lack” in “their lack of competences”). In only 38.6% of instances where they are in the agent position are they represented as a clear-cut actor. This makes 11% of the entire 502 instances. It follows that the

migrant student as agentized by the authors of the documents is more likely to make an appearance as either an object of action, or unable to participate successfully without the project’s intervention. Such portrayal is in contrast to the social justice approach (Bell, 2016), which would see the independence, agency, and social responsibilities of the migrant student recognized and stimulated.

TABLE 2. *Frequencies of actions and objects of utterances with active agency, categorized thematically and connotationally*

Category	Negative				Neutral				
	n	Action	n	Object	n	Action	n	Object	n
movement	19	leave [early]	10	training	3	arrive	8	[unspecified]	4
				education	3			country	3
				school	2			school	1
				previous life	2			migrate	1
interacting	15	[struggle to] integrate	2	educational system	1	access	5	education	5
				system	1	participate	2	education	2
						go through	2	assessment process	1
								grade placement process	1
						enrol	2	education	2
						enter	1	education	1
						attend	1	class	1
outwards action	4	perform	1	worse	1	provide	1	feedback	1
		show	1	tendency	1	answer	1	quiz	1
change	3	lose	1	motivation	1	acquire	1	skill	1
							attain	1	grade level
struggle	17	face	16	challenge	7				
				barrier	3				
				obstacle	2				
				hardship	1				
				housing	1				
				lack	1				
				stressor	1				
				deal with	1	experience	1		
Total			32				24		

The instances of what we call active agency, in which the migrant student both is in the agent position of the sentence and the verb in its context

undeniably implies action ( $n = 56$ ), were further investigated as to their connotations. These instances can be found in Table 2, categorized thematically into negatively, neutrally, and positively correlated instances. Negative and positive here are understood in terms of agency, competence, and outcome: Negatively connotated instances imply challenges in completion (e.g., “deal with”) or result in a negative outcome (e.g., “lose”), while positively connotated verbs imply the task is completed successfully (e.g., “achieve”) or with ease / pleasure (e.g., “explore”). Neutrally connotated instances make no note of the manner or outcome of action. The context of enunciation may however change the connotations of the verb (e.g., “unlikely achieve”). Categorization was made with context in mind, and some verbs may thus appear in both negatively and neutrally connotated columns. With context in mind, no positively connotated instances were identified in the entire data.

Of these actions, the neutrally connotated ones relate to the process of migration and interacting (attending, entering, etc.) with the school system. Their actions within this system on the other hand are negatively connotated: They face various challenges and, when they do act, they perform worse than their peers and lose their motivation in the process, eventually leaving education and training earlier than their peers (Table 2). Foregrounding unfortunate circumstances and challenges faced draws the attention to how the migrant student constructed here is not equally treated within this school system, and their social responsibility to attend school is also recognized in (neutrally connotated) instances, which seems in line with the social justice framework (Bell, 2016). However, as the majority of instances imply poor or non-existent success, the agency and independence of the migrant student seem to go unrecognized.

### ***Characteristics of migrant students***

In previous sections we addressed how migrant students are defined into existence (Jensen 2011), and agentivized in a manner that seems to undermine their agency and independence (see Bell, 2016). The characteristics that are ascribed to them (see Jensen, 2011) are consistent with these findings, and relate firstly to difference / diversity and secondly to disadvantage, incompetence, and being a challenge to both their immediate surroundings and the society at large. Excerpt 4 demonstrates all three characteristics:

#### Excerpt 4

The project aims at the permanent educational inclusion of newly arrived migrant students in an effort to combat the current negative situation which is characterised by lack of motivation on the behalf of migrant students, high rates of drop-outs and lack of the sense of “belonging” which is considered essential for the educational and social inclusion of the target group.

In Excerpt 4 the migrant student, in particular their “inclusion,” is characterized as a challenge. This is indicated most prominently with the word “combat.” The migrant student is then characterized, not through their qualities, but the lack thereof. Unmotivated, they fail to adjust to the schools they eventually drop out from, risking their future as a productive neoliberal subject (Carroll, 2022). The lack of inclusion is also decontextualized from, for example, political and symbolic structures (see Krumer-Nevo & Sidi, 2012). Rather, what the document authors frame as “essential” for inclusion are the student’s feelings of motivation and belonging – which they lack. The migrant student is also characterized as different from non-immigrant students, particularly through the terms “belonging” and “inclusion”: It is presupposed that the migrant student should become a part of this society, not just to the outside eye, but to feel so as well. However, in their current state they are unable to, and remain not included and not belonging, separate from the rest.

The characterization of the migrant student is overwhelmingly negative at times in the documents. In fact, only one instance exists in which positive characteristics are ascribed to them:

#### Excerpt 5

This is why [the project] aims to help newly arrived migrant students with tasks appropriate to their skills, so they may feel as competent as they actually are.

The caveat here of course is that the feeling and recognition of competence requires the intervention of the project. In other words, the migrant student is first preconstructed as not feeling competent so that the project may emerge as a solution that needs to be funded by the EU.

By the use of various strategies addressed in previous sections, negative characteristics are associated to the migrant student. They are characterized as disadvantaged, mostly due to factors beyond their control, such as their cultural / linguistic background, or their “lack of host language skills” (e.g., Excerpt 2). Frequent use of verbs that imply no action, such as “lack” ( $n = 11$ ) and “need” ( $n = 15$ ), frame the migrant student as deficient. The migrant student is also characterized as incompetent – that is, if actions are attributed to them, they are unable to

complete them successfully, or without help (e.g., Excerpt 3). Not only does the migrant student face challenges, they also *are* one (e.g., Excerpt 4). The reader is to understand the difference, disadvantage, and incompetence of the migrant student as a challenge to the migrant student themselves, their teachers, schools, the society (and, at the same time, the EU) at large. Additionally, by decontextualizing their negative circumstances (see Krumer-Nevo & Sidi, 2012), the authors leave the reader to associate these with the migrant student, rather than their surroundings.

## DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

This special issue focuses on undoing and redoing teacher preparation for diversity in the neoliberal and neoconservative “North.” In this article, the North was discussed within the framework of an EU–Finland project and initiative related to educating / training teachers to work with the migrant student. Based on our analysis, it can safely be said that the migrant student produced in the project documents under review is othered (Jensen, 2011). Through naming, (de)agentivizing (speaking for and over), and characterizing the migrant student, the authors seem to differentiate them from their local, national, and EU ingroups, and generalize their outgroup. The migrant students are also dehistoricized, with their varied histories ignored. The other that remains appears to be objectified and reduced to disadvantaged and problematic characteristics. Indirectly, migrant students are deemed particularly problematic because they fail to fill the position of an adequate neoliberal subject – to perform, graduate, and obtain employment (Carroll, 2022). Real-life students commonly oppose othering practices and encounters, to the extent that their less powerful position allows them to (e.g., Wickens et al., 2020; Wischmann & Riepe, 2019; Worthman & Troiano, 2019). The migrant student here is however removed from the neoliberal context they inhabit, decontextualized (Krumer-Nevo & Sidi, 2012), and their predicament seems to be attributed instead to their characteristics, or the lack thereof – a stance they cannot object to themselves. It begs the question, if the migrant student was instead not positioned as disadvantaged, if their predicament was a fault of their own, would it not be a sign of the meritocratic system functioning as intended? Or, if the migrant student was instead positioned as competent, active, and empowered, would such a project as the one discussed here be either formulated or designed otherwise? So long as the migrant student remains unable to change their circumstances, the utterer creates space for the emergence of a “saviour” – a position the project may fill (see Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2017). And, so

long as their predicament appears a bug in the neoliberal system rather than a feature, teacher education and training will appear as an adequate solution to ensuring the equal treatment of all.

We argue that the glocal othering of the migrant student is encouraged, if not necessitated, by a neoliberal framework. Niemczyk and Rónay (2023), as well as Woelert et al. (2021), maintain that, because universities are not exempt from competitiveness, pressure on academics to publish frequently and in esteemed publications persists. Meanwhile, funding may be difficult to obtain. This has created a demand for courses, articles, and other sites where academics may learn the ropes of “grantmanship” – sites where writing norms are upheld (Roumbanis, 2019). These norms include convincing the funder of the need, significance, and executability of the project (Serrano Velarde, 2018). It is then no wonder that the situation constructed here is one in which the migrant student needs the project, as do the teachers that this project aims to train. This need is presented as one of social justice, particularly in terms of ensuring equitable treatment, in the project. However, as the mixed-methods analysis of excerpts and frequencies in the analytical sections show, the project’s efforts to ensure equal treatment for migrant students are primarily focused on shaping them into successful neoliberal subjects. This means an emphasis on helping them achieve their potential, improve performance, and acquire the skills and competencies needed to remain productive. As the neoliberal potential of the migrant student may only be realized with the implementation of the project, they must remain discursively oppressed in the interim.

It is precisely here that the contradiction between social justice and neoliberalism is the starkest. For how equitable could an initiative be if it reinforces linguistically the inequalities it claims to dismantle? This project, completed in 2024, aimed to reach at least 80 teachers in the EU and to be disseminated to many more. We maintain that the social justice claims of the project could fall ultimately short, as it urged these teachers to reduce the students in their class to a potentially disadvantaged, incompetent, and passive other – as it called teachers, researchers, and funders alike to other individuals who are denied a part in this knowledge (re)production.

Not only is such an approach harmful due to its potentially unethical and unempathetic nature, but it may also be ineffective. Particularly decontextualization and deauthorization (Krumer-Nevo & Sidi, 2012), by detaching the issue from the relevant context(s) and the utterance from its utterer(s), may present solutions ill-equipped to solve it. This should be of

great concern to funding organizations if, as suggested by Serrano Velarde (2018), they value significance and executability in the projects they fund.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The special issue aims to “enhance a critical stance against neoconservatism, neoliberalism and the myth of the neutrality of schools, all of which obscure cultural and linguistic hierarchies, power relations, and other mechanisms that reinforce social inequalities.” With this article, we wish to raise awareness and acting against othering in neoliberal (supranational) projects related to diversity and teacher training / education. To resist neoliberalism (and neoconservatism), we believe that, in Nordic teacher education and elsewhere, attention needs to be brought to the ideologies and power relationships that present themselves when discussing others in both research and education. This entails recognizing and acting against academic othering on various relevant levels of academic knowledge production.

Our first recommendations concern how to ethically approach the figure of the migrant in educational research in general. Our primary concern has to do with the monolithic use of the very word in English and other languages. For example, during the course of the project assumptions were made about a shared understanding of this figure, despite the variance in migration histories, policies, and discourses between EU member countries, which undoubtedly informs project members’ and future project users’ understanding. While some definitions were offered, they were rather broad, only excluding people whose family line in their birth country is “long,” and who have never lived elsewhere, even temporarily. This definition encompasses such a broad sample of individuals that their lived experiences or the “challenges they face” are bound to differ. It is in this absence of precision and clarity that the reader must turn to subtexts to decipher whom the project truly wishes to reach and for what purposes. As this article has shown, while the data define the migrant student as a vague and contradictory social category, the subtexts reveal biases which call the reader to imagine a very specific type of person who migrates — namely, a disadvantaged, somewhat incompetent, and culturally and linguistically different person. In opposition to the abundance of victimizing and othering messaging, the broad definitions lose significance. Alternatively, the contradiction between the concrete texts and subtexts could call the reader to associate this subtextual characterization to all those who fit the definition provided by the authors of the analyzed documents. This ambiguity and contradictory messaging may lead to confusing incoherencies, as interlocutors (e.g., teachers

partaking in the training offered by the project) struggle to find solutions for vastly different issues. Additionally, by normalizing these discourses of all who migrate or whose family has migrated as incompetent and disadvantaged, we may also witness worsening treatment of those othered into a migrant student – in education and elsewhere, and in different contexts of the Nordics and the EU.

We also suggest that the power of, for example, scholars and teacher educators to ventriloquize and other should be more widely recognized, for they are active partakers in glocal knowledge production. It should thus be recognized that assignment of a label, such as “migrant” or “student,” may act as the first sign of othering. When labels are necessary, they should be informative, relevant, and social justice-oriented (Vietze et al., 2023). Particularly when addressing people who are not present, discussion ought not to rely on a shared understanding on the meaning of the label assigned to them. Rather, meanings should be negotiated, and any potential agreement on a definition must remain changeable. These discussions are valuable, as they carry a potential for critically examining biases that may otherwise remain undiscovered. Further, in international projects, multilingual conversations could help “un-otherize” the other and further connotational understanding of multilingual discourses. However, when utterances are written, rather than spoken, the possibility for negotiation is reduced. Thus, special care should be given to the ethical representation of the other in writing. Krumer-Nevo and Sidi (2012) make stimulating recommendations for ways to resist othering in writing. They ask researchers to consider the following methods:

- (1) narrative, which enables contextualization, historicization, and the retrieval of the subjectivity of the Other; (2) dialog, which acts against objectification and dehistoricization by bringing the presence of the Other’s personal history and knowledge; and (3) reflexivity, which acts against the authoritative stance of the text or the researcher. (Krumer-Nevo & Sidi, 2012, pp. 300–301)

Empathy should serve as the basis for writing of and discussing the other. This empathy to us means above all the recognition of their complexity.

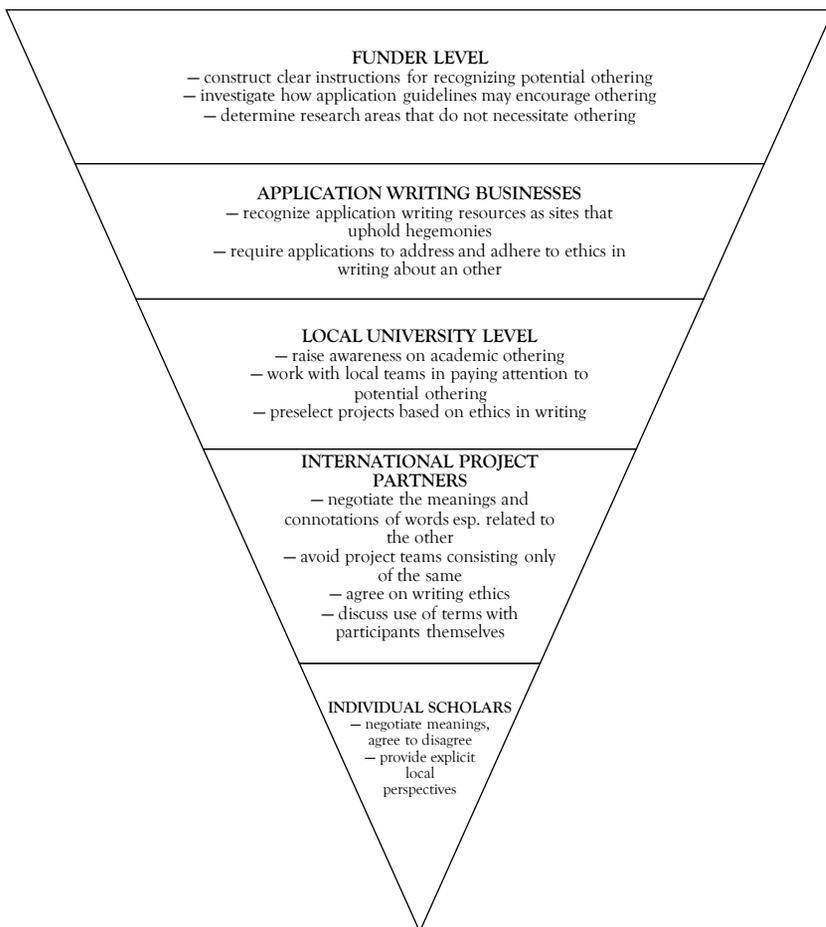


FIGURE 3. Recommendations for entities on levels of educational research for addressing and avoiding (academic) othering

As our article concerns an international intervention project, we would also like to direct some recommendations towards similar initiatives. Firstly, although we recognize the significance of concrete results that reflect the original proposal, we would urge relevant parties to elevate the renegotiations of the central figures of the project on the list of priorities, despite the risk of alterations in the project plan. This may lead not only to more opportunities to reduce and dismantle othering, but also results

and methods that are more relevant to the objectives, as shared knowledge is negotiated and expanded during the lifetime of the project. Secondly, guidelines that account for ethical writing practices should be provided for international application reviewers, application writing course organisers, and universities that select projects to put forward in, for example, EU application rounds. In Figure 3 we suggest concrete recommendations for these various levels involved in decision-making concerning international educational research projects.

These ethical criteria should include a demand for sensitivity, possibility for renegotiation, and an emphasis on the importance of wording in relation to potential othering (Dervin, 2023). In Table 3 we briefly suggest some questions that may aid in recognizing academic othering, focusing on the naming, (de)agentivizing, and characterizing of the other, tying them together with othering (Jensen, 2011), ventriloquism (see Authier-Revuz, 1984; Dervin, 2008), and academic othering (Krumer-Nevo & Sidi, 2012).

**TABLE 3.** *Questions related to naming, (de)agentivizing, and characterization of entities and their connections to (academic) othering and ventriloquizing*

	Ask	Recognize
Naming	Which entities are named?	Othering (defining into existence)
	How are names and the context of their enunciation connotated?	Othering (differentiation, ascribing negative characteristics)
(De)agentivizing	Which entities act and talk?	Ventriloquism
	Which entities do not act and talk?	Deauthorization
	Which entities are the object of action?	Objectification
	Are the actors able to execute actions ascribed to them? How are actions connotated?	Ventriloquism, othering (ascribing negative characteristics)
	What is offered as an explanation of behaviour of entities?	Decontextualization
Characterization	How are the same and the other described?	Othering (ascribing negative characteristics)
	Are entities' individuality and complexity recognized?	Dehistorization

These, we hope, will help recognize projects which approach social justice with a much-needed understanding of how to resist othering created by

neoliberal educational research and practice. The way the project is described and implemented was negotiated, co-constructed, and agreed upon by academics in all the participating countries. Although Finland is not the sole focus of the project, it plays as much of a central role as the other participating member states. This EU project reminds us that looking into a country’s (teacher) education and training, such as in Finland, requires going beyond country and region specifics to include broader supranational influences which also shape its education. The neoliberal and neoconservative aspects which related to this special issue find their roots in this central cross-border, international, and glocal perspective (Biesta, 2020).

## NOTES

1. This article partly builds on some of the findings from this study.

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# DES PRATIQUES ÉDUCATIVES ADAPTÉES AUX BESOINS D'ÉLÈVES NOUVEAUX ARRIVANTS DANS LES ÉCOLES DE LANGUE FRANÇAISE DE L'ONTARIO

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**RÉSUMÉ.** Cet article vise à comprendre comment des pratiques éducatives sont adaptées aux besoins d'élèves nouveaux arrivants dans les écoles de langue française de l'Ontario. Il se réfère à la pédagogie universelle et à la différenciation pédagogique, aux concepts de pratique éducative et d'expérience ainsi qu'au modèle de *Compétence pour l'équité, l'inclusion et la justice sociale* (Larochelle-Audet et al., 2022). L'entrevue semi-structurée constitue la principale stratégie de collecte de données de cette étude de cas. Issus d'une analyse narrative, les résultats valorisent le soutien aux familles lors de l'admission, la mise en contact avec des pairs lors de l'accueil des élèves nouveaux arrivants à l'école et des pratiques éducatives flexibles offrant un accompagnement personnalisé et conférant une ouverture à la diversité.

## EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES ADAPTED TO THE NEEDS OF NEWCOMER STUDENTS IN FRENCH-LANGUAGE SCHOOLS IN ONTARIO

**ABSTRACT.** This article aims to understand how educational practices are adapted to the needs of newcomer students in French-language schools in Ontario. It refers to universal pedagogy and educational differentiation, as well as the concepts of educational practice and experience, and the *Competence for Equity, Inclusion and Social Justice* model (Larochelle-Audet et al., 2022). Semi-structured interviews were the main data collection strategy used in this case study. Based on a narrative analysis, the results highlight the support given to families at the time of admission, contact with peers when welcoming newcomers to the school, flexible educational practices that offer personalised support guidance and provide openness to diversity.

**L**e Canada accueille chaque année une importante proportion d'immigrants et, comme bien des pays, n'échappe pas au phénomène de la mondialisation. En fait, depuis 2021, cette proportion constitue près du quart de la population canadienne et continue de s'accroître (Statistique Canada, 2022). Les projections démographiques stipulent même que la

population ontarienne continuera d'être en hausse « au cours des 27 prochaines années, passant d'un chiffre estimé de 16,1 millions au 1<sup>er</sup> juillet 2024 à plus de 20,5 millions d'ici le 1<sup>er</sup> juillet 2051 » (Gouvernement de l'Ontario, 2025, paragr. 6). Dès lors, il ne s'agit plus uniquement de promouvoir la francophonie en s'interrogeant sur les traditions à perpétuer dans le contexte d'une minorité linguistique. Il devient plutôt prioritaire de comprendre ce qui se passe au quotidien dans des salles de classe qui accueillent et accompagnent des élèves issus des quatre coins du monde qui se retrouvent dans un environnement qui ne leur est pas familier. C'est en ce sens que nous nous intéressons aux pratiques éducatives qui favorisent l'inclusion d'élèves nouvellement arrivés sur ce sol canadien qualifié de terre d'accueil (Zahid, 2021). Plus spécifiquement, notre objectif vise à comprendre comment des pratiques éducatives sont adaptées aux besoins d'élèves nouveaux arrivants dans un contexte de minorité linguistique, tel que celui des écoles de langue française de l'Ontario.

Pour mieux saisir la pertinence de mener notre recherche dans cet environnement, il importe de savoir que, de nos jours, « l'immigration est un facteur important de diversification ethnoculturelle des écoles de langue française en Ontario » (Farmer et Labrie, 2008, p. 377). Le flux migratoire se répercute dans le contexte scolaire de la francophonie ontarienne à tel point qu'il en constitue dorénavant un élément contribuant à sa pérennité. C'est ainsi que la présence d'une population de plus en plus diversifiée sur les plans linguistique, culturel et ethnique s'avère notoire dans les classes (Gérin-Lajoie, 2020; Lory et Valois, 2021). Pour valoriser cette diversité, lutter contre l'exclusion des groupes minorisés et favoriser la réussite scolaire et le bien-être d'élèves issus de l'immigration, plusieurs documents et politiques éducatives ont été conçus au cours de dernières décennies (ministère de l'Éducation et de la Formation, 1993; ministère de l'Éducation de l'Ontario, 2009a, 2009b, 2013a, 2014, 2017, 2021). L'apport de ces documents est notoire, car ils comportent des principes et réglementations. Cependant, la complexité de l'hétérogénéité « linguistique et culturelle au sein des écoles francophones ainsi que la situation minoritaire dans laquelle elles se trouvent » (Jeanveaux, 2022, p. 4) nécessitent d'être davantage explicitées afin de mettre en œuvre des pratiques adaptées aux besoins de ces apprenants. C'est pourquoi il importe de se demander : comment des pratiques éducatives sont-elles adaptées aux besoins d'élèves nouveaux arrivants dans le contexte des écoles de langue française de l'Ontario?

D'une part, mieux comprendre ces pratiques peut contribuer à spécifier celles qui sont à prioriser à la formation enseignante. D'autre part, compte

tenu du contexte minoritaire, une connaissance accrue de ces pratiques porte à réfléchir aux incidences relatives aux changements que provoque le flux de migration et à reconnaître l'importance de la notion d'interculturalité valorisant « un processus de compréhension mutuelle » (Skrefsrud, 2017, p. 319). En ce sens, il appert essentiel de prendre en considération les besoins diversifiés de ces élèves nouveaux arrivants dont les expériences varient selon leurs contextes de provenance, leurs langues d'usage et les expériences vécues dans leur parcours migratoire (Fleuret et al., 2018; Liboy et Mulatris, 2016).

### ***L'admission, l'accueil et l'accompagnement d'élèves nouveaux arrivants***

La nécessité de mettre en œuvre des mesures qui assurent un soutien lors de l'admission, l'accueil et l'accompagnement d'élèves issus de l'immigration est devenue imminente au cours des dernières décennies à cause de leur nombre en constante croissance dans les classes. En ce qui a trait à l'admission, le ministère de l'Éducation de l'Ontario (2009a) affirme l'importance de mettre en place des procédures qui permettent de faire l'étude de dossiers considérés comme des cas d'exception afin d'accueillir les élèves en classe le plus rapidement possible. Cette étape d'admission est suivie de celle de l'accueil, qui fait référence à « l'ensemble des pratiques mises en œuvre par la communauté scolaire afin de permettre à tout nouvel élève et à sa famille de se sentir membre et partenaire privilégié de l'école de langue française, dans un climat de confiance et de compréhension » (ministère de l'Éducation de l'Ontario, 2009a, p. 12). Dans ce contexte éducatif, les conseils scolaires de langue française de l'Ontario ont le mandat de favoriser l'inclusion d'élèves issus de l'immigration et de leurs familles, afin de développer un sentiment d'appartenance avec la communauté de l'école et la communauté francophone élargie.

S'ensuit un accompagnement défini comme étant « l'appui soutenu offert à l'élève tout au long de son cheminement scolaire afin de favoriser l'acquisition des connaissances et compétences essentielles à son actualisation linguistique, sociale et culturelle et de faciliter sa transition vers les études postsecondaires et le marché du travail » (ministère de l'Éducation de l'Ontario, 2009a, p. 15). L'une des stratégies qui concerne l'accompagnement de l'élève insiste sur la nécessité « que les écoles élémentaires et secondaires offrent au besoin le programme d'*Actualisation linguistique en français* (ALF), le *Programme d'appui aux nouveaux arrivants* (PANA) et le *Programme d'anglais pour débutants* (APD) » (ministère de l'Éducation de l'Ontario, 2009a, p. 4).

Le programme ALF (ministère de l'Éducation de l'Ontario, 2010a, 2010b) concourt à développer chez l'élève des compétences langagières en français qui lui permettent ultérieurement de s'inscrire aux classes ordinaires. Le programme PANA :

est conçu pour répondre aux besoins de scolarisation des élèves provenant de l'étranger et récemment installés en Ontario qui ne sont pas en mesure de suivre immédiatement le programme d'études ordinaire et qui doivent s'initier à leur nouvelle réalité au Canada et en Ontario français. (ministère de l'Éducation de l'Ontario, 2010c, p. 9)

Il offre un soutien de scolarisation spécifique aux élèves immigrants afin de les aider à se familiariser avec leur nouveau milieu, à s'intégrer à la société et à la culture canadiennes et à combler, si nécessaire, des retards en communication orale, en lecture et en écriture. Au secondaire, ce programme donne aussi l'opportunité de créer des cours de francisation adaptés à la capacité langagière de l'élève (ministère de l'Éducation de l'Ontario, 2010d). Le programme APD s'adresse aux élèves qui s'expriment peu ou pas en anglais (ministère de l'Éducation de l'Ontario, 2013b, 2013c) et concourt au développement d'une compétence de base dans cette langue d'usage, dont l'enseignement est obligatoire à partir de la quatrième année dans les écoles de langue française de l'Ontario. Dans une vision d'équité, ces programmes sont offerts à de très petits groupes et leur durée maximale de quatre ans varie selon les besoins et le rythme d'apprentissage de chacun des élèves. Cette durée est déterminée par diverses évaluations, effectuées au fur et à mesure que l'élève évolue dans son milieu d'accueil.

Tout en reconnaissant le bien-fondé de ces directives et programmes, Farmer et Labrie (2008) font observer que ce ne sont pas tous les membres de la profession qui déploient la même qualité d'effort pour faciliter la collaboration entre le personnel scolaire et les familles. Ces auteurs soulignent l'importance d'éviter que se glissent des disparités marquées dans l'offre de cet appui linguistique, par exemple, entre des conseils scolaires d'une même région ou des écoles d'une même ville. Plusieurs études soulignent le manque de ressources et de préparation des enseignants en contexte de diversité (Farmer et Labrie, 2008; Jacquet, 2007; Kamano, 2014; Robineau, 2010) ainsi que le manque de pratiques éducatives multilingues pour faire face aux enjeux interculturels dans ces programmes (Fleuret, 2020; Fleuret et al., 2013; Fleuret et al., 2018). Tout ne va pas de soi dans un contexte linguistique minoritaire quand il s'agit d'offrir une éducation à des élèves qui arrivent de partout en ayant des bagages linguistiques et culturels très diversifiés (Liboy et Mulatris, 2016). Des efforts concertés sont actuellement déployés afin de favoriser des

pratiques éducatives qui soient adaptées à leurs besoins et c'est pour mieux les comprendre que nous approfondissons cette problématique.

## **CADRE THÉORIQUE**

Nous examinons la question de l'adaptation de pratiques aux besoins d'élèves nouveaux arrivants à partir des assises référentielles que sont : la troisième composante du modèle de *Compétence pour l'équité, l'inclusion et la justice sociale* (Larochelle-Audet et al., 2022), les concepts de pratique éducative et d'expérience, ainsi que les modèles de la pédagogie universelle et de la différenciation pédagogique.

### ***Le modèle de compétence pour l'équité, l'inclusion et la justice sociale***

Le modèle de *Compétence pour l'équité, l'inclusion et la justice sociale* (Larochelle-Audet et al., 2022) repose sur une perspective transformative, structurelle et systémique des concepts d'équité, d'inclusion et de justice sociale en éducation. En ce sens, l'équité va au-delà de l'égalité de traitement ou de la distribution égale des ressources et des opportunités. L'inclusion implique la transformation des structures scolaires pour offrir à chaque apprenant la possibilité de « recevoir une éducation adaptée à ses expériences, identités et besoins » (Larochelle-Audet et al., 2020, p. 6). La justice sociale est conçue dans une perspective selon laquelle chaque personne a « le droit à l'égalité des chances, aux mêmes droits civils, et à la pleine participation à cette société et à ses libertés et responsabilités, qu'elles soient d'ordre social, éducatif, économique, institutionnel ou moral » (ministère de l'Éducation de l'Ontario, 2014, p. 99).

Ce modèle est conçu au regard de deux finalités. La première finalité consiste à favoriser la réussite éducative et l'épanouissement des personnes de groupes minorisés dans le milieu scolaire et dans la société. La deuxième finalité aspire à former des citoyens qui participent activement au développement et à l'évolution de la démocratie et au respect des droits de la personne. Ces deux finalités se précisent dans une compétence qui comprend les quatre composantes suivantes : « 1) Adopter et promouvoir un agir professionnel intègre et critique; 2) Organiser et piloter l'environnement éducatif; 3) Promouvoir et soutenir le développement de pratiques éducatives et pédagogiques équitables, justes, différenciées et inclusives; 4) Développer avec l'équipe-école une culture et une organisation inclusive » (Larochelle-Audet et al., 2022, p. 5).

Dans cet article, nous nous référons plus spécifiquement à la troisième composante de ce modèle, car elle met explicitement en évidence les possibilités de différenciation et d'adaptation « de pratiques éducatives et pédagogiques, de curriculum, d'activités extrascolaires équitables, justes,

différenciées, et inclusives des identités, expériences et besoins individuels et collectifs des élèves » (Larochelle-Audet et al., 2022, p. 5). C'est en concordance avec cette composante que notre étude a comme objectif de comprendre comment des pratiques éducatives sont adaptées aux besoins d'élèves nouveaux arrivants dans le contexte des écoles de langue française de l'Ontario.

### *Les concepts de pratique éducative et d'expérience*

Le concept de pratique éducative tient compte de la portée systémique que peut avoir un ensemble d'acteurs scolaires et sociaux lors de l'admission, l'accueil et l'accompagnement d'élèves nouveaux arrivants. Ce concept s'avère central dans les fondements de la présente étude, car il est défini comme étant l'ensemble

des processus et des procédures effectuées dans des cadres formels ou informels d'éducation, et ce, à différents niveaux... par toutes personnes contribuant à l'apprentissage d'enfants et d'adolescents d'âge scolaire ou d'adultes selon des modalités de formation diversifiées en présentiel ou en ligne. (Théberge citée dans Pélissier, 2024, p. 38)

Selon ces prémisses, la pratique éducative n'est pas essentiellement assumée par une personne ayant un statut professionnel d'enseignant. Elle se déploie dans des interactions qui tiennent compte du contexte sociopolitique, historique et culturel dans lequel se situent les interactions avec les élèves selon les caractéristiques et intérêts de ces derniers, leurs niveaux d'apprentissage et les relations établies avec leurs familles.

Considéré comme une source d'apprentissage, le concept d'expérience réfère au « fait d'avoir vécu, pensé et agi dans des situations » qui exigent de se débrouiller tout en tenant compte « des conditions, des tâches, des buts, des problèmes posés dans et par ces situations » (Mayen, 2009, p. 139). Ainsi, la vie de tout être humain est constituée d'un ensemble d'expériences, certaines étant plus marquantes que d'autres. Par exemple, les expériences vécues lors de bouleversements affectifs, de changements subis, de transitions qui contrastent avec celles vécues précédemment restent plus facilement gravées dans la mémoire et peuvent éventuellement avoir des incidences sur des comportements ultérieurs.

Selon Dewey (1969), l'expérience s'appuie sur les deux principes suivants : le principe de continuité et le principe d'interaction. En ce qui a trait au principe de continuité, toute expérience « emprunte aux expériences antérieures et modifie la qualité des expériences ultérieures » (Dewey, 1934, cité dans Mayen, 2009, p. 139). En ce sens, l'expérience est un processus continu dans lequel le souvenir d'événements passés exerce une

influence sur les manières dont la personne s'adapte aux situations qui se produisent dans son environnement. En tant que deuxième principe, Dewey (1969) conçoit que l'expérience découle de l'interaction entre l'individu et son environnement, ce qui présuppose une capacité d'adaptation de l'organisme face à des situations, phénomènes, circonstances qui concourent à des transformations (Boutet, 2016). Entrent alors en jeu les caractéristiques de l'environnement dans lequel se vit l'expérience. Si cette dernière s'avère familière et rassurante, l'expérience s'inscrit plus facilement en référence à des souvenirs, tandis qu'un environnement complètement nouveau et étranger exige une plus grande capacité d'adaptation parce qu'il est moins possible de se référer à des expériences antérieures.

### ***La pédagogie universelle et la différenciation pédagogique***

La pédagogie universelle est définie comme étant « une approche inclusive destinée à rendre accessibles et flexibles l'enseignement et l'apprentissage pour mieux répondre aux besoins éducatifs d'une diversité d'élèves » (Desmarais et al., 2018, p. 165). Elle repose sur trois principes de flexibilité : 1) offrir plusieurs moyens d'engagement; 2) offrir plusieurs moyens de représentation; 3) offrir plusieurs moyens d'action et d'expression. Cette approche a pour spécificité de prendre en considération la singularité de l'élève dans une perspective de dénormalisation lors de la planification de l'enseignement afin que chaque apprenant développe son plein potentiel (Bergeron et al., 2011; Bergeron et Prud'homme, 2018). Elle vise ainsi à rendre les pratiques d'enseignement plus accessibles et constitue une approche proactive.

La différenciation pédagogique renvoie à une philosophie basée sur « l'idéal d'égalité des chances » et « la foi dans les potentialités de l'être humain » (Przesmycki, 2004, p. 11). Dans cette optique, elle valorise le droit à la différence, met l'accent sur l'éducabilité de tous les élèves et vise à lutter contre les inégalités qui contribuent à l'échec scolaire. Elle s'avère « une manière organisée, souple et dynamique d'ajuster l'enseignement et l'apprentissage de manière à atteindre les enfants à leur niveau et à leur permettre, en tant qu'apprenants, de progresser au maximum » (Tomlinson, 2004, p. 21). Elle s'inspire de principes selon lesquels l'adaptation de l'enseignement peut s'exercer dans la planification « de tâches respectant les capacités » de l'élève en offrant « des programmes d'étude de qualité » (Tomlinson, 2024, p. 22). Elle préconise que l'enseignement peut se réaliser selon « des regroupements flexibles » et que l'évaluation requiert « des ajustements continus » pour favoriser une construction communautaire au sein même de la classe. Pour ce faire, il

importe de différencier « les contenus, les processus et les productions » au regard « des intérêts et du profil d'apprentissage de l'élève » (Tomlinson, 2004, p. 22). Ces ajustements peuvent aussi être conçus selon l'environnement dans lequel l'enseignement et l'apprentissage s'effectuent (Bergeron et al., 2021).

## MÉTHODOLOGIE

L'objectif de notre étude étant de comprendre comment des pratiques éducatives sont adaptées aux besoins d'élèves nouveaux arrivants dans le contexte des écoles de langue française de l'Ontario, nous avons privilégié l'étude de cas parce que cette approche aide à comprendre les phénomènes sociaux qui nous entourent et leurs liens avec le contexte dans lequel ils sont à l'étude (Roy, 2016). Nous avons opté pour l'étude de cas unique, car nous concevons que l'ensemble des écoles de langue française dans lesquelles nos participants exercent leur profession constitue un cas. D'une part, les législations qui touchent les élèves issus de l'immigration, les programmes et les pratiques dont il est question dans cette étude s'appliquent à un même système scolaire de la minorité francophone de l'Ontario, quelles que soient les régions ou les niveaux préscolaires, élémentaires ou secondaires concernés. D'autre part, des échanges constants entre professionnels de l'éducation de ce réseau contribuent à une circulation de l'information qui se réfère aux pratiques qui y sont mises en œuvre, dont celles relatives aux élèves nouvellement arrivés.

Quatre membres du personnel enseignant, dont deux femmes et deux hommes, ainsi que quatre membres de la direction ou personnes ressources attirés aux programmes d'élèves nouveaux arrivants, dont trois femmes et un homme, ont accepté de nous rencontrer. Parmi ces huit participants, quatre sont immigrants de première génération tandis que les quatre autres sont natifs du Canada. Tous étaient à l'emploi de conseils scolaires de langue française de l'Ontario lors des entrevues individuelles que nous avons effectuées de février au début avril 2023. Ces participants provenaient de trois des 12 conseils scolaires francophones de l'Ontario : deux dans un premier conseil; trois dans un second conseil et trois autres dans un troisième conseil. Pour les recruter, nous avons procédé selon un échantillonnage de type intentionnel, non probabiliste, à savoir l'échantillonnage en boule de neige qui est une approche consistant à « ajouter à un noyau d'individus (des personnes considérées comme influentes, par exemple) tous ceux qui en sont en relation (d'affaires, de travail, amitié, etc.) avec eux, et ainsi de suite » (Beaud, 2016, p. 268).

L'entrevue semi-dirigée a constitué notre principale stratégie de collecte de données, car elle nous mettait directement en contact avec des acteurs scolaires qui nous faisaient part de leurs expériences de pratiques éducatives. Ces entrevues ont duré de 60 à 90 minutes. Puisque la présente recherche avait une visée de compréhension et qu'elle relevait du paradigme constructiviste, il s'avérait pertinent de susciter une interaction verbale avec les participants qui étaient eux-mêmes au cœur de la mise en œuvre des pratiques favorisant l'admission, l'accueil et l'accompagnement d'élèves nouveaux arrivants. Dans cette perspective, nous leur avons demandé de nous raconter des expériences relatives à leurs pratiques, ce qui leur permettait de les décrire selon « leur compréhension d'une expérience particulière, leur vision du monde, en vue de les rendre explicites » (Baribeau et Royer, 2012, p. 26).

Nous avons procédé à une analyse narrative des données selon la logique inductive modérée, qui met en relation le « cadre théorique par la définition opérationnelle des concepts étudiés » (Savoie-Zajc, 2018, p. 206). Nous avons procédé à cette analyse en trois étapes. Dans la première étape, nous avons repéré les récits de pratiques relatées par les participants et avons reconstruit ces récits en les situant en référence aux niveaux dans lesquels les pratiques ont été exercées, par exemple, au préscolaire, à l'élémentaire ou au secondaire. Dans la deuxième étape, nous avons identifié des extraits d'entrevues comprenant des commentaires émis par les participants au sujet de leurs pratiques. Ces extraits étaient formulés sous forme d'intentions, justifiant ces pratiques ou expliquant la manière de les adapter. Dans la troisième étape, nous avons mis ces récits et extraits d'entrevues en lien avec nos assises référentielles, soit la troisième composante du modèle de *Compétence d'équité, d'inclusion et de justice sociale*, (Larochelle et al., 2022) le concept d'expérience, de pédagogie universelle et de différenciation pédagogique.

## RÉSULTATS

Pour présenter les résultats, nous retenons une situation charnière de vie scolaire qui revêt une grande importance pour tous les élèves, soit celle de l'arrivée dans l'environnement scolaire. Les pratiques éducatives étant adaptées à l'âge de l'élève, nous subdivisons la présentation de ces résultats en deux parties en référence : 1) à l'enfant admis et accueilli au préscolaire ou à l'élémentaire alors qu'il est âgé entre 4 et 11 ans; 2) à l'adolescent admis et accueilli au secondaire qui a entre 12 et 17 ans.

### *L'admission et l'accueil de l'enfant au préscolaire ou à l'élémentaire*

L'admission de l'élève comprend diverses procédures dont celles d'établir un premier contact avec la famille qui vient d'immigrer. Entre alors en jeu le *Programme des travailleuses et des travailleurs d'établissement dans les écoles* (TÉÉ), qui offre un service d'interprète pour faciliter la communication (Immigration, Réfugiés et Citoyenneté Canada, 2012). L'aide, qui est alors reçue, concourt à effectuer les formalités d'admissibilité, entre autres, à collecter les documents accessibles qui portent sur sa scolarité antérieure, par exemple, ses bulletins ou relevés de notes afin de soumettre le dossier de l'élève au comité d'admission et de procéder à la confirmation de celle-ci. Cette étape d'admission inclut également des procédures d'évaluation en français et en mathématiques qui se poursuivent au cours des premières semaines d'insertion de l'élève dans l'environnement scolaire.

Pour accueillir l'élève, une visite à l'école est prévue. À cette occasion, les membres de la famille rencontrent dans la mesure du possible la direction de l'école, la personne responsable du programme PANA et celle qui aura la charge de l'élève ainsi que d'autres intervenants qui vont graviter autour de lui. Cette visite revêt beaucoup d'importance, car il est essentiel d'informer le mieux possible tant les parents que les élèves du fonctionnement du système scolaire. Les écoles, les attentes, le cursus, les pratiques éducatives diffèrent d'un pays à l'autre. Une fois que le tour des locaux est complété, il est question du parcours de l'élève. La question des conditions dans lesquelles cette famille a voulu, dû ou pu immigrer est aussi abordée sans nécessairement entrer dans tous les détails, car il est parfois trop tôt pour approfondir tout ce qui a été vécu au cours de leur périple migratoire. Il s'agit avant tout de consolider le contact, qui se veut le plus chaleureux possible. C'est le cas du récit que nous a raconté l'une des participantes, qui porte sur l'accueil d'un jeune élève de 6 ans qui venait d'arriver dans l'une des régions de l'Ontario.

Tout récemment, une famille est venue faire une visite dans l'une de nos écoles. Pour les accueillir, nous avons fait des démarches dans la communauté pour nous assurer d'avoir une personne qui parle leur langue. Une fois son admission confirmée, nous avons effectué une évaluation progressive au cours des trois premières semaines de son insertion en classe afin d'observer comment il interagissait tant avec les autres enfants qu'avec la titulaire de la classe et celle de PANA. L'interprète nous a aidés à lui expliquer le fonctionnement : à quelle heure il allait arriver, à quelle heure il allait manger, à quel endroit il pouvait suspendre son manteau. C'était important qu'il comprenne la routine.

Pendant cette période d'insertion, cet élève a eu la possibilité d'observer ce qui se passait autour de lui et de vivre au même rythme que les autres enfants de la classe. Comme l'interprète n'était pas disponible toute la journée, la titulaire de la classe et celle de la classe PANA se sont relayées pour le guider au quotidien. Elles communiquaient avec lui en ayant recours à des images représentant des actions (lire, écrire, manger), des lieux (gymnase, toilette, bibliothèque, cour de récréation) ou des objets (crayons, tables...). Ces images servaient de repères pour faciliter la compréhension de mots usuels et lui donner accès à un vocabulaire de base pour qu'il puisse exprimer ses besoins. Il a commencé à comprendre la signification de ces images et à s'en servir. (Entrevue 6)

Lors des entrevues, les participants qui travaillent avec des enfants de cet âge insistent sur le fait que ce qui compte c'est d'établir un contact avec l'élève, de lui donner des occasions d'explorer son environnement et de jouer avec d'autres enfants afin qu'il se sente suffisamment à l'aise pour apprendre. Une des caractéristiques qui ressort de leurs témoignages, c'est la flexibilité requise dans l'adaptation de pratiques éducatives. De plus, leurs propos font clairement ressortir que les membres du corps administratif ou enseignant de l'école ne sont pas les seuls à accueillir et accompagner l'élève, mais que les autres enfants de la classe et de l'école jouent également un rôle dans cette capacité d'inclusion. Cela s'exprime par moments par des gestes simples dans un environnement scolaire comme le décrit le récit qui suit.

C'est la première tempête de l'hiver. Des enfants du préscolaire de quatre et cinq ans se retrouvent sur une cour d'école. Lorsque l'heure de la rentrée arrive, l'enseignante décide de prolonger le plaisir et de rester dehors avec eux. Elle a conscience que pour certains de ses élèves, c'est leur première neige et que ce sera aussi leur premier bonhomme de neige. Elle veut leur donner l'occasion d'explorer, de le construire ensemble en s'entraïdant les uns, les autres. La neige est mouillée, parfaite. Le temps est doux, magnifique. (Entrevue 1)

Il est fort possible que tous les enfants de cette classe sautent de joie lorsque cette enseignante leur propose de rester dehors. Pour cette enfant récemment arrivée dans la classe, qui ne comprend pas trop de quoi il s'agit et qui admire les flocons qui tombent sur son manteau, ses mitaines, son visage, loin de constituer un obstacle à la communication, la neige devient rapidement sur cette cour d'école une occasion de découvrir une particularité de ce pays d'accueil. Lorsqu'elle participe avec d'autres enfants de sa classe à l'édification d'un bonhomme de neige, elle découvre que le froid qui semblait si intolérable à son arrivée peut avoir de bons côtés et, surtout, qu'il est très agréable de jouer avec des amis de la classe. Dans cette expérience, l'accueil et l'accompagnement se traduisent par des

rires partagés, par des gestes d'entraide, par le froid d'une température qui se transforme en possibilités de rencontres. Le plaisir ambiant se communique et cette expérience souligne l'importance de donner à l'élève la possibilité d'incarner sa présence par des gestes simples.

Comme ces deux enfants font leur entrée dans le monde scolaire en bas âge, le temps joue en leur faveur. L'attention qui leur est donnée lors de leur arrivée et par la suite permet d'identifier quelles sont leurs capacités. Ce dépistage contribue à identifier leurs besoins de formation et à élaborer un plan d'action pour adapter les pratiques éducatives de telle sorte qu'elles permettent d'intégrer le plus rapidement possible la classe ordinaire à temps plein.

### *L'élève adolescent qui entre en scène au secondaire*

L'admission au secondaire s'effectue selon des procédures similaires à celles de l'élémentaire. Une fois l'admission confirmée, que ce soit en Ontario ou dans une autre province canadienne, la problématique de l'adolescent âgé de 12 à 17 ans qui entre en scène dans l'environnement scolaire est complexe. Comme le témoignage suivant en fait part (Entrevue 5), à l'instar de tous les autres élèves du secondaire, « il fait face à tous les bouleversements qu'un adolescent vit à cet âge-là : les problèmes de santé mentale, les problèmes d'accueil, les problèmes de socialisation ». Il vit ces défis en essayant « de se trouver des amis, de trouver une place, de découvrir ses intérêts » dans une école étrangère, bien souvent sans savoir parler la langue et la comprendre. Tout cela sans compter que la situation financière de sa famille peut être précaire et que chacun des membres de celle-ci (parents, sœurs et frères) vit aussi une transition et a des besoins respectifs. L'accueil de cette famille dès la première rencontre à l'école revêt donc une grande importance.

Les résultats soulignent l'importance de faire appel à des élèves de son âge pour l'accueillir dans l'école dès les premières journées. Les jeunes aiment être en contact les uns avec les autres. Ils se communiquent mutuellement de l'information, ce qui permet au nouveau venu de se débrouiller rapidement dans les couloirs. C'est en ce sens que le programme d'*Accueil aux nouvelles arrivantes et nouveaux arrivants* (ANNA) sélectionne des élèves du secondaire pour qu'ils deviennent ambassadeurs auprès d'élèves nouvellement arrivés (Lamoureux, 2021). Ces jeunes accompagnent ainsi d'autres jeunes dans des tâches quotidiennes et leur expliquent le fonctionnement de l'école ainsi que celui des autobus scolaires et de la ville pour qu'ils puissent circuler. Leurs propres expériences d'immigration leur confèrent une connaissance intrinsèque de ce que vit l'élève qui arrive ainsi que de ce que signifie commencer une nouvelle vie

dans un nouveau pays. Ce sont d'excellents alliés qui assument également un accompagnement social pour aider l'élève à se faire des amis, à qui il est possible de poser des questions et de se confier.

Cet accueil par des pairs est conçu comme étant très important et complémentaire au plan d'action académique mis en place au cours de l'accueil. L'étude du dossier et les résultats de l'évaluation de la capacité de l'élève à s'exprimer oralement, à lire et écrire ainsi que ses connaissances en mathématiques contribuent à déterminer ses besoins d'accompagnement dans le cadre d'une classe PANA et à spécifier quels cours il est en mesure de suivre.

Quand l'élève arrive au secondaire, il ne s'agit pas d'aller trop vite et de l'inscrire dans des cours sans aucun accompagnement, ce n'est pas le but. On veut prendre le temps de connaître ses acquis avant de faire graduellement le placement. Lorsqu'il y a des choix de cours, on se demande : Est-ce que ce sont les meilleurs cours pour l'élève? Est-ce que l'élève serait en mesure d'avancer davantage en suivant d'autres cours? On évalue quelle est la meilleure voie à privilégier. Il nous est même possible de créer des cours pour répondre à des besoins spécifiques d'apprentissage. C'est la beauté des cours des programmes PANA, ALF et APD au secondaire. À la direction de la réussite scolaire et de ces programmes, nous travaillons avec les enseignants, pour trouver des moyens diversifiés, par exemple, en utilisant des capsules virtuelles pour développer des compétences à l'oral et à l'écrit ainsi que la compréhension en lecture. C'est un travail à la carte pour les orienter et les accompagner. Tout n'est pas parfait. On sait qu'il y a un manque de ressources avec les élèves et on essaie d'être créatif. (Entrevue 2)

Les participants que nous avons rencontrés font valoir que ce processus d'accueil et d'accompagnement s'appuie sur des programmes axés sur la francisation et qu'un effort concerté entre enseignants et personnes ressources s'avère essentiel pour assurer un suivi dans le cheminement de l'élève tant au niveau académique que social. Au niveau académique, cet accompagnement se poursuit lorsque l'élève ne requiert plus le cadre de cours PANA et est en mesure de s'inscrire en classe ordinaire, par exemple, en mathématiques. Le suivi est alors assuré par le titulaire qui prend la relève. Celui-ci assiste l'élève dans cette transition en cernant quels sont les besoins de formation, entre autres, en vérifiant quelles sont les stratégies que connaît l'élève et quelles sont celles qu'il est aussi préférable qu'il apprenne pour favoriser son apprentissage et sa réussite scolaire.

Lorsqu'un élève est intégré dans l'une des classes de mathématiques de 7<sup>e</sup> année que j'enseigne, je reçois des informations de la part de son enseignant du programme PANA et je consulte son dossier. Je sais qu'en

mathématiques, l'élève a parfois de la difficulté à comprendre quand on utilise certains termes, parce que ce ne sont pas les mêmes que ceux qu'il connaît. C'est important d'adapter le vocabulaire à son niveau même au secondaire, de choisir des mots qui facilitent son apprentissage. Avant d'immigrer au Canada, j'enseignais les mathématiques et les sciences dans mon pays d'origine. Je connais les stratégies traditionnelles auxquelles on se réfère en Afrique et en Europe. Au cours des premières semaines, quand je donne un travail individuel au groupe, je demande à cet élève d'utiliser des stratégies qu'il employait dans son pays pour effectuer des calculs ou résoudre des problèmes. Ça me permet d'observer les stratégies qu'il a acquises et de concevoir comment faciliter l'intégration d'autres stratégies, qui lui seraient utiles de connaître. Une fois que j'ai vérifié les stratégies avec lesquelles il est familier, je fais de la modélisation pour lui montrer celles qui sont plus couramment employées ici et qu'il a besoin de savoir. (Entrevue 3)

Cette attention fournie à l'élève dans cette étape de transition de la classe PANA au cours ordinaire de mathématiques s'inscrit dans la lignée de la différenciation pédagogique en adoptant une pratique éducative qui permet de cerner les besoins de l'élève. L'enseignant offre à celui-ci des moyens de se représenter le contenu de la matière enseignée et de s'engager dans son apprentissage. Cette attention va aussi dans le sens de la troisième composante du modèle de *Compétence pour l'équité, l'inclusion et la justice sociale* (Larochelle-Audet et al., 2022), car elle témoigne de flexibilité en ce qui a trait au curriculum.

Au niveau social, il y a aussi la possibilité pour certaines écoles d'établir un partenariat avec un centre communautaire qui offre des activités parascolaires et constitue un lieu de rencontre pour les jeunes après les heures de classe, comme le précise le témoignage suivant :

Nos élèves sont très chanceux. Ils peuvent prendre l'autobus de ville et se rendre au centre communautaire francophone avec lequel nous avons une entente. Il y a un gymnase et des activités offertes gratuitement. Ils peuvent aussi avoir accès aux ordinateurs et demander de l'aide, car il y a des personnes qui font du tutorat et qui sont là pour les aider. (Entrevue 7)

Travailler en concertation avec la communauté donne l'occasion aux adolescents de se réunir pour le plaisir d'être ensemble ainsi que pour poursuivre leur apprentissage s'ils le désirent. Les témoignages de nos participants font également valoir l'importance de valoriser les langues et les cultures des familles, car ils considèrent qu'elles nous arrivent avec un riche bagage culturel. Leurs propos sont en concordance avec leur engagement à mettre en œuvre des pratiques éducatives adaptées aux besoins des élèves qui se présentent dans leurs écoles.

## DISCUSSION

Comme nous avons pu l'observer à la lueur des contenus des entrevues, il importe de rassurer tant les parents que les élèves dès leur arrivée et de leur fournir une information claire, précise et pertinente en ce qui a trait aux procédures d'admissibilité et au mode de fonctionnement du système scolaire. En ce sens, les témoignages recueillis soulignent le bien-fondé de la mise en place de procédures d'admission et d'accueil par les conseils scolaires ainsi que l'importance de la concertation de membres du corps administratif et enseignant dans le soutien offert à l'accompagnement de familles qui viennent d'arriver. Il peut être ardu pour ces familles de saisir la portée des règles administratives à suivre pour que leurs enfants se retrouvent rapidement admis à un système scolaire. Immigrer sollicite une grande capacité d'adaptation, surtout lorsque la maîtrise du français et de l'anglais n'est pas acquise. À l'instar de ces témoignages, Liboy et Mulatris (2016) font ressortir la complexité de la réalité des familles immigrantes et le défi à relever dans l'établissement d'une collaboration avec les parents.

Lors de l'entrée de l'élève à l'école, les récits de pratiques convergent vers cette évidence que les enfants, qu'ils soient immigrants ou non, ont besoin de la présence d'autres enfants, de jouer, de découvrir le nouvel environnement qu'ils habitent dorénavant. Quant aux élèves qui entrent au secondaire à l'adolescence, il s'avère évident que se retrouver entre pairs leur permet de faire part de leurs préoccupations, de se recréer un monde dans leur nouveau monde. Même si ces jeunes sont sollicités pour aider leurs parents dans les nombreuses tâches à effectuer pour s'installer, les réseaux sociaux qu'ils créent à l'école leur donnent l'occasion de vivre leur adolescence en compagnie d'élèves de leur âge. L'enseignement qu'ils reçoivent les recentre aussi sur leur apprentissage de la langue, ce qui concourt à développer leur capacité à communiquer et à devenir rapidement autonomes dans leur nouvel environnement. L'expérience étant définie selon les principes de continuité et d'interaction (Boutet, 2016; Dewey, 1969), ces liens établis avec des pairs sont importants pour les élèves nouveaux arrivants, car il y a peu de continuité dans la vie quotidienne de ces derniers et que l'interaction devient le principe à privilégier dans les expériences que suscitent les pratiques éducatives. Des recherches ultérieures pourraient contribuer à mieux saisir la signification de ces liens pour les élèves nouveaux arrivants et les alliés qui les accueillent.

Les décisions qui sont prises lors de l'étude du dossier de l'élève revêtent aussi une grande importance, car elles orientent le soutien qui lui est offert dans son parcours scolaire. À cet effet, les participants affirment que les

programmes ALF, PANA et APD leur fournissent un cadre les autorisant à agir avec une certaine flexibilité. Ces programmes offrent un appui tangible aux nouveaux apprenants qui ont besoin d'un environnement d'apprentissage adapté pour développer non seulement des compétences langagières, mais aussi se familiariser à leur nouvelle réalité linguistique, culturelle et scolaire, et ce, selon leur état physique et psychologique lors de leur arrivée et au cours de leur inclusion. L'évaluation de leurs besoins de mise à niveau donne lieu de cibler les apprentissages à prioriser, ce qui s'inscrit dans la lignée de la pédagogie universelle (Desmarais et al., 2018), de la différenciation pédagogique (Bergeron et Prud'homme, 2018; Bergeron et al., 2011) et de pratiques éducatives d'équité et d'inclusion, comme le conçoivent Laroche-Audet et al. (2022) dans la troisième composante du modèle de *Compétence pour l'équité, l'inclusion et la justice sociale*. Cependant, même si l'engagement et le dévouement des participants à notre étude sont évidents, la flexibilité du soutien qu'ils peuvent offrir reste encore tributaire des ressources accessibles, comme le soulignent Farmer et Labrie (2008) ainsi que Robineau (2010). Comme perspectives de recherche, il serait judicieux de réévaluer la disponibilité de ces ressources en concordance avec l'accroissement de la population immigrante pour éviter que des services d'appui ne puissent être offerts adéquatement faute de celles-ci, car cette lacune peut avoir des incidences sur la réussite et le bien-être des élèves inscrits dans les écoles de langue française de l'Ontario.

Par ailleurs, les efforts de francisation déployés ne peuvent occulter la nécessité d'offrir aussi aux nouveaux apprenants une formation adéquate en anglais afin que ceux-ci puissent maîtriser cette langue prédominante dans les communautés ontariennes et exigée sur le marché du travail. Les propos des participants révèlent également un changement de paradigme dû à la reconnaissance de l'apport de la diversité à la francophonie. Il faut dire que la population scolaire est devenue très hétérogène en très peu de temps, ce qui met en évidence des enjeux de pratiques éducatives multilingues et interculturelles qu'il importe de cibler en tant qu'objets de recherche (Fleuret, 2020; Fleuret et al., 2018; Fleuret et al., 2013).

De plus, pour saisir la spécificité de ce contexte scolaire, il importe de savoir que même si des prérogatives constitutionnelles reconnaissent le français et l'anglais comme langues officielles au Canada, il est loin d'avoir été facile d'institutionnaliser une éducation francophone en Ontario. Par exemple, une mesure intitulée le *Règlement XVII* adoptée par le ministère de l'Éducation de l'Ontario en 1912 faisait de « l'anglais l'unique langue d'enseignement des écoles fréquentées par les élèves franco-ontariens, et ce, dès la troisième année » (Centre de recherche en civilisation

canadienne-française, 2004, paragr. 2). Il a fallu attendre jusqu'en 1944 avant que ce règlement ne soit plus partie prenante des statuts de l'Ontario et la fin des années 1960 pour que des écoles secondaires de langue française voient le jour. Conçue en relation avec l'homogénéité de la population de l'époque, la création de ces écoles relevait alors de la notion conventionnelle protectionniste de la langue et de la culture franco-ontarienne. De nos jours, cette même population est confrontée à une évolution sociétale qui la rend tributaire de la diversité. Ainsi, elle se doit dorénavant de se référer à une définition élargie de la francophonie et à la nécessité de reconnaître le bien-fondé de la notion interculturelle. Reste à se donner le temps d'assumer ce passage obligé de la notion conventionnelle à la notion interculturelle, qui est de plus en plus d'actualité dans ces écoles selon les participants à notre étude et qui se traduit par un engagement à instaurer des pratiques éducatives adaptées aux besoins des élèves nouveaux arrivants.

## CONCLUSION

Dans les écoles de langue française de l'Ontario, la mise en place de politiques et de mesures d'accueil et d'accompagnement est devenue nécessaire au cours des dernières décennies en réponse au flux migratoire. Cette transition démographique a des incidences directes sur le domaine éducationnel qui absorbe ce changement social et culturel. L'ouverture à la diversité des langues et des cultures pour agir avec flexibilité et adapter des pratiques constitue une préoccupation qui s'inscrit dorénavant dans le quotidien des enseignants. Cette préoccupation s'ajoute à l'effort de francisation pour contrer les effets de l'assimilation à laquelle cette minorité linguistique est constamment confrontée. L'analyse des différents récits de nos participants met en évidence plusieurs pratiques éducatives favorisant l'inclusion des élèves nouveaux arrivants. Ils soulignent, entre autres, l'importance 1) du soutien à la famille lors de l'admission, 2) de la mise en contact avec des pairs lors de l'accueil de l'enfant et de l'adolescent à l'école, 3) de la flexibilité dans le choix de cours et de l'environnement d'apprentissage de l'élève ainsi que de pratiques éducatives d'accompagnement au cours de son insertion académique et 4) de la nécessité d'un effort concerté pour favoriser un apprentissage accéléré des langues (français et anglais) ainsi qu'une valorisation des cultures des familles nouvellement arrivées au pays.

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# WHO ARE WE WHEN NOT RULED BY OTHERS? ENGAGING TEACHERS IN NORTHERN AND NORDIC CONTEXTS IN TEACHING USING DIVERSE CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

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**ABSTRACT.** At a time when neoliberalism and neoconservatism would compel teachers to focus narrowly on their own contexts, we ask how cross-national conversations can break down boundaries and provide important insights for teaching to social justice. We initiate a conversation between Canada, as a Northern country, and the Nordic countries of Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, and Iceland on the subject of teaching using “diverse” literature. While one main question revolves around deciding what to call the literature (multicultural? diverse? counter-story? migrant? post-colonial?), a more fundamental one centres on how to critically introduce and respond to its presence in the classroom, especially given national identities formed through Northern / Nordic exceptionalism. Imagology represents one promising direction, as does pedagogy of discomfort.

**QUI SOMMES-NOUS LORSQUE NOUS NE SOMMES PAS GOUVERNÉS PAR LES AUTRES ? ENGAGER LES ENSEIGNANTS DES CONTEXTES DU NORD ET NORDIQUES DANS L'ENSEIGNEMENT À PARTIR D'UNE LITTÉRATURE JEUNESSE DIVERSIFIÉE**

**RÉSUMÉ.** À une époque où le néolibéralisme et le néoconservatisme incitent les enseignants à se concentrer étroitement sur leurs propres contextes, nous nous demandons comment des échanges transnationaux peuvent offrir des perspectives importantes pour un enseignement orienté vers la justice sociale. Nous amorçons un dialogue entre le Canada, en tant que pays du Nord, et les pays nordiques sur la question de l'enseignement à partir d'une littérature « diversifiée ». Si une question centrale consiste à déterminer comment nommer cette littérature, une question plus fondamentale porte sur la manière d'aborder sa présence en classe de façon critique, particulièrement dans des contextes où les identités nationales se sont construites autour d'un exceptionnalisme nordique/du Nord. L'imagologie et la pédagogie de l'inconfort constituent des pistes prometteuses.

“East of the Sun and West of the Moon” tells of a daughter who was married off to a White Bear in exchange for her family members being relieved from poverty (Asbjørnsen & Moe, 1966). On a visit home, the daughter is advised to look at the being who comes to her bed each night — something that the White Bear has strictly warned her against doing. Looking nevertheless, an old spell is invoked, and the being (in fact, a handsome prince) is forced to go away and marry a witch, but not before the daughter falls deeply in love with him. His new love vows to travel east of the sun and west of the moon to release the prince / bear from the witch’s spell. The story, frequently anthologized, features among local tales collected in the 1830s by Norwegian folklorists Peter Christen Asbjørnsen and Jørgen Engebretsen Moe as they visited farming, fishing, and mining communities in Norway’s mountains and fjords (Daniel, 2015). For a child of 9 years old growing up in the Canadian suburbs (which was the first co-author’s case), this Nordic story of a young girl astride a white bear traversing, alone, a beautiful yet challenging landscape of wind and snow, made a deep and enduring mark. It showed the power of stories to impress receptive readers, here with a Nordic North implicitly understood to also be a Canadian one. Asbjørnsen and Moe’s tales were seminal in creating a storied legacy for Norway, which, having just won independence from Denmark, had been asking itself: “Who exactly are we when we are not ruled by others?” (Daniel, 2015, p. 13) — a question that echoes, but in a different way, across the present article. Our main purpose is to engage two Northern / Nordic contexts in dialogue on re-imagining teacher subjective / social formation through teaching using a growing corpus of contemporary children’s literature that addresses diversity. Desmond Manderson (2003) explains that literature in childhood is “not a source of information *about* social structures of subjectivity in our society. It is the very site of their emergence” (p. 93). As an educational vehicle, children’s literature acts as a double-edged sword: It can be an ideological tool by which particular values, orientations, and understandings are implicitly sedimented, or a means by which readers can construct more open-ended identities. By focusing on the pedagogical implications of contemporary children’s literature from two Northern contexts that share commonalities and across whose borders stories have been exchanged, Canada (as a Northern country) and the Nordic countries (traditionally, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, and Iceland), we critically reflect on what it means to prepare teachers for diversity in a neoliberal and neoconservative North. Neoliberalism rests on instrumental reasoning and efficiency, putting human capital theory to work so as to translate perceived potentiality into “economic viability” (Pinar, 2023, p. 35), resulting in teachers’ mental and spiritual exhaustion (Phelan & Janzen, 2024).

Neoconservatism, for its part, stokes fears of an imagined “Other” whose existence is construed as inconvenient; inconvenience, as Lauren Berlant (2022) argues, is produced through an affective friction of being in relation with one another, and which can be based on actual encounters or just the thought that an encounter could occur. An attitude of inconvenience is premised on the neoconservative and neoliberal fantasy of a “sovereign” self (p. 3).

The question of who exactly we are when not ruled by others takes on different meanings depending on who is being asked – those for whom the North is and has ancestrally been home (viz., Indigenous Peoples). Or those migrating to Northern countries (viz., immigrants), as was the case for the second co-author, coming from Jordan with her young children in pursuit of a better life. Both Canada and the Nordic countries are ancestral homes for Indigenous Peoples; they are also places that have attracted migrants – and deliberately cultivated their presence. Historically, Canada was a colonial outpost; people came for reasons that were tied to other countries’ (England’s and France’s) imperialistic ambitions; some came from privileged classes, while others were looking to escape disempowering conditions (Chambers, 2012). The lines tracing Nordic countries to colonial legacies are varied, warranting study of “the Nordic colonial mind” (Palmberg, 2009, p. 35). Settler identity, in short, is a fraught concept in both Canada and the Nordic countries, who both share in a myth of Nordic / Northern exceptionalism; we expand on this shortly.

By bringing into conversation research concerned with engaging with contemporary children’s literature and diversity, we lay the groundwork for further dialogue across Nordic / Northern countries on how pedagogical use of children’s literature can contribute to teachers’ subjective and social reconstruction. We focus on studies conducted over the past 2 decades, roughly between 2005 and 2023, which is when a greater corpus of diverse children’s literature began to be more widely available and/or when conversations about such literature started to intensify. Literature can act as both index as well as site for imaginative engagements with place and identity; it is a field that, as Leerssen (2007) further notes, lends itself to being a “comparative enterprise” (p. 29). There are clearly dangers in reading globally. As Kathy Short (2019) cautions, how can readers (in the absence of knowing a culture more intimately) tell if a children’s story is accurate, authentic to the experiences depicted? She points to texts that become “stand-ins” for a whole culture simply because the book has been promoted globally, having been made available in English. Translation is clearly an issue. As O’Sullivan (2005) points out, “foreign” children’s literature (when translated; only a

comparatively few are) tends to undergo a process of transformation, even of censorship, in being transposed from one language, one context to another, this to render the story more “palatable.” The Nordic / Northern contexts are not the same, even if they share certain histories – and most importantly, certain assumptions about privilege (as we discuss). However, children also need to have the freedom to explore different literatures or literature from diverse perspectives, thinking of the first co-author’s 9-year-old self, as well as the self of the second co-author along with those of her children. As literary scholar Margaret Meek (1992) once wrote, “In stories children discover other complete worlds that let them ask important questions before they are bound by the answers” (p. 174). This is so even if, in children’s literature, readers may often seem to be “brought back to the security of home” (Nikolajeva, 2010, p. 10). However, in certain stories (especially of the kind which are our concern in this article), home can become a place unsettled by readers’ encounters with places and knowledge other-than-home, contributing to subjective formations that “enhance alterity” (Nikolajeva, 2010, p. 11). We turn now to the question of how the two Northern / Nordic contexts might speak across to one another so as to usefully contribute to teaching to (and with) diverse children’s literature in classrooms.

We begin first with theorizing the terms “Northern” and “Nordic” in relation to “Nordic exceptionalism” (Loftsdóttir & Jensen, 2016, p. 2) before delving into each context. We conclude by placing into relation stories from the Canadian and Nordic contexts, thus circling back from another direction to the question of: Who exactly are we when not ruled by others?

## I. NORDIC EXCEPTIONALISM

“Join Margaret Atwood on an Arctic expedition like no other.” So reads an Adventure Canada (2023a) quarter-page ad in the main section of *The Globe and Mail*, Canada’s flagship newspaper. The ad sounds as if from a previous era, yet it is the fall of 2023 and the beaming face of a relaxed Margaret Atwood gazes out at the reader with a beckoning (yet contemplative) aspect, her neck tastefully wrapped in a silk scarf featuring the kinds of evergreen trees typical of a Group of Seven painting. Despite greater awareness of the North as a place inhabited by the Inuit, despite the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s work in Canada, and Atwood’s avowed solidarity with Indigenous causes, which included donating her recent Booker Prize winnings to Indspire to support First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students (CBC Books, 2019), and despite her incisive critiques of nation-making literary myths, here Atwood’s face

beams from an ad inviting us to explore the mythical North in her company for 12 days at the double-occupancy cost of 10,000 to 20,000 USD (Adventure Canada, 2023b). What are we to make of this invitation?

We begin with acknowledging that Nature has long been a subject of fascination in Northern countries. Hulan (2002) points to the long-standing conflation of Northern Canada with Canada as North, in which “north” has become synonymous with “mystery and the unknown,” adventure and escape, untamed wilderness, and a frozen and (apparently) “unpeopled” canvas (p. 6). Landscape and nationalism have become further integrally intertwined in the Canadian imagination through the Group of Seven painters’ depiction of Northern landscapes (Pente, 2009). The Nordic countries have also witnessed romanticizations of a Northern landscape, as documented by Zoltán Somhegyi (2017), in writing about the 18th-century creation (in the arts as well as in tourism) of a sublime centred on the Alps. Seen as a “border that divides the Mediterranean landscape” from a Northern one (p. 30), the Northern Alps became invested with a belief in needing to experience the “harsh, intensive, and elemental forces” of a “powerful” Nature (p. 39). As Knut Helle (2003) wryly notes, the Nordic countries are still considered “sparsely populated by European standards,” overdetermined by its geography – “mountains ... glaciers, forests ... moorland, bogs and fens” (p. 6). The same can be said of Canada.

While the word “Nordic” is reserved now for the Nordic countries, Quebec geographer Louis-Édmond Hamelin was among the first to popularize the term “nordicity,” a phenomenon or quality that he claimed to be able to ascertain based on “empirical” criteria such as latitude and temperature – as well as people (Hulan, 2002, p. 4). In keeping with European (French) philosopher Hippolyte Taine who had mapped out a “cultural geometry” based on “three defining parameters: *race*, *milieu* and *moment*” (Leerssen, 2007, p. 19), Hamelin intrapolated (human) characteristics into nordicity, namely, courage, strength, and an ability to survive in rugged circumstances – all of which were further yoked to masculinity (p. 12). Likewise, R. G. Haliburton, a lawyer and anthropologist active within the Montreal Literary Club, cultivated a group called “Men of the North,” which claimed close ties among race (White), land, and nation (p. 7). It has also been observed that scholars in the Nordic countries were complicit in producing the pseudoscientific systems used to justify the racist ideologies and practices underlying imperialism and colonialism. The Swedish race biologists “were considered leading in their field” (Palmberg, 2009, p. 45), extending

classification work first undertaken in the 1700s by Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus (Loftsdóttir & Jensen, 2016).

*Nordic exceptionalism* rests on a belief in the Nordic countries as bystanders: peripheral actors in colonialism and imperialism. Based on this myth, the Nordic countries have further promoted themselves as “peace-loving” and beneficent; in short, as good global citizens (Loftsdóttir & Jensen, 2016, p. 2), a self-image which Canada also shares. Sociologists Delhey and Newton (2005) were among the first to tie the Nordic countries to the idea of Nordic exceptionalism (p. 320), “exceptional” given the high degree of social trust among its citizens; Canada was also located among their survey’s top six candidates (p. 315). As Nyysönen (2013) has pointed out, “the image of [the Nordic country as] a colonizer of the Sami does not fit” (p. 117); nor, as Paulette Regan (2010) has observed, do Canada’s genocidal policies vis-à-vis Indigenous Peoples comply with its reputation as peacemaker.

The myth of Nordic exceptionalism masks the less-than-benign role played by the colonizer / settler in the formation of a nation and the kinds of stories a nation tells about itself. While Canadian curriculum scholar Cynthia Chambers (2012) acknowledges that her relatives were poor and disenfranchised, “Irish peasants on my mother’s side, landless Scots on my father’s side” (p. 23), the Canadian North, she notes, was a place where they could freely reimagine themselves; she points out how expatriates “didn’t ask each other where they came from or why they’d come” (p. 25). They bought into the “immigration fairy tale” of “sweet promises of progress and adventure”; they didn’t inquire into who the land belonged to (p. 30). Indeed, just as the British had used acts of enclosure to drive a landless working class off land originally shared in common, settlers assumed that the nation’s land was there for the taking. Canada was marketed as an empty, white space on which explorers then settlers “inscribed a series of ‘firsts’” (Edwards & Saltman, 2010, p. 50).

In the Nordic countries, histories and patterns of settlement are complex, with Denmark (along with Sweden and Norway) taking the lead in ruling over and colonizing others (Sawyer, 2003); activities that, traceable in part to a Viking past, are still uncannily evoked in the shadow of a Viking king’s runic stone visible on the reverse page of the Danish passport (Blaagaard, 2009). Each Nordic country, even if not directly involved in having colonies, has been a beneficiary of colonialism and its legacies, whether through mercantilism, the slave trade, the World Bank, or missionary activities (Palmberg, 2009). The Nordic countries have also been complicit

in the erosion of hunting-gathering territories of the Sami (Kjeldstadli, 2012).

As Michael Rothberg (2019) makes clear, the settler is an implicated subject. An *implicated subject* is someone who genealogically and/or structurally benefits from systems of oppression, ones originating in the past but whose effects continue into the present. Slavery is one of the most obvious examples; however, there are several other forms of exclusion, many of which are linked to the legacies of imperialism and colonialism, which have used coercion and violence to subject one people to another, or to secure more privileges and benefits (land, titles, social standing, education, etc.). Genealogical implication, Rothberg explains, is intimate but diffuse; it can be traced through family lines, however the consequences (across generations) exceed individual life spans. Structural implication is the opposite – diffuse yet intimate – because it affects many more indiscriminately, but the benefits are enjoyed daily: “my very subjectivity as a social being derives from the impersonal structures that surround and support me” (p. 79). The notion of White settler as implicated subject is a post-war invention, even if events were set in motion before 1945. Todd Shepard (2006), for instance, points to the moment at which France, perceiving that it would lose its struggle with Algeria, this during the 1960s, turned to inventing a (French) myth of decolonization. France (specifically Charles de Gaulle) stopped claiming that Algeria was part of France, that Algerians were French citizens, and conversely embraced the decolonization of Algeria as a narrative of progress; why haven’t you done the same, de Gaulle asked the then prime minister of the United Kingdom, whereupon, “embarrassed, ... the British pushed most of their remaining colonies towards independence” (p. 7). With this push came an eliding of the need to scrutinize their own conduct as nations: racist attitudes and policies tied to imperialism and colonialism. Nordic exceptionalism was likewise touted as a “good news” story in which Canada and the Nordic countries tried to align themselves with a progressive narrative. Such myths stand in the way of unsettling the implicated subject.

As already noted, children’s literature is a main site for subjective and social formation, beginning in early childhood. The Nordic countries have enjoyed a long and illustrious history of producing classic children’s literature, like Danish storyteller Hans Christian Andersen’s fairy and folk tales, or Finnish author Tove Jansson’s beloved Moomin characters. Then there is Swedish author Astrid Lindgren’s inimitable Pippi Longstocking, who lived alone, but imagined her long-lost father as “king of the natives” in a far-flung country on the African continent (Vuorela, 2009, p. 24). A

popular landmark in Nordic literature remains Selma Lagerlöf's *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils*, written by a former teacher and originally commissioned as a Swedish elementary school reader in 1901 to teach children about their own geographical and cultural surroundings – surroundings that did not feature any “foreign” elements (Sundmark, 2008, p. 18). The Nordic nations actually enjoy a strong reputation for producing children's literature that explores the edges of what may be deemed socially acceptable, as when *Sinna Mann* (2003; by Norwegian writer Gro Dahle and artist Svein Nyhus) became a highly animated topic of conversation at the 22nd Biennial Congress of the International Research Society for Children's Literature (IRSCCL) in 2015, held at the University of Worcester, at which Teresa (one of this article's co-authors) was in attendance. Dialogue, begun in the one session, reverberated across others concerning a picturebook that depicted domestic violence from the point of view of a young child. *Sinna mann* means “angry man.” When asked about the controversy stirred by the story, author Nyhus said the book, intended to portray the experience of a child who witnesses violence, was made in response to a family therapist's request for literature that could serve as a “conversation piece” in his talks with children and their parents (Salisbury & Styles, 2012, p. 117). The Nordic countries, though, have struggled to produce a children's literature that contends with the others in their midst (Pesonen, 2020).

The history of Canadian children's literature, for its part, is marked by the colonial legacies of Canada's national formation, carrying the values and prejudices of a mainly British cadre of authors. The image of Canada for young readers has been “shaped by narratives that emphasized geographic and cultural Otherness – a place of ice and snow, dark and dangerous wooded forests, infinite prairie expanses, and towering mountains, populated by mysterious, savage, and primitive peoples and dangerous wild animals” (Edwards & Saltman, 2010, p. 17). All the while, Canada has struggled to define itself as a nation distinct from its rather large neighbour to the south, and one way in which this was accomplished was to emphasize precisely those stereotypical features in the list just quoted; at the top was the Indigenized Other. Canadian literature for children is historically full of stories that trade on images and content loosely mapping onto First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples, with several cardinal authors making such representations their bread and butter; Elizabeth Cleaver (of White settler heritage) was one, an illustrator initially promoted by Canadian publisher William Toyes to brandish what became a widely-used elementary textbook, *The Wind Has Wings* (1968). It was literary critic Sheila Egoff who, in speaking with Toyes, noted that the

Canadian picturebook industry was languishing, and that Aboriginal picturebooks would help set the Canadian market apart. Both promoted Cleaver's work as the voice and image of stories claiming to be from the Gitksan, an Indigenous People of British Columbia (Edwards & Saltman, 2010). The story of Canadian children's literature is largely one of appropriation and misappropriation of an Indigenous Other. Interest on the part of publishing companies in children's literature actually written by Indigenous and immigrant authors did not start to take hold until the 1990s, when a chapter on a more contemporary Canadian children's literature opened. As for immigrant author-illustrators, one of the first to become popular was William Kurelek, originally from Ukraine, whose *A Prairie Boy's Winter* (1973) and *A Prairie Boy's Summer* (1975) were a form of "visual autobiography" depicting the harsh beauty of daily life on a Manitoba dairy farm during the years of the Great Depression (Edwards & Saltman, 2010, p. 84). The books found global distribution and were translated into six languages, four of them being Nordic: Norwegian, Swedish, Danish, and Finnish.

Children's literature has thus been an important site of national as well as subjective formation. We look next at how diverse contemporary children's literature has evolved – first in the Nordic countries, then in Canada – and implications for teaching and teachers.

## II. ENGAGING WITH DIVERSE CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

Norway, Sweden, Iceland, Finland, and Denmark, now fully independent states, have had a long and fractious history with one another over centuries, marked by fluctuating borders, contested territories, and periods of dominating and/or being dominated (Loftsdóttir & Jensen, 2016). The greatest influx of foreign migrants occurred after the 1960s, provoking discussion on the impact of immigration on local communities as well as national identity. Migration also prompted a creative explosion of adult narratives crafted by second (and third) generation authors (Kongslien, 2007). In their editorial to a special issue on diversity in Nordic children's literature, Kokkola and Van den Bossche (2020a) identify *diversity* as among the latest in a series of terms that highlights one group as "normal," while categorizing everyone else as "other." *Multicultural*, they suggest, belongs there as well. The problem Kokkola and Van den Bossche (2020a) have with both terms lies in the way they implicitly reinforce a hierarchical relationship; any conceptualization of literature in terms of equity, diversity, and inclusion, they maintain, is pursued by "markedness" (race, culture, class, gender, ability, etc.), thus

implicitly reinforcing an unmarked category of a White / normal norm (p. 4). They also raise the “colonial amnesia” that has pervaded Nordic children’s literature, thinking especially of Sami and Roma minorities (Hvenegård-Lassen & Maurer, 2012, as cited in Kokkola & Van den Bossche, 2020a, p. 9). While abiding by the term “diversity,” they take care to place it in relation with “intersectionality” (Crenshaw, 1989): the inflection of plural and diverse identities within a given person, each identity carrying its own “power valence” (Kokkola & Van den Bossche, 2020a, p. 5).

Nordic children’s literature scholars have found it useful to consult the American context. Danish scholar Nadia Mansour and African American teacher-librarian Michelle Martin (2020) offer insights into what American and Danish children’s literature can gain from each other. Martin traces the United States’ longstanding history with minoritized Indigenous populations and immigrants: those already there, those who arrived voluntarily, and those brought forcibly through chattel slavery. Only gradually has American children’s literature embraced ethnic and cultural diversity, Martin maintains; the process has taken decades and is ongoing. Mansour’s research in the Danish context builds on James Banks’ work in American multiculturalism, along with Cai and Bishop’s analysis of multicultural literature. Kokkola and Van den Bossche (2020b) suggest that, different from the American context, which they characterize by an “us” and “them” binary (p. 2), the Nordic context is more inclined towards coalitions, which is an interesting thought to which we return later. Because multiculturalism emerged in the United States from the civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s (Banks, 2007), multicultural literature has become associated with amplifying the voices of minorities (Cai & Bishop, 1994). Banks (2007) famously argued against treating multiculturalism as an “add-on” to the curriculum (p. 255). Rather, he emphasized, multiculturalism must permeate the curriculum to be truly effective. In Denmark, reservations persist regarding the “multicultural” in multicultural literature, a conversation simultaneously happening in adult and children’s literature. When studying books authored by individuals from minority backgrounds or narratives about migrants, some researchers of adult literature have preferred to employ *indvandrerlitteratur* (“migrant literature”), *indvandrerforfatter* (“migrant author”; Bech Albertsen, 2013), or *migrationslitteratur* (“migration literature”; Frank, 2012, as cited in Mansour & Martin, 2020, p. 12), this even though, as Natia Gokieli (2017) points out, immigrant literature is essentially “a euphemism for non-white literature” (p. 269).

As Mansour and Martin (2020) discuss, Cai and Bishop (who divided multicultural literature into world literature, cross-cultural literature, and literature from parallel cultures) favoured the use of parallel cultures in selecting literature for the classroom because these represent stories written by authors who are considered to be insiders to a certain lived reality. Mansour and Martin consider, too, Rudine Sims Bishop's (1990) seminal work on mirrors and windows, which introduced the salience of audience along with authorship, asking: Was the story one in which the reader (e.g., if Black) could see themselves? Was it one that could serve for an outsider as a window to someone else's reality? The question of authenticity of authorship is a more openly debated one in the Nordic context, where there is concern with minority insiders being depicted in an invariably positive light, which might neglect internal conflicts and differences in perspectives. Additionally, prioritizing such literature might unintentionally assert dominance of certain cultures and insiders over others. This issue also surfaces in the Canadian studies, as we shall see.

Mansour chooses to ground her work in children's literature by emphasizing "literary characteristics and content ... not whether the text is regarded as an authentic representation of the minority reader" (Mansour & Martin, 2020, p. 13). Echoing that point is Christopher Myers' (2014) observation, as a Black children's author and illustrator in the United States, that characters in books by minority authors should not be consigned to an

apartheid of literature ... limited to the townships of occasional historical books that concern themselves with the legacies of civil rights and slavery but are never given a pass card to traverse the lands of adventure, curiosity, imagination or personal growth. (p. 1)

While much research literature in the scholarly Nordic context has focused to date on discussion of literary works, certain Nordic studies are emerging that have migrated this question to the classroom.

We begin with the work of Åse Marie Ommundsen et al. (2022), who encourage teachers to use "challenging" picturebooks (p. 1). *Challenging picturebooks* include books "that pose challenging questions or address challenging topics" (p. 7), that is, "learning new things, or seeing things in a new light" (Sundmark & Olsson Jers, 2021, as cited in Ommundsen et al., p. 9). In research conducted at a primary school in Oslo, Ommundsen et al. (2023) selected the picturebook *Når kaniner blir reddet* (*When Rabbits Get Scared*) to use with 10-year-old children; though not directly focused on the Other, it treated a situation productive of migrants – namely, war. This Swedish picturebook was considered challenging by the researchers

and teacher because it dug into the harsh realities of conflict and impacts of traumatic experiences. As Ommundsen et al. (2023) explain, this theme has been practically non-existent in Nordic children's literature, at least until 2007. In light of Russia's war with Ukraine, the issue has acquired a new urgency. The researchers, working in collaboration with the teacher, aimed to help foster children's critical and emotional literacy. The children connected with the main character, Noah — a young boy growing up in a war zone with his mother and toy rabbit. By emotionally deconstructing Noah's fear, the children empathetically envisioned what it felt like to be in his vulnerable position.

Challenging picturebooks that engage with others / the Other remain scarce, though, leading Mansour to wonder how a Danish Public School Law that requires teachers to consider students' experiences could succeed in the absence of the availability of such literature to teachers (Mansour & Martin, 2020). Ommundsen (2011) has shared that concern, pointing out that Norway (the geographical location from which she writes) remains a "monocultural country" — White and Christian — with migration mainly to its capital city, Oslo. However, she mused, if "multicultural Norway is limited to Oslo," Norwegian childhoods will also be limited, this in an increasingly global world (p. 37). The critical consensus is: Children need access to challenging picturebooks.

### **III. ENGAGING WITH DIVERSE CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN THE CANADIAN CONTEXT**

As Leerssen (2007) points out, "it is in the field of imaginary and poetical literature that national stereotypes are first and most effectively formulated, perpetuated and disseminated" (p. 26), even as their incidence might be expected to be fewer in contemporary literature. We highlight findings that disclose affinities with or differences from the Nordic context appearing in three connected Canadian research projects that studied teachers' responses and uses of contemporary diverse literature, between 2006 and 2019, across six provinces: Newfoundland, Quebec, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia. (Thanks is due to SSHRC [Social Sciences Humanities Research Council] for their gracious support of these projects.) Researchers had been elementary or secondary teachers themselves and were now teacher-educators. Much as with the Nordic context, wrestling with terminology became part of the evolution of the research.

The first study (2006–2009), which was the only one to work with pre-service teachers, gathered a then growing corpus of contemporary

Canadian picturebooks published since 1990, set within diverse Canadian locations (rural and urban), and written by authors of diverse backgrounds, especially by minority authors (Johnston & Bainbridge, 2013). Over 75 contemporary books were compiled, then used in education classes; each site probed pre-service teacher perceptions of Canadian identity (drawing on surveys, workshops, and focus groups and/or interviews). The researchers found a rural / urban divide in the teachers' perceptions – which was unsurprising. In metropolitan centres, diversity was embraced more, while smaller, rural places were characterized by religious homogeneity, with even one change in that configuration deemed highly contentious. Pre-service teachers, whose position in the classroom is subject to others' scrutiny and approval, judged texts according to the level of risk they posed. While certain texts were welcomed as essential resources because they spoke to the students that pre-service teachers were encountering in their classrooms, and therefore helped them reach out to those students, other texts were sedulously avoided. Attitudes of discomfort were apparent with any literature that unsettled teachers' sense of what it meant to be Canadian, that identity resting on the "Great White North," which sat beside "a somewhat superior attitude of tolerance towards diversity" (Johnston & Bainbridge, 2013, p. 176) – namely, White exceptionalism at work.

The next research project (2010–2014) focused on teachers already teaching in classrooms. The book base was broadened to include novels and graphic novels, with the focus still maintained on Canadian literature, because certain changes in the landscape had happened in the intervening years. While Canada had adopted multiculturalism as official government policy in 1971, it was not until 2008 that then prime minister of Canada, Stephen Harper, apologized for the state's residential school policy, acknowledging the great harm it had done to Indigenous Peoples; soon after, a Royal Commission Inquiry on Residential Schools was created. While the word "genocide" would not be used until 2022 (Olareswaju, 2023), the landscape had begun to visibly change, including recognition that Canada's multiculturalism consisted mostly of "unreflective gestures": "What is absent from current articulations of multiculturalism is the profound potential of multiple and dynamic knowledges to mutually and substantively transform the national space" (Saldana, 2000, as cited in Burke et al., 2017, p. 5). The term "multicultural literature" was provisionally retained in the project, but the emphasis shifted towards "social justice literature," literature which could be harnessed to a pedagogical intention to address issues of equity through social action. Teaching using children's and young adult literature by immigrants,

minorities, and Indigenous people was considered as a form of social action, on the grounds that “[a] literacy education that focuses on social justice educates both the heads and hearts of students and helps them to become thoughtful, committed and active citizens” (Banks, 2003, as cited in Burke et al., 2017, p. 2).

Teacher inquiry groups were created, within and across schools and school districts, for teachers to discuss the literature and how it could be pedagogically approached. The inquiry groups proved to be a major source of learning for teachers as well as researchers. While the riskiness of teaching with certain texts in certain settings remained a “hot spot,” teachers were more willing to travel outside of their comfort zones with the support of the inquiry group. The longitudinal study design also made it possible to develop pedagogies, which was important; few to no curricular resources for teaching to such literature existed. Given the longitudinal nature of the research, teachers were also afforded time and space to critically reflect on their own histories in relation to the subject or to the literature. Memory work became an integral part of the research. Teachers’ identities – and where their identities were mostly White settler of European ancestry – became an important site for critical reflection on their motivations, histories, and intentions with respect to the content and use of the social justice literature. One direction in which this reflection moved was through having teachers interrogate their touchstone texts and responses (Strong-Wilson et al., 2014; Strong-Wilson, Yoder, & Phipps, 2014; Yoder & Strong-Wilson, 2017).

The third study (2015–2019) turned a corner by more explicitly engaging with postcolonial texts, which are a form of counter-story that talks back to the centre from the periphery. The teacher inquiry group structure was maintained; however, the literature base was again broadened, this time to include literature from or about Canada as well as literature (available in English) from other countries on the subject of resisting colonial rule or any hegemonic orthodoxies.

The third study resulted in a much more coherent approach to teaching to social justice using literary texts, this via “pedagogies of discomfort” (Boler, 1999, p. 175; modified in our project to the plural: “pedagogies of discomfort” – Balzer et al., 2023, p. 5), which proved to be a useful lens through which to address the challenges of teaching to “difficult knowledge[s]” (Pitt & Britzman, 2003, p. 766). Megan Boler, once a secondary teacher herself, teaching Holocaust texts like Spiegelman’s *Maus*, focused her theory on disrupting “cherished beliefs,” that is, “self-images in relation to how one has learned to perceive others” (Boler, 1999,

p. 177). She worked in collaboration with educational scholar Michael Zembylas, whose scholarship focuses on the intersection of emotion with historical traumas in teaching and learning (e.g., Boler & Zembylas, 2003). *Pedagogies of discomfort* engage feelings and emotions in relation to the critical consciousness of history; in other words, they address the often volatile and vulnerable nexus around which responses to counter- and post-colonial texts hover. Work within the project became a curricular project of subjective and social construction (Pinar, 2023) – of teachers’ pedagogically working through of difficult subject matter by “*confront[ing]* [emphasis added] moments of discomfort” provoked by reading and discussing the literature with the researchers, other teachers, and students (Balzer et al., 2023, p. 3).

Tensions between Indigenous literatures and migrant / newcomer stories (a concern similar to that anticipated in the Nordic context) were beginning to test teachers’ and students’ abilities to know how to navigate between competing counter-stories; this became the focus of elementary teachers’ inquiry in one of the Alberta sites, and conversations increasingly turned towards seeking out stories that could begin dialogues focused on “good relations” between marginalized peoples (Wiltse et al., 2023, p. 52). Confronting the forms of empathy that would lead to more deeply felt yet complicated testimonial responses became the focus of two Alberta secondary teachers’ working through response with their secondary students around a novel depicting abuse and trauma ensuing from Indian residential schooling (McBean & Piazza, 2023). The Quebec and Ontario studies emphasized the importance of keeping students talking, especially when the talk became challenging (Strong-Wilson & Huang, 2023; Tilley & Redmond, 2023). Strong-Wilson and Huang (2023) brought out the importance of encouraging students to think aloud as a way to process thinking, of building on others’ ideas, and working through contentious ideas. The teachers’ pedagogical working through of difficult subject matter had the effect of deepening classroom engagement with the counter-stories (Strong-Wilson, 2021).

#### IV. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The Canadian and Nordic contexts are most alike in being Northern countries – countries that, besides sharing similar geographical features and remoteness, have inherited an attitude of Northern / Nordic exceptionalism. It is this learned attitude that needs to be wrestled with as part of the work of making available a diversity of perspectives: perspectives considered both on their own account (*viz.*, parallel literature and counter-stories), this to redress their previous silencing and exclusion from the

public domain, as well as counter-stories acting in coalition with one another. The term “coalition” is a highly felicitous one on the part of Kokkola and Van den Bossche (2020b, p.2), and echoes Michael Rothberg’s (2009) of “solidarity” (p. 132). Counter-memories and counter-stories ought not to be in competition with one another (as they have been with the dominant, hegemonic narrative); rather, they should act in collaboration to bring out shared concerns. Conversely, discussions in the Nordic context have re-opened a question deemed virtually closed in the American and Canadian contexts with respect to authenticity of literature: How central to the conversation is the identity of the author? Much might be said here with respect to honouring voices and redressing inequalities. Whereas the term “counter-stories” emphasizes issues of power and subversion of power, “migrant literature” (or “refugee literature,” which has been used in the Canadian context; Wiltse et al., 2023) marks stories according to their origins as, arguably, “Indigenous literature” also does. However, how does intersectionality complicate this question in vitally important ways? Conversations in the Nordic context around terminology hold strong possibilities for complicating identities that are increasingly cosmopolitan, complex, and intersectional.

Emerging from this discussion is the continued salience of the image, especially as viewed in relation to an underlying and continuing Nordic exceptionalism (an ideology kept in play, too, through the fears engendered by neoliberalism and neoconservatism). One theoretical approach that holds great promise in this regard is *imagology*, which is a dynamic field being explored by Nordic and European researchers that analyzes how characters are culturally constructed and represented in literature (Leerson, 2007; O’Sullivan & Immel, 2017). This literary approach brings us back to teachers and students by asking: Who is the observer? O’Sullivan and Immel (2017) emphasize how images “reveal as much or more about those who are seeing or doing the representing (the spectants) as about those seen or represented (the spected)” (p. 10). As Silke Meyer also advocates: “From the very beginning of our lives, we have to train our eyes so that we reverse the image projected onto our retina by external stimuli” (O’Sullivan & Immel, 2017, p. 29). To yield results in classrooms, such work, though, needs to be done with teachers, as the Canadian studies show. In using counter-stories and teaching to diversity, addressing that reversal necessities the teacher confronting themselves as implicated subjects – the persons whose actions or inactions, actually, historically, or ancestrally, have placed them in a position of unequal power relative to others (Rothberg, 2019). Through experiencing pedagogies of discomfort and encountering challenging stories, teachers

can arrive at deeper, contextualized engagements with their own implication – here, Nordic / Northern exceptionalism and settler identity – and thus responsibility. Indeed, recent updates to the pedagogy of discomfort call for a contextual approach. Zembylas (2023), drawing on Berlant’s work (quoted in the beginning of the current article), explains: “The pedagogical question, then, is: Under what affective conditions is it possible to build infrastructures of discomfort-as-inconvenience that increase the possibilities of individual (or social) transformation?” (p. 202). It is a question, Zembylas specifies, that needs to consider how “feelings of discomfort take on different nuances and trajectories in various contexts” (p. 203). The problem is how to best “nurture” such unsettling feelings “without ending the conversation” before it has begun (p. 203). Discussion of images in children’s contemporary literature in Northern / Nordic contexts (and across the two contexts) can provide a powerful avenue for subjective and social reconstruction (Pinar, 2023).

Drawing on images in picturebooks – a language that can potentially also travel across contexts – may intensify a sense of alterity, thus enhancing critical thinking as well as heightening empathy. When aligned with a contextualized pedagogy of discomfort, narratives can become a means to dive deeper into ethical terrain tied to implication. For instance, books with telling images hold out the possibility of breaking preconceived ideas – including with respect to nationhood. For example, images from contemporary Indigenous picturebooks like those illustrated by Julie Flett, a talented and renowned Cree / Métis artist and storyteller in the Canadian context, though not yet translated into any of the Nordic languages, would be a promising place from which to begin, as would be the picturebooks and graphic novels of Cree / Métis artist and storyteller David Robertson. Such stories and their images would challenge prevailing limited and limiting depictions of Indigenous Peoples in the Northern (Canadian) and Nordic contexts.

Still another possibility lies in wordless texts. We conclude with two which tell stories of migration – one written by Vietnamese-Canadian author Thao Lam (2020), called *The Paper Boat: A Refugee Story*, that illustrates the long journey made from Vietnam to Canada, like the one she herself made to Canada as a refugee, this at the age of 3. The other book, written by Finnish author Sanna Peilliccioni (2018), is called *Meidän piti lähteä [We Had to Leave]* and depicts a child’s migration to a snowy place from an undisclosed location, which Pesonen (2020) speculates is likely Syria. *The Paper Boat* illustrates a family escaping war-torn Vietnam to seek refuge in a boat bound for Canada. The picturebook depicts a colony of ants spreading on a dinner table within a Vietnamese household. A little girl is

seen, standing amongst adults who are gathered around the same dinner table – but no one eats. Armored tanks suddenly approach, prompting the family – and the ants – to immediately depart. The mother and daughter are portrayed as travelling through a jungle of darkness and fear, only to be guided to a body of water by the ants. Using a paper boat crafted by the mother, the ants board their own journey through severe weather and hostile conditions – a parallel narrative for the difficulties endured by the refugee families. The ending depicts an apartment complex in a busy city inhabited by racially diverse residents; the Vietnamese family, and the ants, are seen settling in at their dinner table. From the Finnish context, Pelliccioni's *Meidän piti lähteä* [*We Had to Leave*] illustrates a family of three fleeing violence and navigating a stormy ocean in a small boat towards a new life, the falling snow symbolizing the challenges of a new beginning and the hope of one. Reflecting on the book, Pesonen (2020) notes that emphasized is the “forced ... departure” (p. 5). Both wordless picturebooks portray the disruption of a peaceful life before the onset of war. Narratives in which “the journey has gained emblematic status” are not unproblematic, of course; “warm reception” in the host society does not invariably follow, nor does “happy closure,” as Vassiliki Vassiloudi (2019, p. 38-39) wryly comments in her critical review of refugee literature for children. However, large bodies of water, sea or ocean, even as they represent fear, darkness, and anxiety, thus reinforcing the notion of Other (Pesonen, 2020), also point towards conduits and passageways. Swedish children's literature scholar Maria Nikolajeva (2010) suggests that child protagonists can play a central role in helping the reader discern vital details – here, the parallel movement / migration of the ants, who are likewise seeking sanctuary, a place to land. Wordless picturebooks can provide valuable opportunities for starting conversations within and across Nordic and Northern contexts, conversations that encourage teachers and their students to recognize the lives of others in their midst even as discussion of the stories calls for critically engaging with readers' own subjective and social investments and implications in the kinds of narratives and myths that get told and taught. The question of who we are when not ruled by others is fundamentally a question about subjective and social reconstruction, one best approached in the classroom through unsettling subjects.

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# “A SYSTEM THAT IS GEARED TOWARDS COMPETITION”: IDENTITY-BASED PEDAGOGIES AND STUDENT TEACHERS’ BELIEFS ABOUT RESISTING NEOLIBERAL AND NEOCONSERVATIVE STRUCTURES IN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

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**ABSTRACT.** In this paper, we aim to analyze how identity-based pedagogies with a focus on diversity and inclusion aspects are related to student teachers’ beliefs about resisting neoliberal and neoconservative structures in the educational system. Data from eleven students was collected in an asynchronous session in a Spanish pedagogies course at university through an online discussion forum and analysed through content and discourse analysis. The results reveal that student teachers refer to different aspects of diversity for identity-based or interest-driven reasons. Beliefs about capital, equity, othering, and agency in resisting neoliberal and neoconservative structures in education are primarily expressed by individuals with personal experiences of poverty and racism.

**« UN SYSTÈME AXÉ SUR LA CONCURRENCE » : PÉDAGOGIES FONDÉES SUR L’IDENTITÉ ET CROYANCES DES FUTUR.E.S ENSEIGNANT.E.S QUANT À LA RÉSISTANCE AUX STRUCTURES NÉOLIBÉRALES ET NÉOCONSERVATRICES DANS LE SYSTÈME ÉDUCATIF**

**RÉSUMÉ.** Nous cherchons à analyser comment les pédagogies fondées sur l’identité et axées sur la diversité sont liées aux croyances des futur.e.s enseignant.e.s quant à la résistance aux structures néolibérales et néoconservatrices dans le système éducatif. Les données provenant de onze futur.e.s enseignant.e.s ont été recueillies dans le cadre d’un cours de didactique espagnole à l’université, puis analysées au niveau du contenu et du discours. Les résultats révèlent des références à différents aspects de la diversité pour des raisons identitaires ou motivées par les intérêts. Les croyances relatives au capital, à l’équité, à l’altérisation et à l’action dans la résistance aux structures néolibérales et néoconservatrices dans l’éducation sont principalement exprimées par des personnes ayant vécu personnellement la pauvreté et le racisme.

In the global North, where neoliberal and neoconservative (henceforth N-N) structures reign, it becomes increasingly important to address (minoritized) teachers' identities. With N-N structures, individual identities are often overlooked, leading to invisible minorities that are not considered in educational structures. By empowering those minorities through identity-based approaches, we enable student teachers to empower their future students. Identity is multifaceted and dynamic; it depends on context, surrounding discourses (and resisting them) and diversity-related aspects such as gender, sexual orientation, religion, neurodiversity, disabilities, and race (Norton, 2013). N-N structures in education tend to ignore or even undermine minoritized identities, but a counterpoint to these structures can be found in inclusion and diversity-sensitive pedagogies. Therefore, in this paper, we suggest an identity-based reimagining of teacher education. In an empirical study, we analyse how identity-based pedagogies with a focus on diversity and inclusion aspects relate to beliefs about resisting N-N structures in the educational system, focusing both on the reasons for selecting a specific aspect as well as an in-depth analysis of the participants' beliefs. More specifically, we will answer the following research questions: Why do Spanish language student teachers select specific diversity and inclusion aspects? What are their beliefs about resisting N-N structures in the educational system?

Data was collected in one session of an introductory seminar to Spanish language pedagogies at the University of Hamburg in 2022. The session was held asynchronously via forum entries to the learning management system (LMS) of the course, to which eleven students contributed. To analyse the written data, we used content and discourse analysis.

In the following, we first describe our theoretical framework, which encompasses student teachers' beliefs, teacher education in N-N times and places and how identity-based pedagogies allow (student) teachers to resist N-N structures in education. We then introduce the empirical study with its context and participants, the concrete session and teaching methods used (group discussion and e-portfolios), and methods for data collection and analysis. Finally, we present and discuss the results.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

For our theoretical framework, we focus on the concept of teachers' beliefs as well as recent research on (student) teachers' beliefs about N-N

ideologies and diversity before we explain characteristics of teacher education in N-N times and places.

### ***Student teachers' beliefs***

Understanding teachers' beliefs has long been recognized as a pivotal factor in understanding their professional behavior. Tillema (1997, p. 209) emphasizes that "it is important to acknowledge student teachers' beliefs and to offer and discuss alternative conceptions to which student teachers can revert and in which they can find support in building their teaching identities and professional lives". This focus on student teachers is seen as an avenue to work with their existing conceptions, allowing for customized training tailored to their specific needs. Borg's (2003) conceptualization of teacher cognition and Baumert and Kunter's (2011) notion of teacher professionalization both position teachers' beliefs as integral components of their professional identities and competencies, alongside other aspects such as motivational orientations, self-regulatory skills or professional knowledge. We can summarize some central notions regarding beliefs: according to Pajares (1992, p. 316), they are convictions that teachers believe to be true; they are consistent; they result from social experiences; and they include cognitive, affective and conative dimensions (Bohner, 2003; Borg, 2017; Pajares, 1992; Reusser & Pauli, 2014). Furthermore, teachers' beliefs and their practices share a reciprocal relationship, although it has been shown that "the strength of this relationship may vary across individuals and contexts as well as the type of beliefs and practices being assessed" (Buehl & Beck, 2015, p. 70).

In teacher education programs, identifying student teachers' beliefs has been seen as a "starting point" for improving and tailoring programs to meet individual needs (Stenberg et al., 2014). Recent research on teachers' beliefs about multilingualism and multilingual approaches in the classroom has shown how training courses can have an impact on teachers' beliefs (Gorter & Arocena, 2020; Portolés & Martí, 2020). However, the understanding that "[teachers'] beliefs are shaped by interactions with others in the environment in which they work and the collective beliefs that grow out of these interactions" (Tschannen-Moran et al., 2014, p. 301) adds a layer of complexity to the development of such training courses. Teachers' beliefs have also been connected to policy implementation (Sabarwal, Abu-Jawdeh & Kapoor, 2022), seeing as teachers mediate between politics and students. This social ontology of beliefs underscores the dynamic and intricate nature of teachers' belief

systems, necessitating a nuanced approach to research and analysis (Burns et al., 2015; Gerwers et al., 2022; Svalberg, 2015).

A more social lens on teachers' beliefs also allows for a deeper understanding of why some (student) teachers can maintain inaccurate, inappropriate, or incomplete beliefs. Melo-Pfeifer's (2021) proposition for fostering self-reflection and changing beliefs involves confrontation with situations that entail uncertainty. Nevertheless, it is important to point out a challenge in this process, acknowledging that schools may perpetuate certain behaviors and beliefs, such as racist or classist attitudes, due to entrenched cultural assumptions: "the school ... upholds traditional assumptions about culture, social capital and skills necessary to succeed in the global neoliberal labor market" (Rodriguez & Magill, 2016, pp. 17-18). Thus, competencies that are deemed less important in this market, such as languages or inclusivity, often suffer as a result. Furthermore, teachers seem to have pre-existing beliefs regarding socially disadvantaged students, which might lead to a pessimistic mindset when teaching those students (Sabarwal, Abu-Jawdeh & Kapoor, 2022). This goes in line with teachers' deficit-oriented perception of minority students' language competences (Vikøya & Haukås, 2023).

Zembylas and Chubbuck (2015) extend this discourse by suggesting an exploration of beliefs about teacher identity, where identity, beliefs and politics intersect. This perspective, they argue,

promotes a more holistic understanding of teacher identity that does not ignore the influence of power relations and politics in teacher identity; and ... recognizes the prospects of developing a critical and transformative orientation towards the conceptualization of teacher identity (p. 187).

On the basis of their study of pre-service teachers' conceptions about N-N framing of schooling, Brown et al. (2022) have also highlighted the importance of making pre-service teachers aware that "teaching is a political act" (p. 475) and that future teachers need to develop a "sense of action" (p. 475) in order to resist existing structures.

In conclusion, understanding teachers' beliefs, their connection to practices, and their formation within complex social contexts is crucial for examining their relevance to N-N structures in education.

### *Teacher education in N-N times and places*

Main features of today's globalized and digitalized world, which include its sociotechnical structures and the influence of neoliberalism, characterized by deregulation and free markets, cannot help but shape various aspects of society, including language learning (Darvin, 2023; Darvin & Norton, 2015). This context intertwines with forces like migration, technology, and media, impacting language practices and identities (Block et al., 2012). As Darvin and Norton (2015) note, technology facilitates access to valuable digitally-mediated information in the knowledge economy, but it is also accompanied by a cost as its mechanisms are intricately linked to profit structures. In this wider context, language learning is marked by critical areas of tension that are *inter alia*:

- globalization and neoliberalism;
- investment and identity;
- scales and translanguaging (Norton & De Costa, 2018).

To further explain these areas and their interconnectedness, we can note that in these circumstances, language learning raises questions about the linguistic effects of globalization, such as the emergence of multilingualism and the consequent formation of diverse identities. Neoliberalism's influence on market dynamics and the resulting emphasis on individualism further impact language learning and teaching (Norton & De Costa, 2018). A critical examination of neoliberalism, as presented by Block et al. (2012), reveals it as a construct denoting advanced capitalism and the rule of the free market, built upon economic common sense. Neoliberalism and neoconservatism, often described as "twin legacies", have led to educational reforms that contribute to greater social inequality. The educational arena is particularly significant for neoliberal thinking, serving both as a field for corporate designs and as a means of instilling market values in future generations (Block et al., 2012, p. 7). Scales describe learners' identities and language practices over time, illustrating the dynamic nature of changing identities linked to shifting language practices and translanguaging (Norton & De Costa, 2018). Moreover, neoliberalism both as a social system and as an ideology permeates discourse, being simultaneously reproduced and reinforced by it<sup>1</sup> (Block et al., 2012).

Building upon Williams' (1996) concept of translanguaging originating in Wales, where different languages were used for receptive and productive

purposes, García and Wei (2014) further developed this concept to “refer to both the complex language practices of plurilingual individuals and communities, as well as the pedagogical approaches that use those complex practices” (p. 20). For them, translanguaging is a process that uses all available communicative means across all the learners’ languages (and dialects). The focus is not on the languages themselves, but on the practices of the individuals. Furthermore, “pedagogical translanguaging takes the focus on multilingualism as its point of departure, and it is also based on the concepts of prior knowledge, scaffolding and connected growers” (Cenoz & Gorter, 2021, p. 25). Using translanguaging practices in the classroom thus means to give permission and encourage students to use their whole linguistic repertoire, and to incorporate the languages learned in school into their linguistic repertoire, always aiming at the students’ linguistic and academic development in multilingual contexts. Thereby, pedagogical translanguaging is always planned by the teacher (Cenoz & Gorter, 2021).

When analyzing teacher education in N-N times, the role of capital – not only in the form of economic capital – needs to be discussed. Following Bourdieu (1986), capital is understood as divided into cultural, social and economic capital. Economic capital presents itself in the form of money or other (real estate) assets while cultural capital is related to educational qualifications – and, in its embodied form also cultural goods such as books. Furthermore, social capital includes resources linked to social relationships (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu’s theories of cultural and social reproduction argue that students’ unequal educational trajectories can partly be explained by their cultural (parental) capital, and that power structures reproduce themselves, favoring meritocracy (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). In this regard, De Graaf, De Graaf and Kraayakamp (2000) found reading activities to be influential for educational outcomes, and that cultural (parental) capital in this form is especially important in children of lower or middle socioeconomic backgrounds. However, not all forms of increasing cultural capital may lead to the reduction of social class inequalities (Stopforth & Gayle, 2022).

A critical observation made by Block et al. (2012) identifies a blind spot in language identity research, concerning political economy and its impact on all social activities, including language practices. Thus, within the field of language education teachers are recognized as political actors engaging in the politicized activity of education (Block et al., 2012). This is in line with Freire’s (1975) understanding of education of the oppressed, in

which a “bank education” that only serves to maintain or increase injustice is rejected by empowering those affected by the injustices. For Freire (1975, 1994), teachers are political militants as they facilitate change for the individual through education.

Working on student teachers’ identities can therefore serve to contrast neoconservative and neoliberal structures in educational systems. This can be achieved through identity-based pedagogies, which refer to the “purposeful involvement of educators with students’ identity-related processes or contents” (Schachter & Rich, 2011, p. 222). The overall aim is to empower learners and dismantle ideologies that prevent them from fully embracing their identity (Norton, 2013). In student teachers’ identity, race, ethnology, language and ideologies, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, social class, neurodiversity, physical characteristics, and others intersect (Melo-Pfeifer & Tavares, 2024).

In a study on student teachers, De Costa (2016) describes the importance of ideologies since they structure sociocultural experiences. They can have a negative or a positive impact on one’s identity and one’s language learning. Nevertheless, ideologies are not fixed, they can be negotiated in interactions where the individual agentively decides about their position (De Costa, 2016). An enlightening example and analysis of identity-based pedagogies can be found in Prada (2021). The author describes the transformation of beliefs of one of his students in terms of ideologies of Spanish(es). The student took part in a heritage language course in which students engaged critically with underlying ideologies of language, especially Spanish and English, and the impact of the ideologies on their identities. Using a sort of diary, the student reflects after each session on the changes to his beliefs that happened thanks to the course sessions. Schwartz (2023) applies such critical examinations on the Spanish language teacher, provoking reflections on teachers’ and students’ race and language and how hierarchies of White Spanish teachers teaching students of color (Latinx) can be disrupted. All these examples follow diversity-sensitive and inclusive pedagogies.

Contemporary language learning operates within neoliberal frameworks, perpetuating social injustices and marginalizing identities. Teaching transforms into a political endeavor, with identity-based pedagogies challenging prevailing ideologies to empower learners.

## EMPIRICAL STUDY

In examining student teachers' beliefs, we showed connections to their practices, professionalization, and the impact of power. In N-N times, power dynamics marginalize communities and perpetuate social injustice against which diversity-sensitive pedagogies offer resistance. This empirical study therefore aims to answer the following research questions:

- RQ1: Why do Spanish language student teachers select specific diversity and inclusion aspects?
- RQ2: What are their beliefs about resisting N-N structures in the educational system?

### *Context and participants*

Our study takes place within the context of a three-month course on Spanish language pedagogies for undergraduate students in the summer term of 2022 at the University of Hamburg, which is the first discipline-related (Spanish language pedagogies) course in the undergraduate program. The course aimed at getting students to:

- critically analyze the fundamentals and current issues of Spanish didactics;
- reflect on the subject of Spanish and their role as prospective Spanish teachers; and,
- analyze selected focal points of subject-specific didactics.

The course accompanies a lecture in which the theoretical bases are provided. The course complements and deepens the input from the lecture, applying practical analysis, theoretical discussions, and guided reflections.

The lecturer in the course, Lisa Marie Brinkmann, aimed at a diversity-sensitive approach that was ensured *inter alia* through translanguaging practices, i.e. permission and encouragement to use students' whole linguistic repertoire (García & Wei, 2014), challenging the monolingual habitus (Gogolin, 1994); hybrid or online (asynchronous) sessions, allowing parents with sick children or people with reduced mobility to take part in the sessions; trigger warnings before each session and approached topics; and, a welcoming message in which different diversity aspects were

mentioned to be respected and valued in the course. The course took place every week of the semester.

Eleven students (nine females and two males) who were studying Spanish to become a teacher participated in the course that is obligatory for them. They come from diverse backgrounds, with ten of them having a migrant background, and different language levels (either Spanish being their first language, having been raised bilingual, having learned the language during long stays in a Spanish-speaking country, or having learned the language through formal instruction). The students were advised that the data of the course would be used for research. All students gave their consent. Even though the students did not receive a grade for their post, there is a power hierarchy that the instructor was aware of. The feedback the students received by the instructor foresaw thanking them, answering their open questions, adding new information or adapting their information to other contexts, adding new questions to reflect on, and, if applicable, adjusting the wording.

### Session

This study uses material from the 5<sup>th</sup> session of the course. The session was dedicated to *teaching and learning success in a foreign language: interlinking factors and complexity* and was taught online, asynchronously. Validity and reliability of the data is given since the aim of the discussion forum can answer the specific research questions and the students are represented because most of them involved wrote up to three to five posts. One important element of ensuring success in language learning is an inclusive classroom. To explore inclusion and diversity-sensitive pedagogies, students used a variety of methods and topics. First, they were asked to choose from different media templates (podcast episodes, videos, scientific papers, practice-oriented papers; all of them offered content in German, some in English) and topics in (language) teaching (*inter alia* gender-bias, neurodiversity, special needs in learning, special needs in hearing, social class, racism), henceforth called inputs. Then, they had to define inclusion or differentiation based on the selected input. Finally, they were asked to reflect on possible approaches to deal with diversity. They published their results in an online forum in their LMS. In the forum, they also had to react to at least one other contribution from a student in the course, to gain insight into at least two areas of diversity and inclusion-related topics. After publishing their results, they also received feedback from the lecturer

aimed at evaluating their work and encouraging further reflective questions.

### **Methods**

To collect the data we used an online focus group (Brinkmann & Melo-Pfeifer, 2023) anchored in the online forum. The online focus group is characterized by participants who come together out of a shared interest in a topic, in this case diversity and inclusion. The students have known each other for at least five weeks (since the start of the course), though some were friends or knew each other before. The interactions in the online focus group were managed through two distinct mechanisms: first, students were asked to comment on at least one other student's contribution; and second, the lecturer pointed out to the students' other discussion threads linked to theirs. For each contribution there was a single thread, with between two (thread-creating student and lecturer) and seven contributions (thread-creating student, three other students and lecturer). The forum turned multimodal, as the lecturer and the students attached images, texts or excerpts to which we do not refer in the results since they do not contain the main meaning. The data was analyzed using content and discourse analysis (Hardy et al., 2004). The raw data was read several times to identify inductive (data-based) categories. The categories were divided into main and subcategories. The excerpts of selected subcategories were then analyzed in terms of the discourse used, underlying beliefs, and word choice.

### **RESULTS**

The participants chose different diversity or inclusion-related topics for their discussion:

- heritage language and migration background
- neurodiversity
- physical disability
- poverty
- racism

In three different forum entries students analyzed inclusion on a more global scale and on the basis of three different input options. These were

not analyzed as choosing a specific diversity or inclusion aspects but rather as more general entries.

In the following, we will first answer the question of why they chose their topic (RQ1), before examining their beliefs about resisting N-N structures in the educational system (RQ2).

### ***Why do Spanish language student teachers select specific diversity and inclusion aspects?***

The answer to the first research question can be found in two main categories: identity-based reasons and interest-driven reasons.

#### **Identity-based reasons**

The first category of identity-based reasons denotes personal experiences that the participants or their children have had around neurodiversity, racism, and poverty. We included the participants' children in this category as student teachers who are parents feel responsible for their own children and thus indirectly affected by their experiences. Some of the student teachers explicitly stated that they or their children were affected by a discrimination category, others described it more implicitly, e.g. through personal examples. One Spanish-German bilingual student, Normán<sup>2</sup>, gives an example of discrimination by repeating words he once received: "Normán, you speak good German already!" In most cases, this has no negative ulterior motive, but leads to people not being included within a system<sup>3</sup>. German is Normán's first language, but by complimenting his proficiency the person was excluding him from the group of native German speakers and his identity was perceived differently from that of the person speaking. This example was so impactful that he repeated it at another point in the forum. His identity and the discrimination experiences were relevant to his topic choice.

Another implicit identity-related diversity aspect is racism and its ongoing discussion, which three student teachers engaged in. Alice explains how this discussion was the first time that she had seen racism and education coming together in a lecture. She found the connection of particular interest, to the extent that she chose two different inputs (a video and a text) to approach it. As a Black student, racism is likely to have been something she has had to deal with in both her personal and professional lives. As she says: "I wanted to know exactly what was meant by racism-

critical educational work, clearly you had an idea that it was about issues like racism and education, yet the combination of the two words was appealing”. In this sentence, the adverb “exactly” shows how important it is for her to have an understanding about anti-racial education. In combination with the verb “want”, she expresses that she wishes to get ideas on how to construct a diversity-sensitive and discrimination-free classroom atmosphere. The link between education and racism seems particularly relevant to her as she might both identify with anti-racist ideas, but also because of her skin color, and the fact she is studying to become a teacher.<sup>4</sup> The other two contributors to this forum discussion, Carolina and Tanja, link racism to heritage languages and migration background, which also reflect their own identities. It can be assumed that they both chose to comment on Alice’s forum entry because they saw themselves reflected in the words Alice used and wanted to contribute to the discussion. They relate to teachers with a migrant background and the potential they have in the educational system. Luana, another participant, chose to dedicate her entry to migration background and she also named the reason for selection as a “personal relation”.

The students who explicitly explained the selection of an input with identity-based reasons also mentioned their interest in exploring mechanisms for coping with it. The attributes used to describe this opportunity are “curious”, “interesting”, “informed” and “wanted to know”. Karim says: “I chose the video ... because I have had more or less the same experiences, but I also find it difficult to work against this as a teacher”. In this case, the student employs the first-person singular. To describe the identity-based reason he draws on his experiences that are comparable to those presented in the input. He relativizes “more or less the same” to indicate that even within one diversity category, in this case poverty, there is diversity and a range of experiences can be had. Regarding the same subject (poverty), the participant Tanja explains:

This matter affected me personally when I was a child (7 years old) and I emigrated to Germany with my family. When I arrived in Germany, the first few years were not very easy, as there were changes or further training in my parents’ professions and, despite working, there simply wasn’t much money available with three children. This topic touches my heart.

Tanja shares her experiences of being affected by poverty when she was young. The temporal adverbs (“when”) give the impression of sharing a story with the others. She explains her own situation, underlined by first

person singular and the adverb “personally”. Her family and parents played an important role in her experiencing poverty as a child (repeated three times). It may be due to her family and her inner child that she expresses affection when saying that the topic “touches my heart”.

Regarding neurodiversity, the students do not mention whether they are directly affected by it or not. Nevertheless, one of them, Carolina, relates to her own children. She says: “Your article immediately appealed to me, as my son has ADD and I am constantly on the lookout for new findings about this”. Carolina employs the first-person singular in this statement (me, my, I), which shows how closely ADD is linked to her identity. It is a stable interest of hers (“constantly”) and she adds one aspect after the other, from the impact the forum entry about ADD had on her, to the consecutive reasons for this. Furthermore, while discussing another topic, one of the students, Karim, mentions that he is affected by aphantasia. He explains that “I simply can’t imagine things. When I close my eyes and try to imagine something, I see everything in black”. Karim too shares his personal experiences and three students (the highest number in this study) contribute to the forum discussion by further inquiring. He answers: “But sometimes I still don’t know how to deal with it in certain situations. As already mentioned, I only found out a few months ago that I have this ‘disorder’”. In the two excerpts, the first person singular and direct descriptions or explanations are used. In the second excerpt, the conjunction “but” and the adverb “still not” show how challenging it can be to cope with aphantasia in some moments. He describes his aphantasia as a “disorder”, whereas it could also be perceived as something that makes him special, especially his affinity for objectivity, and that he has or chooses other ways of understanding the world.

### **Interest-driven reasons**

The interest-driven topics selected by the students cover inclusion in general, Spanish as a heritage language, neurodiversity, and physical disability. More concretely, the interest is reducing a knowledge gap (linked to what Evelyn calls “curiosity”), treating an underexplored topic, or approaching a relevant theme. Regarding ADD, the participant Maral says:

I think that too little attention is paid to neurodiverse pupils and the difficulties they face within the school system. There is still a lot of stigma

around ADD because there is too little education about it. As a future teacher, it is therefore very important for me to be informed about it.

Maral considers the responsibility she has as a future teacher, underlined by the adverbial construction “very important for me”. Her perception, expressed through the first-person singular, is that information about neurodiversity in education is “too little” (repeated twice). Similarly, regarding dyslexia Cristina says

these difficulties are also important in foreign language lessons ... That’s why I really wanted to know how dyslexia affects Spanish lessons and what teachers can do or should avoid.

In her past studies Cristina had been introduced to dyslexia, but the application to language education was missing. She selected the topic to close this knowledge gap and because of its relevance for her as a future teacher. As Alice above, she emphasizes her wish to go into detail (“want”), employing the adverb “really”.

Another relevant reason, mentioned by Oliwia, is that “schools and society are characterized by diversity”. This observation highlights the inherent diversity in our environment and therefore the importance of taking it into account and dealing with it. Another student, Bahar, reflects on the relevance of diversity and inclusion in general:

I found many topics very relevant. ... The articles on inclusion are also interesting. However, I have long had the feeling that there is a discrepancy between the current situation and the desired ideal of teaching and learning in German schools.

Bahar perceives a discrepancy between the theory and practice of inclusion, which causes the supposedly negative feeling of not wanting to delve into more theories and ideals that in practice would not work. She is not undermining the importance of inclusion but rather highlighting it, as she uses the quantifiers “many” and “very”. In the end, she decided on a video on rethinking school to better adapt to the future.

The interest-driven reasons encompass reflections on the relevance and importance of the themes, the desire to know more about them, but also the impact of diversity in society on pedagogies and school structures.

### ***What are student teachers' beliefs about resisting N-N structures in the educational system?***

The answer to the second research question can be found in beliefs about capital, othering and equity, and one's perceived (limited) agency. We start by describing each main category and corresponding subcategories, followed by the discussion.

#### **Capital**

Following Bourdieu (1986), the students refer mostly to economic capital (in forum entries on poverty), but also to cultural and symbolic capital. In N-N times, the distribution of capital in society diverges more and more. The student teachers' beliefs on resisting this unjust distribution of capital appear in the deconstruction of the impact of capital on education and the presentation of harsh realities that should be avoided through education.

The understanding of capital as fundamental for success asserts that children's poverty acts as "a barrier to education" (Karim). According to Karim, Normán, and Tanja, parental capital significantly influences one's school trajectory, attributing poverty not to personal shortcomings but to a lack of social support from the state. They point out that salaries in certain sectors remain low and unemployment "benefits" are inadequate.

Furthermore, the participants discern variations in children's hobbies and habitus based on parental capital. Normán categorizes tennis as a "sport for the 'rich'", expressing his regret that many children, including himself, desire sports opportunities but face unfair limitations. He puts "rich" in inverted commas, suggesting uncertainty about the exact referent.

Tanja draws on the general impact of poverty on a child. She says:

The other consequences of these children living in poverty are also noted, for example, the lack of security, the lack of opportunities to shape their youth ... and the lack of cultural events, which means that cultural capital cannot be built up. The lives of these children are also predetermined, as they usually receive little educational support at home and it is very likely that they will not attend grammar school and will not be able to go to a university.

As the start of this sentence indicates, she had already explained about other consequences of poverty in the previous sentences. She describes a child “living in poverty”, which alludes to the fact that poverty is a circumstance not the child’s fault. The consequences are described as “lacks”, which shows how (the lack of) capital influences needs such as security. She also specifies how the lack of economic capital influences the lack of cultural capital. The impact of a lack of cultural capital can be noticed in education and thus also in the children’s lives. In the current educational system, a lack of support at home – due to the lack of cultural capital (education) of the parents, which may also be a key factor for not achieving economic capital – leads to barriers in the child’s education. This raises the question of how a child from a family that cannot afford to buy extra materials, cannot pay for tutoring, cannot afford music lessons, where both parents have to work and the child has to look after their siblings and share a room with only one desk and many distractions, is supposed to do just as well in school as a child not facing these challenges.

Karim responds to Tanja, highlighting the inherent injustice of homework when he did not understand something in the classroom: “I had classmates who understood the material immediately after a few tutoring sessions and these students generally also had better grades”.

Karim perceives a differentiation and injustice regarding his peers’ opportunities to receive tutoring sessions. It seems that he is not completely aware of how tutoring sessions function, since he has never had any, because “immediately” contradicts “after a few sessions”. Eventually, this difference results in his peers “generally” having better grades, which shows his perception of systemic issues in this regard. Support in learning is also an important factor for Bahar, who calls for a change in the “learning culture”.

The students identify habitus, cultural and economic capital as sources of injustices. They believe that revealing N-N structures is a form of resisting them in education.

### **Othering and equity**

The students refer to dismantling othering and providing equity as being central beliefs about resisting N-N structures in education. The emerging subcategories are human rights and empowerment.

Exploring the deconstruction of othering reveals its presence in discussions on racism and neurodiversity. Carolina, discussing children with ADD, emphasizes that “they have to make more effort if they want to be ‘like the other kids’”. The use of inverted commas around “like the other kids” suggests ambiguity in Carolina’s perception or a struggle to articulate her feelings. This effort stems from a societal pressure towards homogeneity, a desire to conform rather than embrace differences, which perpetuates unequal starting positions and demands additional support for students facing those challenges.

Normán highlights othering in examples of seemingly innocuous discrimination, such as the repetition of compliments about his proficiency in German, showcasing the disparity between self-perception and external judgment. He speaks about power-sharing, explaining how one can use privilege to combat discrimination and racism:

I think this is a very interesting approach to fighting inequalities because you put yourself in the role of the ‘victim’ and fight for each other, which, for me, is what an equal life is all about and what we humans should actually live by.

Normán uses a vocabulary of battle (“victim,” “fight”) and indicates that everyone has a role to play in a society of equity. He calls for collective commitment, expressing that equity is intrinsic to humanity and a principle everyone should uphold.

Alice looks at othering from a historical perspective. She explains her lessons learned from the inputs:

Racism arose in the course of the Enlightenment, also in European colonization, to be able to economically and culturally legitimize the dominance of Whites. ... Another form of discrimination is structural discrimination, which is based on a human-made social structuring system and was set up to secure the interests of White people.

For Alice, it is important to demonstrate the development of racism from its origins in the Enlightenment and colonization and its impact on the unequal and unfairly legitimized distribution of cultural and economic capital depending on skin color. This leads Alice to a structural understanding of discrimination. The use of juridical vocabulary such as “legitimize” and “secure” underlines the “human-made”, not natural, structures. To emphasize the human-made structure she capitalizes the adjective “White”, which is common in German academic literature.

Another way of ensuring equity in education, apart from dismantling othering, is explicitly highlighting existing inequities. Tanja refers to the importance of talking about poverty so that children affected by poverty know that it is not their fault and “that they no longer feel like failures ... . Wealthier children also need to be educated so that they do not treat poor children worse”. The participant differentiates between poor and wealthier children but says clearly that both need education on the topic (“also”). Still, the consequences of such education would be different: empowerment for the poor children and reduction of discrimination by the wealthy children. Tanja continues explaining the fear of being stigmatized as poor, of “social exclusion, social inferiority and a lack of prospects ... material deprivation and social isolation but also unequal educational and development opportunities”.

She lists the many unfair and unequal conditions of being poor, often in combination with the adjective “social”, referring to conditions that are human-made and anchored in society.

Finally, the participants mention “human rights” (Normán) and respecting the constitution, because “diversity is associated with the constitution” (Alice). Respecting diversity allows for what Normán calls a “peaceful and fair school career/life”. He equates school, career, and life, knowing about the fundamental influence one’s education has on one’s life. These two participants also refer to empowerment. They define it as “support, to address the experiences children have been through, and to find a way of dealing with them” (Alice) and as an “exchange between those affected within a safe space. ... The main goal of empowerment is therefore not just the subject, but the collective” (Normán). The last statement highlights the importance of collective structures in society, especially in the realm of diversity and resisting N-N structures in education.

### **Agency**

In our study, agency is the most essential concept in student teachers’ beliefs about resisting N-N structures in education. The beliefs analyzed range from limitations on agency and tensions between the N-N and inclusive structures to activism and intention to take action.

The participants expressed uncertainty about their future roles as teachers, mindful of the restriction that German teachers as civil servants are not allowed to strike. In thinking about alternative forms of protest, Karim

questions "to what extent we can campaign for this problem [poverty], i.e. to what extent the policy actually allows something like this and whether it would be possible to campaign for it in our own school". Karim's language is uncertain and non-specific, using phrases like "something like this" and "campaign for this/it". Tensions between neoliberal-neoconservative and inclusive structures further complicate matters, as Carolina observes,

the schools (especially at secondary level) don't offer that much leeway, and therefore UDL [= Universal Design of Learning] would be a constant battle against the system. What can you do as a teacher if the school absolutely demands a written exam as proof of performance? In the end, some students want to pass the Abitur<sup>5</sup> and they have to find their way around the standards. That's why I find it difficult to implement, which doesn't mean it's not worth trying. Maybe something like this is easier to implement in primary school?

Carolina asks two questions, demonstrating her uncertainty. The first one regards the limitations of agency and the second the possibility of outsourcing agency. First, she draws on an incompatibility between the school system and inclusive and diversity-sensitive pedagogies, a "battle" making them "difficult to implement". This idea of limited agency is again echoed when she says "worth trying", but not doing. She seems to appreciate the idea even though she doesn't see herself implementing it, as she concludes by outsourcing her own agency to primary schools. There is a sort of ambiguity, underlined through the use of "however", "if", and double negative (doesn't mean it's not).

In another entry, Bahar describes the educational system as "a system that is geared towards competition. What is needed, however, is the power of Us. Pupils should take responsibility for their lives, for the lives of others and our planet. This requires courage to act". Bahar employs several abstract and generic nouns ("competition", "power", "responsibility", "lives", "others", "courage") and makes a noun out of the first-person plural pronoun starting with a capital letter ("Us"). Her statement is content-loaded in that she presents ideas and requirements of a participative educational system, in which students acknowledge their own responsibility for learning, life, and environment. Such a participative education requires agency or in her words: "courage to act". Bahar's ideas resonate with Luana, who shares similar views on the need for collaboration over competition. Alice and Oliwia also discuss participative teaching, considering students' previous knowledge, competences, and languages.

Agency is about responsibility and intention to take action, not just for students but also for “ministry officials and teachers” (Alice). The students relate politics and school actors to become agents to reduce inequalities. Alice says:

You have to ask yourself the question, especially as a teacher, what happens in the classroom that is relevant to racism and how do you act when this happens. Finally, you should also look at your materials and consider whether these materials are reproducing racist material and how you can avoid this.

The participant refers to reflective thinking, self-questioning as well as concrete acting. She uses the general form of “you”, indicating that everybody has to take responsibility for their anti-racist actions, and the verb “should” to show that for her, it is the only reasonable and human way to act. Carolina replies to Alice by stating that inclusive pedagogies are a “clear opportunity for us as teachers to change the racist tradition and contribute to enabling a different form of socialization”. The turn from a discriminatory “tradition”, i.e. something stable and maintained, towards another socialization is expressed through the verbs “change” and “enable”.

Combining the findings from RQ1 and RQ2, we can say that student teachers’ beliefs about capital, equity, othering, and agency in resisting N-N structures in education are primarily expressed by individuals with personal experiences of poverty (Karim and Tanja) and those implicitly identifying as victims of racism (Normán and Alice). Identity emerges as a crucial factor shaping beliefs about resistance to N-N structures in education.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Regarding our first research question, the student teachers’ approaches to selecting diversity and inclusion aspects were driven by a blend of identity-based reasons and interest-driven motivations and influenced by personal experiences and identities related to discrimination, racism, poverty, and other diversity aspects. Beyond identity-related reasons, students were motivated by curiosity and a sense of responsibility as future educators. The underrepresentation of discussions on neurodiversity and the missing disclosure of such experiences reflects the social stigma surrounding psychological issues and underscores the impact of power relations

(Zembylas and Chubbuck, 2015) as well as sociocultural experiences (De Costa, 2016) in shaping ideologies.

In the context of language education and N-N influences, the connection between beliefs and identity gained prominence. The discussion on identity-based pedagogies (Schachter & Rich, 2011) is aligned with Zembylas and Chubbuck's (2015) perspective, emphasizing the interconnectedness of teachers' personal and professional identities. Forum entries focusing on racism, migration background, and poverty highlighted students' recognition of the impact of these issues on their identities. The important role of using students' entire language repertoire and thus embracing the personal (migration/linguistic) background, highlighted in the translanguaging concept (García & Wei, 2014), offers insight on how to include heritage languages into the classroom and thus foster identity-based pedagogies.

In short, personal identity, lived experience, curiosity, and a sense of responsibility significantly shaped the participants' selections of diversity and inclusion aspects. The recognition of beliefs as integral components of identity highlights the complexity of agency in identity-based pedagogies. This emphasizes the need for teacher education programs to acknowledge and address the interconnectedness of personal and professional identities, encouraging a more holistic approach to training that encompasses diverse perspectives and experiences. It also proved important to offer safe spaces for the disclosure of student teachers' personal experiences and identities by being inclusive and diversity-sensitive.

Considering the second research question, the student teachers showed diverse beliefs regarding N-N structures in the educational system that we have organized into three categories: capital, othering and equity, and agency. Drawing from Bourdieu's (1986) framework we can say that the student teachers' beliefs regarding capital reveal a critical awareness of economic disparities impacting education. The student teachers highlight the influence of economic capital on education, particularly in terms of poverty acting as a barrier to learning, and they assign responsibility to N-N structures in education for such barriers. Similarly, the students recognize what Bourdieu (1986) calls convertibility of capital, explaining how economic capital often translates to cultural and social capital. Their beliefs align with how the lack of parental capital has already been shown

to negatively impact students' educational paths (De Graaf et al., 2000; Stopforth and Gayle, 2022).

The students critically analyze the “myth of education” (El-Mafalaani, 2020) and the concept of meritocracy, unveiling the inherent problems in the German educational system that reproduce injustices. They recognize that the system not only reflects existing societal disparities, such as habitus and parental support, but more significantly that it fails to address these issues. Instead, the structures within the educational system tend to favor those who already enjoy substantial support, thereby reinforcing instead of rectifying the inequalities present in the system. This analysis is the first step to enable the students to resist the structures supporting those inequalities (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Brown et al., 2022).

The participants articulate an intention to dismantle othering, emphasizing the importance of human rights and empowerment. For them, equity means embracing “human rights” and the constitution, reinforcing the commitment to fostering a peaceful and fair educational environment. These findings align with literature that emphasizes the pervasive influence of neoliberalism in education, which has led to educational reforms contributing to social inequality (Block et al., 2012). The participants' awareness of the human-made structures shaping discrimination and inequality suggests a critical engagement with the political economy of language identity research, acknowledging the role of teachers as political actors within the educational system (Block et al., 2012; Freire, 1975).

Finally, agency emerges as a central concept in student teachers' beliefs about resisting N-N structures. The participants grapple with the limitations imposed by civil servant roles and explore alternative forms of activism and intentionality in their future teaching practices. This resonates partly with the fact that “teachers are said to be responsible for educating the future generations, but this assertion should be taken carefully because they are not the only agents at play within the school system” (Melo-Pfeifer & Tavares, 2024, p. 22). For student teachers, educating the future generation involves a participative educational system that empowers students, promoting a collective approach over competitive dynamics, and overcoming market values (Block et al., 2012). The ideas behind competitive systems can be interpreted as a problem of individualism in the global North (Tavares, 2023), which is linked to N-N structures.

The student teachers also demonstrated awareness regarding intersectionality issues, as their beliefs displayed a nuanced understanding of how various aspects of identity intersect with and influence educational experiences. This could be investigated in future research.

To conclude, identity-based pedagogies become tools for empowerment and dismantling ideologies that hinder inclusive identity development (Schachter & Rich, 2011). Our study emphasizes the pivotal role of student teachers in shaping an inclusive and equitable educational landscape, highlighting the need for ongoing critical engagement with those structures that perpetuate inequality. As these emerging educators navigate their professional paths, their beliefs can be tools for transformative action within the educational sphere. Student teachers believe (in)equalities to result from unequal distributed capital. To reduce this dependence, agency is required and becomes a key affordance for teacher education programs. Programs could provide opportunities for student teachers to confront situations of uncertainty (Melo-Pfeifer, 2021) to cultivate a sense of agency among student teachers, empowering them to enact change and resist systemic injustices. This requires a shift from a prescriptive approach to an inquiry- and identity-based pedagogy that encourages critical thinking.

We thus encourage teacher educators to give future teachers the necessary tools to counter N-N structures in educational contexts and recommend teachers to include identity-based pedagogies into their teaching. This could be in the form of fostering translanguaging practices in the classroom as well as critically reflecting on their own actions and how they might be influenced by pre-conceived notions about disadvantaged students. This study contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics involved in student teachers' belief systems, urging teacher education programs to embrace a holistic approach that encompasses diverse perspectives and experiences.

Regarding the student teachers' identity and their beliefs, it would be interesting to research their investment in identity- and diversity-based aspects of education. Finally, investigating student teachers' beliefs about potentials and challenges of inclusion and diversity-sensitive pedagogies more in depth could reveal further insights into student teachers' identity-related beliefs about resisting N-N structures in the educational system.

## NOTES

1. English is understood as a dominant ideology supporting global capitalism.
2. All names have been changed to preserve participant anonymity.
3. All examples are retrieved from the forum and translated from German into English.
4. It is interesting to note that she does not explicitly state a link to her identity, which may however be tied to the fact that, as a Black person, she should not be obliged to educate others about racism.
5. Qualification exams at the end of secondary education in Germany.

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# VERS UN MEILLEUR ACCOMPAGNEMENT DES PERSONNES S/SOURDES ET MALENTENDANTES : ETUDE DE CAS EN COURS DE FRANÇAIS LANGUE SECONDE EN MILIEU UNIVERSITAIRE CANADIEN

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**RÉSUMÉ.** Cette étude de cas autoethnographique présente des considérations éthiques et culturelles et les accommodations à mettre en œuvre pour soutenir l'apprentissage des personnes S/sourdes et malentendantes en cours de langue orale. S'appuyant sur l'expérience commune des deux chercheuses en tant que professeure et étudiante de Français langue seconde dans une université ontarienne de septembre 2019 à avril 2022, cet article propose des pistes pédagogiques et des conseils pratiques pour mieux accommoder les étudiants S/sourds et malentendants en classe et en ligne.

**TOWARDS BETTER ACCOMMODATION FOR D/DEAF AND HARD-OF-HEARING PEOPLE: A CASE STUDY IN FRENCH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE IN A CANADIAN UNIVERSITY**

**ABSTRACT.** This autoethnographic case study presents ethical and cultural considerations and accommodations to support the learning of D/deaf and hard-of-hearing people in oral language classes. Drawing on the shared experience of both researchers, as a professor and a student of French as a Second Language at an Ontario university from September 2019 to April 2022, this article offers pedagogical tips and practical advice to better accommodate D/deaf and hard-of-hearing students in the classroom and online.

Sur le plan légal et théorique, l'accès aux accommodations en milieu scolaire et universitaire pour les étudiants présentant un handicap ou ayant des « besoins particuliers » est garanti en Ontario (*Code des droits de la personne de l'Ontario*, 1990, *Charte canadienne des droits et des libertés*,

1982 ; Loi de 2005 sur l'accessibilité pour les personnes handicapées de l'Ontario, *Directives sur l'éducation accessible* de la Commission ontarienne des droits de la personne, 2004). En 2018, la Commission ontarienne des droits de la personne (CODP) a publié la *Politique sur l'éducation accessible aux élèves handicapés*, mettant à jour les *Directives* de 2004 et visant à aider les institutions éducatives à mieux comprendre et assurer leurs obligations relatives au Code. Malgré l'existence d'un cadre très réglementé pour accommoder la population étudiante aux « besoins particuliers », la CODP reconnaît que les difficultés d'accessibilité dans les écoles primaires et secondaires ontariennes restent nombreuses (CODP, 2018, p. 7). En milieu postsecondaire, ces difficultés perdurent. Bien que le cadre législatif ne soit pas aussi réglementé, de nombreux services ont été mis en place dans les collèges et universités de l'Ontario pour répondre « aux besoins particuliers ». Ces services sont assujettis à la *Charte canadienne des droits et des libertés* et aux lois provinciales. Cependant, l'accès à ces accommodations continue de présenter des défis pour de nombreuses personnes qui font face à des obstacles structurels, culturels ou comportementaux (National Educational Association of Disabled Students [NEADS], 2018).

Dans le cadre de cours de français langue seconde (FLS), nous avons travaillé ensemble, en tant qu'enseignante entendante et étudiante s'identifiant comme Sourde<sup>1</sup>, de septembre 2019 à avril 2022. Au cours de ces trois années universitaires, en collaboration avec l'équipe du service d'accessibilité de notre université, nous avons tenté de surmonter ces obstacles structurels, culturels et comportementaux pour garantir une expérience d'apprentissage optimale pour une étudiante Sourde en cours de langue orale. À la suite du succès de notre collaboration, tant sur le plan de l'enseignement que de l'apprentissage, nous avons souhaité partager notre expérience et proposer des pistes pédagogiques et des conseils pratiques pour mieux accommoder les étudiants S/sourds et malentendants (ESM) en cours de langue orale, en salle de classe, mais également dans le contexte des cours en ligne qui se sont considérablement développés dans notre institution depuis la pandémie de la Covid-19.

## CADRE THÉORIQUE ET MÉTHODOLOGIQUE

### *Une étude de cas autoethnographique collaborative*

Nous avons mené une étude exploratoire et phénoménologique de l'éducation inclusive et de l'adaptation pédagogique en contexte universitaire, à partir d'une étude de cas autoethnographique collaborative. L'autoethnographie est couramment utilisée dans diverses disciplines, notamment l'anthropologie, la sociologie, la psychologie et l'éducation (Anderson, 2006 ; Dubé 2016 ; Ellis et Bochner, 2000 ; Etherington, 2004 ; McIlveen, 2008 ; Roth, 2005). Cette méthode qualitative vise à décrire et analyser une expérience personnelle afin de comprendre un phénomène culturel (Ellis et al., 2011). Dans ce contexte, le chercheur constitue le « centre épistémologique et ontologique autour duquel tourne la recherche » (Spry, 2001, p. 711, traduction libre). Le concept d'autoethnographie *collaborative* pourrait alors sembler contradictoire, mais celui-ci est pourtant bien répandu depuis des décennies (Cann et DeMeulenaere, 2012 ; Ellis et Bochner, 2000 ; Kalmbach Phillips et al., 2009). Chang (2008) le qualifie comme « une méthode de recherche qualitative dans laquelle les chercheurs travaillent en communauté pour collecter leurs matériaux autobiographiques et pour analyser et interpréter leurs données collectivement afin d'acquérir une compréhension significative des phénomènes socioculturels reflétés dans leurs données autobiographiques » (p. 23-24, traduction libre).

Notre étude a pour objectif l'analyse de notre expérience en tant que professeure de FLS et étudiante Sourde, afin de comprendre comment mieux accommoder les ESM en cours de langue orale. Cette recherche a donc une dimension autobiographique, introspective et rétrospective, puisqu'il s'agit d'une analyse de l'expérience des co-chercheuses, menée par les co-chercheuses. Les études de cas introspectives sont communes dans le domaine des « études sur le handicap » (*disability studies* en anglais) et particulièrement dans le cadre des études sur la S/surdité. Elles sont généralement publiées sous forme d'anthologies et de monographies plutôt que sous forme d'articles scientifiques (Lingsom, 2011). En sciences de l'éducation, pour faire écho à l'analyse de Mann (1986) sur l'utilisation des données obtenues à partir de méthodes introspectives, cette approche nous semble particulièrement opportune pour analyser l'impact de différentes stratégies d'enseignement inclusif et pour explorer les expériences subjectives des apprenants ayant besoin d'accommodations plus spécifiques. Puisque notre recherche est nourrie de nos expériences

personnelles, il est important de noter que celle-ci est difficilement dissociable de nos idéologies. Nous n'offrons donc pas une perspective purement objective. Comme le note Stake (1994), si on appréhende l'étude de cas dans une optique de représentativité, son intérêt épistémologique est faible. En revanche, d'un point de vue qualitatif, celle-ci permet de découvrir des éléments nouveaux, particulièrement sur un sujet peu exploré, et ce « potentiel d'apprentissage est un critère différent de la représentativité et parfois supérieur » à celle-ci. (Stake, 1994, p. 243). Nous nous inscrivons dans la lignée d'autres chercheurs qui ont souligné l'importance de l'étude du positionnement et de l'expérience personnelle du chercheur dans le développement intellectuel de la recherche qualitative en éducation (Cooper et White, 2009 ; Horejes, 2012).

### *L'épistémologie de la culture Sourde*

Notre approche valorise également la culture Sourde et son épistémologie (Holcomb, 2010). L'épistémologie de la culture Sourde s'appuie sur les expériences, les valeurs et les témoignages de celles-ci (Holcomb, 2010). Elle est semblable aux épistémologies d'autres groupes marginalisés ou sous-représentés (Bakari, 1997 ; Wright, 2003) qui luttent contre l'oppression vécue par des membres de ces communautés et tentent de la rectifier. Pour ce faire, elles considèrent les systèmes de connaissances et les expériences auxquels seules ces communautés respectives ont accès (Anderson, 1995 ; Bakari, 1997 ; Koertge, 1996 ; Ladd, 2008). L'épistémologie des personnes Sourdes est considérée comme étant essentielle à l'amélioration de leur éducation (Geeslin, 2007 ; Jankowski, 1997 ; Ladd, 2008 ; Lang, 2003 ; Simms et Thumann, 2007 ; Stone, 2000). Dans le cadre de notre collaboration, valoriser cette épistémologie a été la première étape pour permettre à Auteure 1 de mieux comprendre les obstacles auxquels faisaient face Auteure 2 afin de trouver des solutions pédagogiques adéquates pour les surmonter.

### *Une pédagogie inclusive et adaptée*

Nous proposons des pistes de réflexion que nous n'avons pas trouvées dans les guides d'accessibilité universitaires ni dans la littérature scientifique, pour favoriser un meilleur accompagnement des ESM dans le contexte de cours de langue orale fortement axés sur la participation orale et l'interaction. Nous présentons des pistes pédagogiques qui s'inscrivent dans une conception inclusive et universelle de l'apprentissage, tout en intégrant des accommodations supplémentaires

sortant de ce cadre puisqu'elles sont exclusivement destinées aux ESM. Une clarification de ces différents concepts s'impose afin de bien comprendre le cadre dans lequel s'inscrit chacune de nos recommandations. La pédagogie inclusive anticipe la diversité de la classe pour répondre aux besoins et aux styles d'apprentissage variés des étudiants. Elle est constituée d'un « ensemble de pratiques pédagogiques exemplaires » qui visent à « éliminer les obstacles à l'apprentissage » (Beaudoin, 2013, p. 4). Il s'agit de proposer à l'ensemble de la classe une situation d'apprentissage, un matériel pédagogique, un climat de classe et des activités d'évaluation qui prennent en compte la diversité des personnes et de leurs besoins pour favoriser une expérience d'apprentissage équitable. Présenter le contenu du cours sous différents formats, donner le choix entre plusieurs modalités d'évaluation ou proposer des voies alternatives de participation et de communication sont quelques exemples de pratiques pédagogiques inclusives. Ces pratiques font également partie des lignes directrices de la conception universelle de l'apprentissage proposées par le Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST, 2018). Rose et Meyer, chercheurs et fondateurs du CAST, définissent la conception universelle de l'apprentissage comme :

... un ensemble de principes liés au développement du curriculum qui favorise les possibilités d'apprentissage égales pour tous les individus. La pédagogie universelle offre un canevas pour la création de buts, de méthodes, d'évaluations et de matériel éducatif qui fonctionnent pour tous les individus. Il ne s'agit pas d'un modèle unique qui s'applique à tous, mais plutôt d'une approche flexible qui peut être faite sur mesure ou ajustée pour les besoins de l'individu. (Rose et Meyer, 2002, p. 5, traduction libre ; Bergeron et al., 2011, p. 91)

La conception universelle de l'apprentissage et les pratiques d'enseignement inclusives sont donc intrinsèquement liées. Elles visent à mettre en place un curriculum flexible et adapté au plus grand nombre, dès le départ. Certaines des pistes pédagogiques que nous proposons s'inscrivent dans ce cadre puisqu'elles s'appliquent à toute la classe, prenant en compte son hétérogénéité. En revanche, nous suggérons également un certain nombre de mesures d'adaptation pour accommoder les ESM en particulier. Ces mesures ne modifient pas les attentes envers les ESM, mais leur permettent, dans le respect du principe d'équité, de participer activement aux mêmes activités du cours de langue orale que les autres étudiants. Nous définissons ces mesures « d'adaptation » ou « d'accommodation » comme l'aménagement du contexte, de

l'environnement ou des modalités d'apprentissage et d'évaluation d'une personne aux besoins spécifiques.

## PERTINENCE

Cette étude présente des considérations éthiques et culturelles souvent négligées dans les ressources sur l'accommodation des ESM mises à la disposition des enseignants, ainsi que des pistes pédagogiques qui pourraient aider les personnes souhaitant développer un curriculum plus inclusif. Nos recommandations répondent à l'appel du Comité des droits des personnes handicapées des Nations Unies qui encourage les parties prenantes à fournir des ressources « aux enseignants et autres membres du personnel [...] leur permettant de créer des milieux d'apprentissage flexibles et de dispenser une instruction répondant aux besoins variés de tous les apprenants » (CODP, 2018, p. 46.). La même année, le rapport de l'Association nationale des étudiant(e)s handicapé(e)s au niveau postsecondaire (NEADS) fait écho à cet appel en recommandant que les institutions postsecondaires développent des ressources pour former le corps professoral sur les besoins essentiels des étudiants, la pédagogie différenciée, la conception universelle de l'apprentissage et la distinction entre les deux (National Educational Association of Disabled Students, 2018).

Il existe peu de recherches sur l'accommodement des ESM au niveau postsecondaire au Canada dans les cours de langue orale. Les études existantes ont essentiellement été menées dans le contexte américain. O'Brien et al. (2015) ont étudié les réactions d'étudiants américains dans les domaines de l'éducation et du travail social face aux barrières rencontrées par les ESM en milieu académique. Ils abordent la question des frontières définies par les normes sociales et linguistiques des cultures Sourde et entendant et surtout le manque de fluidité dans les échanges entre l'une et l'autre. Cette étude se concentre sur les attitudes et réactions liées aux accommodations plutôt que sur la pertinence et l'efficacité des accommodations mises en place. Plusieurs recherches ont été menées sur la différence entre l'apprentissage direct et l'apprentissage médiatisé par interprète, essentiellement au niveau secondaire. Les conclusions fréquentes de ces études sont que l'instruction directe, particulièrement si celle-ci est dispensée par un professeur Sourde, serait plus efficace que l'instruction médiatisée par un interprète (Davis, 2005 ; Kurtz et al., 2015 ; Winston, 2005). Marschark et al. (2008) contredisent la majorité des travaux sur la question. Les résultats de leur étude, à l'issue de quatre

expériences distinctes, montrent que la qualité et l'accessibilité de l'éducation des ESM ont davantage d'impact que le mode de livraison de cette information. Dans le cadre de notre étude, l'ESM n'a suivi que des cours par apprentissage indirect, médiatisé par interprètes.

La plupart des universités ontariennes mettent à disposition des enseignants un guide qui inclut quelques recommandations d'accommodations pour les ESM. Ces accommodations restent cependant très générales et ne prennent pas en compte la spécificité des cours de langue orale. Enfin, rares sont les guides qui, comme ceux des Universités York et Western, abordent la distinction entre le terme « Sourde » comme identité culturelle et « sourd » comme définition d'une condition audiologique. Cette distinction est pourtant essentielle pour s'inscrire dans une pédagogie inclusive et socialement juste. C'est donc dans cette optique que nous avons identifié le besoin pressant de développer une ressource plus approfondie pour soutenir l'apprentissage des ESM en cours universitaires de langue orale.

## **PROCÉDURE**

### ***Production des données***

Cette étude longitudinale s'est déroulée sur une période de trois ans. Nous avons recueilli nos données à partir d'un protocole de rédaction de rapports rétrospectifs auto-observés et auto-déclarés, nous inspirant d'autres travaux ayant adopté cette approche dans l'étude de l'acquisition d'une langue seconde (Glahn, 1980 ; Hosenfeld, 1976). À l'issue d'un entretien préliminaire, nous avons déterminé une liste de thématiques à développer concernant les besoins d'accommodation identifiés par l'ESM et les stratégies et adaptations pédagogiques mises en place par l'enseignante pour y répondre. Le point de départ de notre réflexion a été la lettre d'accommodations recommandées pour Auteure 2 par le service en accessibilité de notre campus ; plus précisément les éléments que cette lettre n'incluait pas, mais qui sont devenus primordiaux dans nos cours. Auteure 2 a dressé une liste des besoins qui n'avaient pas été anticipés par la lettre, des difficultés rencontrées particulièrement dans les cours de FLS, des mesures prises par Auteure 1 qui ont été bénéfiques à son apprentissage et qui lui ont permis de surmonter ces difficultés et le cas échéant, des mesures qui n'ont pas été bénéfiques ou qui n'ont pas pu être prises. Auteure 1 a identifié les différents ajustements pédagogiques qu'elle a effectués, distinguant les pratiques inclusives destinées à l'ensemble de

la classe des accommodations spécifiques à Auteure 2. C'est à partir de ces listes initiales que nous avons déterminé nos premières thématiques.

Nous avons également tenu des journaux de bord sur nos expériences et réflexions respectives. L'étudiante s'est concentrée sur sa situation d'apprentissage et l'évolution de ses besoins au fil de ses cours et l'enseignante sur les ajustements pédagogiques nécessaires et leurs implications.

Finalement, nous avons produit nos données en rédigeant, individuellement, des rapports rétrospectifs détaillant notre expérience en lien avec chaque thématique initiale, à partir de nos journaux de bord et des notes de nos entretiens réguliers.

### *Traitement et analyse des données*

Nous avons ensuite procédé à la mise en commun et à l'étiquetage manuel de ces données, ce qui nous a permis d'identifier des thématiques, des regroupements, des sous-thèmes, de nouvelles catégories émergeant des données et des thèmes nécessitant plus de recherche pour placer les données dans un contexte culturel et social plus large. Il est important de préciser que dans le cadre d'une autoethnographie, la production, l'analyse et l'interprétation des données ne sont pas des étapes distinctes. Elles sont réalisées de façon parallèle et s'informent constamment l'une l'autre, tout au long du processus de recherche (Chang, 2008 ; Dubé, 2016 ; Taylor et Bogdan, 1984). La collaboration a permis une constante vérification et validation mutuelle de la juste représentation de cette expérience, malgré la synthétisation qu'impose l'analyse phénoménologique des données et la rédaction de l'article scientifique.

Dans la section suivante, nous présentons les résultats de notre analyse des données, desquels se sont dégagées cinq catégories finales de recommandations pédagogiques ; les considérations éthiques et culturelles nécessaires pour mieux comprendre et accommoder les ESM, les stratégies pour favoriser l'accès au contenu, les accommodations en salle de classe, les accommodations en ligne et l'adaptation des évaluations.

## RÉSULTATS ET DISCUSSION

### *Considérations éthiques et culturelles*

#### *La terminologie*

Avant d'aborder en détail nos considérations éthiques et culturelles, il est essentiel de faire un point sur le langage utilisé pour décrire les S/sourds. En anglais, il existe une distinction entre « deaf », écrit avec un d minuscule et « Deaf » avec un D majuscule (Association des Sourds du Canada [ASC], 2015). « Deaf » correspond à l'identité culturelle de la personne alors que « deaf » est utilisé pour décrire son diagnostic médical. Il existe la même distinction entre les deux concepts en français. Cependant, les adjectifs ne peuvent pas grammaticalement s'écrire avec une majuscule en français. Il y a donc souvent une ambiguïté entre une personne « culturellement » sourde et une personne « médicalement » sourde. Pour réduire cette ambiguïté, certains choisissent de transgresser les règles grammaticales et d'écrire « Sourd.e » comme adjectif faisant référence à la culture. Dans la communauté des Sourds qui signent la langue des signes québécoise (LSQ) le terme « sourdien.ne » a été créé pour marquer cette distinction. (Gagnon, 2014). Dans une démarche inclusive et de respect des identités culturelles, nous recommandons d'observer ou d'inviter les personnes concernées à préciser le terme qu'elles emploient quand elles se présentent. Le terme ESM (étudiants S/sourds et malentendants) a été retenu dans cet article, par souci de lisibilité et pour permettre d'inclure un plus grand nombre de personnes dans nos considérations.

Pour mieux assurer l'inclusion complète d'un ESM dans un cours de langue orale, Auteure 2, en tant qu'ESM faisant partie de la culture Sourde, note qu'il est important de considérer les différences culturelles entre les entendants et les ESM. Dans le monde entendant, le fait que la S/surdité représente aussi l'essence d'une culture des ESM est souvent méconnu. Les personnes qui s'identifient comme appartenant à cette culture ont leur propre langue signée ainsi qu'une série de normes et de valeurs qui leur sont spécifiques. Cependant, leurs expériences linguistiques et culturelles varient. Par exemple, elles n'ont pas toutes un accès égal à leur langue maternelle, qu'elle soit orale ou signée. Trouver des accommodations générales qui conviennent à tous étant un défi, il est nécessaire de proposer des accommodations personnalisées.

Auteure 2 recommande également d'utiliser la terminologie préférée par la communauté et ses membres individuels lorsqu'on s'adresse à eux ou que l'on parle d'eux. Par exemple, il existe une forme de langage (*person-first language* en anglais) qui met en valeur la personne avant de mentionner son handicap (ex. « une personne ayant une perte d'audition » au lieu de « une sourde »). Cela permettrait d'éviter une perception négative de la personne (Flink, 2021). S'il est vrai que certaines personnes en situation de handicap préfèrent cette terminologie, d'autres demandent à être identifiées par leur marqueur d'identité en premier (*identity-first language* en anglais). Cela leur permettrait de fièrement s'identifier comme handicapées et d'accepter leur handicap (Dunn et Andrews, 2015 ; Flink, 2021).

Le langage *identity-first* est fréquemment employé dans d'autres communautés (ex. : la communauté 2SLGBTQ+, la communauté Noire), tandis que l'utilisation du langage *person-first* n'existe que pour décrire les personnes handicapées (Gernsbacher, 2017). Collier (2012) suggère même que la persistance à mettre en valeur la personne avant son handicap pour qu'elle puisse être vue comme un humain complet montre une perspective négative du handicap. Auteure 2 indique qu'en général, la communauté Sourde, fière de sa culture, considère le terme « personne qui est sourde » comme trop délicat, mais l'accepte. La plupart des membres semblent préférer le terme « personne sourde » (ASC, 2015). Ainsi, il serait idéal de demander à chaque personne concernée le terme qu'elle préfère. Pour faire cela avec tact et professionnalisme dans le cadre d'un cours, nous recommandons aux enseignants d'intégrer une mention dans leurs syllabus encourageant tous les étudiants à préciser leurs identités et leur terminologie préférée (ex. les identités de genre, les identités liées aux handicaps, les origines ethniques et les autres identités culturelles), s'ils se sentent à l'aise de le faire. Il est essentiel de ne pas isoler les ESM en leur posant cette question, mais d'inclure tous les étudiants du cours dans cette démarche, pour respecter toutes les identités, qu'elles soient visibles ou non.

### *Les tendances comportementales*

Il est également important de considérer les tendances comportementales de la culture Sourde qui diffèrent de celles de la culture entendante. Le Rochester Institute of Technology (Siple et al., 2004) insiste par exemple sur l'importance du contact visuel dans la culture Sourde, car le rompre pourrait suggérer un désintérêt. En revanche, un contact visuel continu

pourrait mettre une personne mal à l'aise au sein de la culture entendante canadienne. Par ailleurs, la culture Sourde valorise le collectivisme plutôt que l'individualisme. Les membres de cette culture se considèrent comme un groupe où la communication ouverte est essentielle (Siple et al., 2004). Bien que ces tendances existent chez les Sourds, on ne doit jamais les généraliser. Par exemple, Auteure 2 note qu'elle ne privilégie pas le contact visuel continu. De plus, elle remarque que les Sourds qui utilisent la langue des signes américaine (ASL) n'utilisent pas souvent de titres ou de noms de famille pour marquer le respect envers les supérieurs hiérarchiques ou les aînés. Par conséquent, l'utilisation d'un prénom pour s'adresser à un professeur n'est pas irrespectueuse dans ce contexte et devrait être comprise comme une norme culturelle de l'ESM jusqu'à ce qu'on lui suggère éventuellement de procéder autrement.

### ***L'accès et la compréhension du contenu***

Afin de favoriser l'accès au contenu d'un cours de langue orale pour les ESM, tout en évitant leur stigmatisation, une pédagogie inclusive agrémentée d'accommodations spécifiques s'impose.

Les services d'accessibilité des universités ontariennes se doivent de garantir des accommodations pour les personnes handicapées. Pour les ESM, ces services proposent en général au minimum l'accès à des interprètes en langue des signes (si l'ESM signe) et à une personne désignée pour prendre des notes. Il n'est cependant pas toujours possible de trouver des personnes disponibles et qualifiées pour effectuer ces services de façon optimale dans tous les cours.

Auteure 2, diagnostiquée dès l'âge de trois ans avec une perte d'audition bilatérale et sévère, est issue d'une famille entendante ne parlant que l'anglais. Elle était elle-même anglophone unilingue jusqu'à ce qu'elle commence à apprendre l'ASL à 16 ans. Elle utilise quotidiennement l'anglais dans les contextes familiaux et éducatifs et elle a recours à l'ASL en classe avec ses interprètes et ses amis Sourds. Buchholz (2017) suggère qu'il est préférable que les ESM qui signent et qui étudient une langue orale étrangère l'apprennent à travers une langue des signes qui leur est également étrangère ou inconnue. Dans le cas d'Auteure 2, il serait donc préférable de lui fournir des interprètes de langue des signes québécoise (LSQ). Cela lui permettrait d'établir de nouvelles connexions entre la langue des signes inconnue et la langue orale (Buchholz, 2017). Compte tenu du manque d'interprètes de langues des signes en général (Leduc,

2024 ; Société canadienne de l'ouïe, 2013), en trouver qui sont capables de signer une langue des signes étrangère représente un défi supplémentaire pour les universités. Le Centre d'accessibilité de notre université a essayé de trouver des interprètes de la LSQ pour les cours de français d'Auteure 2, mais sans succès. Elle a donc eu recours à des interprètes d'ASL qui comprenaient aussi le français.

Parmi les accommodations générales offertes par le centre d'accessibilité et applicables à tous les cours, l'ESM peut bénéficier également du droit d'accès au matériel pédagogique du cours, de temps supplémentaire pour les examens et d'échéances flexibles. Les cours de langue orale présentent cependant d'autres défis qui nécessitent des ajustements supplémentaires pour les ESM et qui seront décrits dans la section suivante.

Dans les cours de langue orale, trois des cinq compétences langagières à développer d'après le Cadre européen commun de référence pour les langues (Conseil de l'Europe, 2001), sur lequel nous nous alignons, peuvent représenter un défi supplémentaire pour les ESM : la compréhension, l'expression et l'interaction orales. Afin d'aider les étudiants à développer ces compétences au 21<sup>e</sup> siècle, l'exploitation de documents sonores et audiovisuels en cours de langue orale est désormais incontournable, quelle que soit l'approche d'enseignement adoptée (communicative, actionnelle ou autre). Pour permettre aux ESM d'accéder à ce contenu et de le comprendre, les équipes pédagogiques devront systématiquement prévoir d'accompagner ces documents d'une transcription. Dans le cadre d'exploitation de documents authentiques, à savoir des documents qui n'ont pas été créés ou modifiés à des fins pédagogiques, les transcriptions sont souvent inexistantes. C'était donc à l'enseignante de les créer. Les ESM ont également besoin de pouvoir accéder à tout le contenu du cours avant chaque séance, afin de pouvoir l'étudier au préalable, ce qui facilitera le déroulement du cours. Auteure 2 indique que ceci était primordial pour lui permettre de bien se préparer pour le cours. Pendant la séance de cours, elle devait se concentrer simultanément sur la professeure et sur ce qui apparaissait à l'écran, sur le tableau ou sur le document étudié, mais également sur les interventions éventuelles des autres étudiants, sur les interprètes et sur la prise de notes. Connaître le contexte, le contenu général et le plan de déroulement de la séance à l'avance lui permettait donc de pouvoir suivre et de ne pas perdre le fil malgré tous ces stimuli. L'enseignante devait ainsi faire preuve d'organisation et d'anticipation dans la préparation de ses séances de cours. Idéalement, celles-ci devaient être très structurées et l'enseignante

devait éviter de s'éloigner du contenu et du déroulement initialement prévu, afin de faciliter le travail des interprètes et l'assimilation du contenu par l'ESM.

Durant le cours, l'enseignante devait également adapter son débit oral et marquer des pauses régulières pour laisser le temps aux interprètes de signer, à l'ESM de suivre et à la personne assignée à la prise de notes d'effectuer sa tâche. Si des diapositives ou tout autre support visuel étaient utilisés, l'enseignante pouvait faciliter le travail des interprètes et l'assimilation de l'ESM en pointant, au fur et à mesure, les différents passages au moment où ils étaient discutés.

### *Les accommodations en salle de classe*

#### *L'interaction et la participation de l'ESM*

Nos cours de FLS s'inscrivent dans une approche expérientielle et actionnelle, centrée sur l'apprenant et sur ses interactions avec ses pairs. L'apprentissage coopératif et collaboratif par tâche est privilégié. Ainsi, les étudiants travaillent en petits groupes tout au long du semestre pour accomplir des tâches communes et développer leurs compétences communicationnelles. Afin d'offrir des conditions d'apprentissage optimales à l'ESM dans ce contexte, il nous a fallu mettre en place un système efficace pour favoriser l'interaction.

Auteure 2 peut parler oralement et choisit de le faire dans ses cours de FLS. En revanche, elle a besoin de ses interprètes pour comprendre ce qui est dit par ses pairs lors des travaux en groupe, car la lecture labiale n'est pas toujours suffisante ou accessible, surtout dans une langue étrangère. Cela implique un petit décalage entre le moment où la phrase est prononcée et le moment où Auteure 2 reçoit l'information. Si les pairs ne marquent pas de pauses pendant leurs interventions, il est difficile pour Auteure 2 de participer à la conversation. C'est pour cela qu'elle préférerait travailler en groupe plus restreint (composé idéalement de trois personnes au lieu de cinq dans notre cas) pour que chacun puisse s'exprimer à un rythme plus lent tout en ayant le temps de compléter la tâche assignée. La possibilité de travailler en groupe plus restreint est donc devenue une option pour l'ensemble de la classe. Cet ajustement ne perturbe en rien l'intégrité de la tâche à effectuer et facilite grandement le travail de l'ESM. Nous avons observé une nette amélioration dans la participation d'Auteure 2 lors de ces groupes de discussion grâce à la réduction du

nombre de participants. Il est important de préciser qu'aucune instruction particulière n'a été donnée par l'enseignante aux autres membres des groupes dont Auteure 2 faisait partie. Pour garantir une démarche d'équité et d'inclusivité, il était essentiel de ne pas déresponsabiliser et marginaliser l'ESM, ce qui aurait pu être le cas en mettant en avant sa situation et ses besoins spécifiques et en donnant des instructions particulières à ses pairs. C'est Auteure 2 qui a pris la responsabilité, au besoin, de demander à ses pairs de ralentir, de répéter ou de marquer des pauses dans leur discours.

Si l'ESM ne s'exprime pas du tout oralement, il est possible, comme le suggère Buchholz (2017) d'avoir recours à la technologie (via Google Docs par exemple ou tout autre outil de traitement de texte collaboratif) pour partager avec les pairs, en temps réel, les interventions de l'ESM à l'écrit dans la langue cible. Le recours aux logiciels de traitement de texte collaboratif s'avère également utile pour la personne assignée à la prise de notes si celle-ci ne peut pas s'asseoir à côté de l'ESM dans la salle de classe ou si le cours se déroule en ligne.

#### *La prise de notes*

La plupart des services d'accessibilité des universités ontariennes proposent en principe l'accès à une personne externe au cours assignée à la prise de notes. Cette personne est en général employée par l'université et rémunérée pour ce travail. En revanche, il n'est pas toujours possible de trouver une personne disponible chaque semaine à l'heure du cours et étant capable de travailler dans la langue cible de cours. D'autres structures sont alors mises en place ; les professeurs peuvent par exemple lancer un appel à la classe pour trouver un volontaire pour prendre des notes qui seront mises à la disposition de l'ensemble de la classe chaque semaine. Cette solution n'est pas toujours optimale non plus. Notre expérience confirme ce que le *National Deaf Center on Postsecondary Outcomes* (2023) conclut ; il est difficile de trouver des étudiants volontaires et lorsqu'on en trouve, la qualité de leurs notes est parfois irrégulière. Pour contourner ce problème, Auteure 1 s'est assurée de systématiquement fournir, à l'ensemble de la classe, les diapositives projetées et les notes prises pendant le cours. Au lieu d'écrire directement sur le tableau de la classe, elle prenait ses notes sur ordinateur, les projetait à l'écran en temps réel et partageait ces notes sur Moodle à la fin de chaque cours.

### *Un environnement d'enseignement et d'apprentissage optimal*

La taille, la configuration et l'équipement de la salle de classe sont d'autres éléments à considérer pour favoriser le bon déroulement du cours. Nous avons dû demander un changement de salle de classe à plusieurs reprises durant ces trois années, car les salles qui nous étaient initialement assignées n'étaient pas adaptées. L'ESM devait pouvoir avoir en même temps, dans son champ de vision, le tableau ou l'écran de projection, la professeure et ses interprètes. Les interprètes devaient donc pouvoir disposer d'un espace pour signer face aux étudiants, près de la professeure, mais sans masquer l'écran ou le tableau. Cet espace doit aussi être propice aux allées et venues des interprètes qui se relaient et se déplacent dans la classe en fonction de l'activité en déroulement. Nos cours de FLS étant axés sur la collaboration entre les pairs, chaque séance est souvent divisée en différentes activités alternant entre travail en petits groupes et explications ou compte-rendu en classe entière. Ces déplacements doivent donc pouvoir s'effectuer de façon fluide sans interrompre le déroulement du cours.

### *Les accommodations dans le contexte d'un cours en ligne*

#### *La logistique en ligne*

La deuxième année de notre collaboration a été marquée par la pandémie de Covid-19 et la transition vers des cours assurés entièrement en ligne, avec un mélange de séances synchrones sur Zoom et de travail asynchrone sur Moodle. Au-delà des ajustements que tous les enseignants ont dû effectuer dans ce contexte, des considérations supplémentaires pour accommoder l'ESM se sont imposées à nous. Les défis liés à la capacité d'attention et de concentration et à la fatigue générée par l'apprentissage en ligne sont multipliés pour les ESM. Auteure 2 indique qu'elle devait parfois travailler avec trois écrans en simultané lors des séances de cours synchrones ; un pour suivre le déroulement du cours sur Zoom et ses interprètes, un pour consulter les notes partagées en temps réel sur Google doc et un troisième pour accéder au site Moodle avec les documents nécessaires pour le cours. Pour des raisons évidentes, le passage d'une fenêtre ou d'un onglet à l'autre, sur un même écran, pratique courante pour la plupart des étudiants dans ce contexte, n'est pas une option optimale pour les ESM. En raison de cette hyper stimulation constante, Auteure 2 indique qu'elle avait besoin de davantage de pauses pendant les cours en ligne afin de maintenir une concentration optimale.

Les autres aménagements ne différaient pas particulièrement de ceux mis en place en salle de classe. Les groupes de discussion se déroulaient sur Zoom dans des salles virtuelles distinctes, avec la présence des interprètes et de la personne chargée de la prise de notes.

### *La technologie*

La technologie et l'intelligence artificielle peuvent aujourd'hui faciliter l'enseignement et l'apprentissage en ligne avec des ESM, les sous-titres autogénérés lorsque quelqu'un s'exprime sur une plateforme de conférence en ligne sont de plus en plus performants et disponibles dans une variété de langues. Dans le cadre de notre collaboration en ligne sur Zoom pendant la pandémie de Covid-19, ce n'était malheureusement pas encore le cas pour les sous-titres autogénérés en français. Nous avons cependant observé une nette amélioration au cours des deux dernières années et découvert que la plateforme Google Meet nous permet aussi d'avoir des échanges en ligne entièrement à l'oral, avec l'appui de sous-titres autogénérés efficaces, sans nécessiter la présence des interprètes d'Auteure 2.

### *Les évaluations*

Dans nos cours, les évaluations de compréhension orale étaient celles qui nécessitaient le plus d'ajustements pour Auteure 2. Auteure 2 ayant souhaité apprendre et pratiquer la lecture labiale en FLS, nous avons adapté les évaluations de compréhension orale autour de cet objectif. Lorsque l'évaluation portait sur un document audio ou vidéo, nous programmions une évaluation alternative où la professeure lisait le script du document à voix haute, dans son bureau, devant l'étudiante pour que celle-ci puisse lire sur ses lèvres et répondre aux questions de compréhension. Cette technique a bien fonctionné et a permis à l'étudiante de réussir toutes ses évaluations de compréhension orale sur le même contenu que ses pairs, sans avoir recours à des supports écrits. Cela nous a permis de maintenir l'intégrité du cours et de l'évaluation, tout en aidant Auteure 2 à développer sa capacité à lire sur les lèvres en français, stratégie à laquelle elle pourrait avoir recours pour pouvoir comprendre des communications orales dans la vie quotidienne en français. Il est important de rappeler que si le document exploité pour l'évaluation ne comprenait pas de transcription, c'était à l'enseignante de la rédiger au préalable, pour pouvoir ensuite la lire à l'étudiante. C'était également à

l'enseignante de trouver un créneau horaire alternatif en dehors du temps de cours pour faciliter cette évaluation individuelle pour l'étudiante.

Auteure 2 note que la lecture labiale n'est cependant pas toujours évidente. Elle dépend de l'articulation, du débit de parole et de la présence ou non de bruit de fond ou d'interlocuteurs supplémentaires. Dans le contexte de la pandémie de Covid-19, le port du masque représentait un défi additionnel pour les ESM qui comptaient sur la lecture labiale. Pour contourner ces défis éventuels, Auteure 1 s'est assurée de développer une articulation soignée et de ralentir son débit de parole suffisamment pour qu'Auteure 2 puisse suivre, tout en maintenant un rythme et une vitesse authentiques pour des locuteurs du français. Lorsque le port du masque était obligatoire ou recommandé, les masques équipés d'une fenêtre transparente pour ne pas masquer les lèvres se sont avérés essentiels pour Auteure 2.

Auteure 2 rappelle cependant que tous les ESM ne s'intéressent pas forcément à développer leurs compétences en lecture labiale et que celle-ci n'est pas une solution parfaite pour remplacer la compréhension orale en français. Beaucoup de sons consonantiques, comme le /k/, sont articulés dans le fond de la bouche plutôt que sur les lèvres tandis que l'articulation d'autres sons ont des images labiales identiques, comme les sons /m/, /p/ et /b/. Étant étudiante en linguistique et maîtrisant déjà l'alphabet phonétique international, Auteure 2 est consciente de ces problématiques liées à la prononciation et à la position de la bouche, de la langue et des lèvres dans la production de sons. C'est ce qui lui permet également de s'exprimer oralement malgré sa Surdit . Ce n'est cependant pas le cas de tous les ESM. Dans le cas d'un ESM qui ne pourrait pas remplacer la compréhension orale par la lecture labiale et qui ne pourrait pas du tout entendre, m me avec l'utilisation d'appareils auditifs, l' valuation de la compr hension orale sera impossible sans avoir recours   un interpr te ou   un support  crit.

En ce qui concerne l'interaction orale avec les pairs, les m mes strat gies que celles d velopp es en cours  taient utilis es lors des  valuations. Auteure 2  tait plac e dans un groupe plus petit, pour laisser   chacun le temps de s'exprimer lentement et de marquer des pauses dans la conversation tout en ayant suffisamment de temps pour compl ter la t che. La pr sence des interpr tes restait cependant essentielle dans ce contexte pour assurer la compr hension du discours des pairs. Les autres  tudiants  tant eux-m mes en situation d' valuation et apprenants du FLS,

l'ESM ne pouvait pas toujours compter sur leur capacité à articuler et à ajuster suffisamment leur débit oral pour faciliter la lecture labiale.

Les évaluations de compréhension et de production écrite ont toujours été plus faciles pour Auteure 2 qui indique apprécier la grammaire et la lecture. Elle rappelle cependant que sa langue première est une langue orale, l'anglais. Les activités reposant sur la compréhension et la production écrite pourraient être plus complexes pour un ESM dont la langue maternelle serait une langue signée.

## CONCLUSION

Le tableau peint par notre étude de cas montre que de nombreux progrès restent à faire afin de garantir aux ESM un apprentissage optimal en cours de langue orale et qu'il existe un besoin pressant de générer davantage de ressources pour accompagner les institutions et les éducateurs dans cette tâche. Malgré la garantie légale et théorique que les personnes en situation de handicap peuvent bénéficier des accommodations qui leur sont nécessaires en milieu scolaire et postsecondaire au Canada, un grand nombre d'entre elles continuent de rencontrer des difficultés majeures. Les ressources humaines, financières et logistiques ne sont pas toujours suffisantes pour assurer un accompagnement efficace des ESM, particulièrement dans le contexte de cours de langue orale étrangère.

Notre étude de cas présente quelques pistes pédagogiques et stratégiques qui ont porté leurs fruits sur une période de trois années de collaboration dans plusieurs cours de FLS. Nous avons souhaité partager cette expérience pour combler un manque dans la recherche existante sur la pédagogie inclusive et l'accompagnement des ESM à l'université et pour permettre à d'autres enseignants d'adapter leurs approches d'enseignement.

Il est important de rappeler les limites de notre étude. Ce travail autoethnographique collaboratif est fondé sur notre expérience spécifique. Bien que notre analyse phénoménologique des données ait été menée en suivant un protocole rigoureux, notre interprétation des résultats demeure associée à nos idéologies. L'efficacité de notre dispositif pédagogique est confirmée par le fait qu'Auteure 2 a excellé dans tous les cours qui ont fait l'objet de cette étude de cas. À l'inverse, elle a déclaré avoir vu sa performance académique diminuer et avoir même dû abandonner d'autres cours de français et de linguistique dans lesquels elle était inscrite

durant ces trois années universitaires, en raison d'un manque d'accommodations proposées dans ceux-ci. Cependant, bien que les stratégies développées dans cette étude aient été efficaces pour Auteure 2, les besoins des ESM varient et, malgré la mise en place d'une pédagogie inclusive, des ajustements au cas par cas resteront nécessaires.

Enfin, comme cette étude l'a démontré, il en est souvent de la responsabilité de l'enseignant de combler de nombreux fossés afin de pouvoir mieux accompagner les ESM en cours de langue orale (prendre en considération les différences culturelles, penser des évaluations alternatives, les faire passer en dehors du temps de cours, générer des transcriptions, faciliter le travail des interprètes, fournir les documents de cours à l'avance et respecter une structure préétablie, etc.). En sensibilisant les éducateurs sur l'importance de ces accommodations et en leur offrant des pistes pour les mettre en œuvre, nous espérons contribuer à généraliser l'éducation inclusive et socialement juste en milieu universitaire.

## NOTES

1. Le S majuscule est employé pour faire la distinction entre la culture des Sourds et l'altération de l'acuité auditive.

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# DIRECT AND INDIRECT RELEVANT KNOWLEDGE: STRATEGIES FOR HANDLING DIVERSITY AND UNITY IN TEACHER EDUCATION

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**ABSTRACT.** This article examines the Norwegian curriculum through neoconservative and neoliberal perspectives, arguing that it represents a confusing hybrid of the two. It proposes two ways to address such hybrids: first, by rethinking the role of knowledge for teaching, and second, by revisiting key *Bildung* concepts. These concepts shed light on fundamental pedagogical challenges concerning (a) the relationship between formal and material learning and (b) the formation of value categories, such as autonomy and responsibility. The article concludes by emphasizing a crucial distinction in teacher education when guiding future teachers: the difference between indirectly and directly relevant knowledge and skills. Without a clear understanding of relevance, teacher education risks failing in its core mission.

## CONNAISSANCES DIRECTEMENT ET INDIRECTEMENT PERTINENTES : STRATÉGIES POUR GÉRER LA DIVERSITÉ ET L'UNITÉ DANS LA FORMATION DES ENSEIGNANTS

**RÉSUMÉ.** Cet article examine le curriculum norvégien à travers des perspectives néoconservatrices et néolibérales, en soutenant qu'il représente un hybride déconcertant des deux. Il propose deux façons d'aborder de tels hybrides : en repensant le rôle du savoir dans l'enseignement et en revisitant des concepts clés de la *Bildung*. Ces concepts éclairent des défis pédagogiques fondamentaux concernant (a) la relation entre l'apprentissage formel et matériel et (b) la formation de catégories de valeurs, telles que l'autonomie. L'article souligne une distinction cruciale dans la formation des enseignants lorsqu'il s'agit de guider les futurs enseignants : la différence entre les connaissances et compétences indirectement et directement pertinentes. Sans une compréhension claire de la pertinence, la formation des enseignants risque d'échouer dans sa mission fondamentale.

## I. THE CHALLENGE OF DIVERSITY AND THE PARADOX OF FREEDOM

The common question to discuss in this special issue of the journal is how teachers “can respond to and resist growing neoliberal and neoconservative orientations.” A possible answer to this question takes me to educational theories first articulated in the wake of the Enlightenment and the later modern quest for liberation from tradition and social class. This *Bildung* pedagogy incorporates ideas that still elucidate and advocate possibilities for handling both diversity and unity in democratic education. Diversity in this context is understood in a broad sense, but my examples are taken from religious and cultural diversity. Moreover, references in the article to teaching and teachers refer to primary and secondary level teachers. As will be shown, the proponents of this educational approach discovered and tried to find ways to solve the paradox of freedom and the dilemmas it created for teachers by telling someone to be autonomous. This approach, the *Bildung*, or comprehensive education ideal, contends that there is no knowledge per se, it always comes with questions of autonomy and responsibility (see Klafki, 1964; von Oettingen, 2001). I shall argue that, although our present religious and cultural diversity in Norway and elsewhere in Scandinavia is relatively new, we do not need to invent new educational principles to meet plurality, we only need to re-apply old ones in new contexts. My suggestion is centred on the distinction between what I have called “encyclic” and “encyclopaedic” principles, that is, between a comprehensive (encyclic) and all-encompassing (encyclopaedic) curriculum. This leads me to a rejection of Dewey’s model for teacher education concerning the relationship between theory and practice – a rejection based on a proposition by Lee Shulman – and finally to my own solution based on the distinction between direct and indirect relevant knowledge for teaching practice.

My contribution first engages in a textual analysis of the present Norwegian national curriculum for the primary and secondary school levels with the purpose of locating possible models related to neoliberal and neoconservative orientations. As will be argued, it is not possible to see the Norwegian curriculum as either neoconservative or neoliberal, but therein also lies the problem that must be solved theoretically, as the national curriculum for primary and secondary schools frames and also entails teacher practices, and as such the hybrid is key to a problem teacher education must confront. How the curriculum is understood and practiced, and what its end results are, are questions beyond the scope of this study. Secondly, I shall present a general guide to knowledge

presentation: There are both direct and indirect relevant knowledge and skills to guide future teachers in these matters.

## **2. NEOCONSERVATIVE AND NEOLIBERAL MARKS ON THE NORWEGIAN CURRICULUM**

The current curriculum (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020) was introduced in 2020 as a renewal reform.<sup>1</sup> The preparatory work started in 2013 and resulted in a series of white papers, the first one published in 2014 (Ludvigsen, 2014, 2015). The initial discussions and plans for the new curriculum were explicitly based on neoliberal standards, particularly seen in the stress on formal learning principles such as deep learning, social and emotional competences, self-regulation, and meta-cognition (see Hilt et al., 2019, 2022). These ideas were imported from global institutions such as the OECD, UNESCO, the EU, and also the Partnership for 21st Century Skills. Several scholars believe that the new curriculum brought in principles that represent a clear break with the former educational policies in Norway (Hilt et al., 2019, 2022). Prior to its implementation, there were also earlier signals of a change from the previous curriculum principles, not only in Norway, but in all the Nordic countries. Imsen et al. (2017) even used the word “undermining” of the Nordic values by “new technologies” in this connection, with “technology” referring generally to all kinds of organizational instruments:

It is argued that the Nordic model still exists as the predominant system for the large majority of Scandinavian children at a national level, but that a number of new technologies aiming to increase the efficiency of teaching and learning are gradually undermining the main values of the Nordic model. (p. 568)

There are similar discussions about this instrumentalization of educational theories in other European countries at the moment. One important example comes from Germany, where leading university professors wrote a manifesto against neoliberal reform plans (see Anders et al., 2023). In Norway, Hilt and Riese (2022) demonstrated how these principles were discussed during the process of public curriculum consultations, and how the guiding principles were altered in the political deliberations. The discussions, leading up to the present national curriculum, did not alter the marks of instrumentalization, but instead added new ones in line with the *Bildung* traditions. The result is a hybrid of two types of educational theories, as pointed out by Hilt and Riese, linked to either neoliberal or neoconservative ideologies. Initially then, the present curriculum does not seem to be dominated by any of these ideologies, a fact that turns out to

be important for the operationalization and practices of the curriculum in the classrooms, and its double character of being both liberal and conservative is therefore also of interest, for schools and teacher education.

In the general part of the curriculum, the core curriculum, the Norwegian word for formative development or *Bildung*, *danning*, is used extensively to describe the educational aim of the schools (Government of Norway, 2019). The *Bildung* ideal is seen in the broad scope of the curriculum, with 11 main school subjects covering almost all parts of human life in the modern world. The Norwegian main subjects are: religious education (RE), Norwegian, mathematics, science, English, other foreign language, social sciences, arts and crafts, music, food and health, and physical education. In the *Bildung* tradition, 12 areas of society and culture of interest for schools are defined:

1. the body and physical education
2. crafts and technology
3. social life
4. the musical-aesthetic life,
5. language, literature, and cultural knowledge
6. history and politics
7. trade (economics and geographical knowledge)
8. mathematics and natural science
9. biology (life on earth)
10. philosophy and life knowledge
11. social ethics and morality
12. religion and threat

In various forms, this structure is universal for all societies and cultures.

(Klafki, 1975, p. 332, own translation)

The RE subject (knowledge of Christianity, religions, secular life, and orientations and ethics [KRLE]) is of special interest when it comes to a discussion of how to handle diversity and unity generally, as diversity is mostly connected to different religious or non-religious group identities (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). On the one hand, the RE subject is clearly neoconservative in that the curriculum refers to traditional theories, values, and practices: “Education and training shall be based on fundamental values in Christian and humanist heritage and traditions” (Government of Norway, 2019, p. 3). On the

other hand, the role of historical knowledge is generally downplayed (see Rasmussen, 2020), the notion of “world religions” from the previous curriculum being totally omitted, indicating a more neoliberal than neoconservative approach. The articulations of very specific learning outcomes for every school subject in the curriculum (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020) may also be regarded as neoliberal if implemented to ensure and measure competences, but *Bildung* ideas of independence are also obviously present in the learning outcomes of autonomy and responsibility, in Norway called “general competences” (see Shulman’s, 2004, term in the book *The Wisdom of Practice*). This articulation is of a more conservative stance. However, it is questionable to call these outcomes “competences,” as if they were to confirm moral characters and virtues. Nevertheless, being in close connection with a development of knowledge and skills, as in the European Qualification Framework (Europass, 2023), the category of autonomy and responsibility reflects genuine *Bildung* ideas. The three categories (knowledge, skills, and general competences) form a tripartite unity, also adopted in the description of learning outcomes in the Norwegian national curriculum. Thus, *Bildung* is seen as a theoretical, valuational, and practical aspect of knowledge and skills, and cannot be isolated from them.

The renewal of the former curriculum may also be characterized as a *value promotion reform* (*verdiløft* in Norwegian, see Karseth et al., 2020, p. 31). For instance, the general part of the curriculum is heavily marked by the necessity of values guiding education. The general values are “respect for human dignity and nature, freedom of thought, charity, forgiveness, equality and solidarity” (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020, para. 1.3; see also the *Education Act*, Government of Norway, 2014). However, “value” is not a word used in the RE plan in the curriculum apart from a quote in the general part, and the word for *Bildung*, “danning,” is not used at all in connection to this school subject – perhaps the core school subject for the teaching of values. This lack of value and *Bildung* language reflects a clear neoliberal approach in this school subject curriculum. On the other hand, the fact that there is an RE subject at all, with a strong focus on Christian beliefs and practices, is a neoconservative mark. Apart from the introduction to the curriculum, no other religions are mentioned apart from Christianity, a further indication of the neoconservative inclination. Traces of neoconservative ideology are obvious with the weight on values and cultural heritage, and with a compulsory RE subject and its stress on Christian beliefs and

practices, while traces of neoliberal ideology are particularly seen in the formal aims for “21st century skills” and competence.

A complete scrutiny of the national curriculum and the RE plan is not necessary to see the ambiguities involved. A general report on the curriculum revealed that teachers like the new curriculum because it is less detailed and generally value-based, and as such adds more personal responsibility to the teachers, not only for teaching methods, but also for content (Burner et al., 2023). These examples suffice to demonstrate the general claim that the curriculum is a hybrid text, as Hilt and others have concluded (see Hilt et al., 2019; Riese et al., 2020). What is of further importance in this connection are the consequences for the understanding of teaching by schoolteachers, and teacher educators and their students alike, with the frames that the curriculum constitutes. As a hybrid text, there are two tendencies with almost conflicting interests, a neoliberal and a neoconservative one, and for that reason it may be seen as ambiguous and confused in this regard. Teachers and teacher educators have to find a way to understand and handle this ambiguity in one way or another. There is another *Bildung* concept that seems to be forgotten, which might help them: the *categorical* thinking in teaching practice. Nonetheless, as will be shown, there are also severe challenges in appropriating this pedagogical solution to our problems with the hybrid national curriculum.

### 3. CATEGORICAL THINKING AS SOLUTION

In Germany in the 1950s, Wolfgang Klafki, who developed the critical-constructive *Bildung* theory, argued that teachers must be teaching what he called “elementary” in their presentation of subjects, referring to the basic elements in each field of knowledge, as this is essential for understanding the topic (see Klafki, 1964, and in English, 1995). In addition, they must also aim for more general knowledge and values in fundamental or existential ways for the student. This is the core idea in categorical *Bildung* theory, the “double opening” of students: Teachers must be able to critically open the world for students, and students for the world (see core contributions of Klafki, 1975, 1976, 1993, 2002). Klafki also employed and developed further theoretical concepts that made it possible to differentiate between formal and material *Bildung*. Twenty-first century skills and neoliberal ideologies were already present at the time of Klafki’s articulation of the idea, but certainly present were also formal learning theories (e.g., “learn to learn”). He saw school essentialism and the attention to some classical literature as a form of material *Bildung*.

When comparing these categorical Bildung theories of Klafki and the above analysis of the national curriculum of Norway, a certain parallel way of thinking emerges. Klafki combined the formal and material Bildung concept in a critical-constructive and categorical theory of education. The perceived ambiguity in the national curriculum of Norway may in fact be understood as a similar combination, almost by chance, and most probably unknowingly for the authors.

The distinction between encyclic and encyclopaedic curriculum principles also represent two types that can be used to explain the perceived ambiguities in accordance with the Klafkian double opening. An *encyclic* education is a comprehensive way of dealing with schooling, as it covers all the main societal areas as explained above. I understand *encyclopaedic* education as all-encompassing, and there is a tradition in Norway for this type of encyclopaedic curricula. However, in earlier curricula, descriptions of the school subjects were not phrased as learning outcomes, but rather teachers' topics one should consider teaching, with the chosen subjects being dependent on what the pupils already knew and understood (see Ministry of Education and Research, 1996). Being completely encyclopaedic is of course not possible with a competence-based curriculum that includes specific learning outcomes. There is one way to solve the problem of topic overload while at the same time being encyclic and Bildung oriented: create autonomy and responsibility by using categorical-based strategies. By using the categorical principle, the educator also sees the pupil or student as a human with integrity needing formative development in all main areas of a modern society. Although broad, it is not encyclopaedic. In one way, encyclic education is also all-encompassing, but the selection of topics is thought to be conscious and aimed at the development of critical thinking. The categorical teaching theory by Klafki (1964, 1975) highlights the dilemmas that the paradox of freedom creates, and no teaching can dissolve the paradox completely. It is a way of acting that is ethically justifiable, as some kind of cohesion is always necessary, but it should be minimal. It also demonstrates a way of handling the ambiguity and lessening the confusion created by a curriculum that combines neoliberal and neoconservative ideologies.

However, conclusions like these do not give much specific advice for teaching methods and actions. The problem is that in a plan to establish or constitute categories in a learning situation, one can never be sure of the end result. Specific plans for action and plans that involve the constitution of categories among one's own students or pupils are similar to plans for action in general in at least one respect: They are necessarily anonymous until completed (a "factum"), as Alfred Schütz, one of the first

followers of the father of phenomenology Edmund Husserl, pointed out in his action theory, the theory of relevance (Schütz, 1970, 1971; see Berger & Luckmann, 1967, who transferred these theories to a sociology of knowledge). There are several insights that can be drawn from this relevance theory for education, as well as the proto-theories of phenomenology in general (see Fuglseth 2015, 2020, 2023). In the remaining part, I shall discuss some insights that may be gained from this for teacher education generally. These suggestions are meant to guide how teacher education may prepare students for the constitution of values, a core priority in a diverse society. It brings me to a discussion of Dewey's (1904) model for teacher education, and to a new theory that emerges from it regarding the difference between directly and indirectly relevant knowledge – two types of knowledge and skills that teacher education should let their students meet and engage with.

#### 4. TRAINING FOR PRACTICE IN TEACHER EDUCATION

John Dewey's theories are often used as a starting point for discussions of theory versus practice (academic practice versus workplace practice) in teacher education in Norway and elsewhere (e.g., Eikseth & Nilsen, 2004; Shulman, 1998; Sætra, 2018). The point for John Dewey (1904) was that in teacher education one should not use the method found in the apprentice approach (i.e., through imitation) but rather a more scientific or exploratory point of view. There is a difference between teaching as technique and teaching as art, between the master-apprentice model and the laboratory or research-based model: "Practice work is, as far as it goes, of the nature of apprenticeship" (Dewey, 1904, p. 9).

Dewey (1904) pointed out that "the laboratory point of view" is oriented long-term "to supply the intellectual method and material of good workmanship, instead of making on the spot, as it were, an efficient workman" (p. 10). Dewey can be said to have been a supporter of research-based education. He emphasized that both models must be included in professional education. However, here, Dewey, known for the slogan "learning by doing," defended his opinion on the organization of teacher education in the United States, at that time only recently established, that it initially be theoretical. As Shulman (1998) has pointed out, Dewey used other vocational education to support this view, particularly from medicine and medical education in the Flexner model. The model assumed that practice learning could preserve unwanted practices, so a scientific basis for actions had to be introduced and practice adjusted according to accepted scientific beliefs. Thus, medical training needed to be a theoretical study first, and then students would be allowed to try their

hand at medical practice. Dewey wanted this model to be the template for teacher education as well, but Shulman has argued that it would discourage the medical practice schools common in the United States at the time of Dewey. Today, Shulman believes that the trend has turned against the Flexner model, as it has become more common in medical training to use early practice and problem-based learning.

Today's Norwegian teacher education mostly follows Dewey's research model for professional teacher training, with a combination of the apprenticeship model with practical training, and the research model with research-based teaching. For example, as an argument against those who want even more practice in education today, Sætra (2018) has argued that Dewey's model is still relevant, and that a new teacher will fare better in everyday practice with a strong epistemological basis. In a mixed model, it will be possible to see how theories about teaching and school subjects on one side, and the experiences that students gain in practice on the other, can support each other.

A key objection on Shulman's (1998) part was that Dewey was too strongly influenced by the medical education model, in which students had to learn from scientific theories in the form of objective explanations. The idea that one can learn from practice experiences was less appreciated. When Dewey transferred this model to teacher training, he took on a similar theoretical bias. However, as Shulman argued, this strategy is not that simple when it comes to educational research on school practices. In his critique, Shulman contended that we should expand the list of what is needed in a profession, in addition to the knowledge and skills that teacher educators and students engage with.

One strategy that combines learning from grounded theories and practical experience is problem-based learning, with the use of examples or cases. The case method loosens up the theory-practice problem by allowing us to link theories with practice experiences, ideas with experience, and norms with possibilities. In the face of a situated example from practice, the novice is given the opportunity to combine theory and practice where there are many choices, but where one can make only one of them (Shulman, 1998).

Still, there is an argument by Dewey that Shulman did not capture, and that I think proves to be essential for an understanding of teacher education, and in particular for handling categorical training. Dewey (1904) presented a notion of the teacher-student encounter that I think is fruitful for our discussion. He pointed to an important insight when he distinguished between "the immediate aim" and "the ultimate aim" as

expressions of what teachers encounter (pp. 9–11). Dewey believed that knowledge and insight into scientific theory also have a long-term effect on student teachers, allowing them to become students of teaching, rather than just good practitioners. The point is that when we ask what a teacher needs to learn to become a good teacher, we need to think beyond the first day of work and the first year of work.

Biesta (2013) launched a similar model of short-term and long-term goals in the book *The Beautiful Risk of Education*. He first points out a basic feature of teaching as relational – that the teacher is always in a social relationship. Although trivial, it becomes his starting point for a theory about how the overall and long-term goals of teacher practice govern or orient what happens in the situation. It is in the individual meetings with the child that the overall objectives can be concretely expressed. According to Biesta (2013), these meetings are based on three areas that govern, or should govern, what happens in schools: “qualification, socialization and subjectification” (p. 4). The areas are always moving and floating in some way. It is a conception of the end result that determines what is highlighted, communicated, and then constituted. The teacher must steer in the direction that these concepts represent, to use a naval metaphor. We can also understand this as a classic hermeneutic problem between the parts and the whole.

This requires a form of balancing different considerations, Biesta (2013) believed. Biesta’s theory is a theory of what is going on in the situation: It should always be seen against certain overarching aims, although this is not just a descriptive theory. Biesta claimed to have found a relationship pattern in all learning situations, and it is therefore prescriptive as well. The balancing adapts according to what the situation requires. This insight is based on a certain amount of judgement to which no evidence-based research can provide answers. The neo-Aristotelean word for discretion or tact, *phronesis*, links Biesta’s approach to *Bildung* theories of education.

Shulman (1986, 1987) also presented theories on teaching and teacher education that evolve in a similar *Bildung* direction, and as with Biesta, perhaps unknowingly. Actually, his theories on content analysis (see Shulman, 2004) go very well with the German–Scandinavian *Bildung* tradition. He operates with a similar distinction to Biesta, with three types of teacher knowledge, which can also be characterized as short- and long-term categories:

1. Propositional knowledge: evidence, claims
2. Experiential knowledge: previous knowledge / cases, experience
3. Strategic knowledge: pragmatism, prudence, tact, with possible combinations of 1 and 2

Such categories analyze what de facto teacher knowledge can be transferred to a more general level, to a theory of direct and indirect relevance of knowledge and skills in teacher education, or in fact any professional training.

## **5. DIRECT AND INDIRECT RELEVANCE IN TEACHER EDUCATION FOR SCHOOL TEACHING**

What remains valuable of Dewey's model of teacher education is the relationship between immediate and ultimate aims, a view that we may further develop for the sake of our understanding of the role of education for specific professions such as teacher education. These are two aspects of professional practice that school education usually covers. Generally, researchers of social interaction, such as in a classroom situation, cannot understand the meaning of actions by only observing what is happening in one situation. An interpretive approach requires insight into both of these synchronous, and also diachronic, cultural features that are given concrete, conscious, and unconscious expression in conversation and interaction (see Knoblauch, 2020; Tuma et al., 2013). It is important for the researcher to pay attention to the cultural traits also. The constitution of meaning in social situations or all encounters, regardless of whether they are social or not, is therefore to be seen as the result of two different movements, vertically (synchronously, culturally) and horizontally (diachronically, sequentially). The cultural or synchronous aspects of an encounter are seen as background and express global values, while the diachronic aspects are foreground and are focal (see Fuglseth, 2012). This can also be portrayed as the difference between a core with an inner and outer horizon in the philosophical-phenomenological theorizing of Edmund Husserl (see Fuglseth, 2017a, 2017b).

The method and also the theory or perspective that govern this interpretive approach are parallel to what Biesta maintained in his model of the encounter between teacher and student. The difference between what is described here as constitutive of meaning in social situations in general and in the teaching profession, is that school teaching has global aims, often expressed as values and as Bildung-based. Teaching by definition has direction; it is intentional. If the teacher does not see or know the direction that they are able to use as a compass, a place of

orientation, actions in the situation easily become randomly chosen. This forms the natural starting point for creating theories of action for professional practice in general, which in turn has consequences for the educational practice of these professions.

In the encounter with the student, the teacher faces two movements that one must handle at the same time. These are what we shall call synchronous and diachronic. The synchronous in this case is not only cultural, but also value-laden and intentional. In Norwegian schools, there are certain basic values that the teacher is obliged to follow. It is not only about professional ethical requirements or demands, but also about legally binding aims, for example, that the teaching must promote “democracies, gender equality and scientific thinking” (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020, para. 1.3). In an intentional model, one can imagine that the synchronous aspects of the situation form the background that the teacher uses to respond to the student. Consequently, this is a condition for the teacher's general ability to respond to what is going on in the foreground, and that develops dialogically in the situation in sequential steps, on the basis of certain overarching values and cultural traits. We can call this a balancing model, since teachers must balance overarching objectives (wholeness), which must be made real in individual situations (parts). With such a balance model, we have a general theory of action about intentional actions, such as those in which teachers always are placed.

The essential point in this context is to maintain that what students encounter during vocational education will always be something they can either directly or indirectly use in professional work. Likewise, we can talk about the direct and indirect use of previous experience, “the stock of knowledge,” to use a term from Alfred Schütz (e.g., Schütz & Luckmann, 1973, p. 99). They represent two kinds of relevance of theories and practices during education. Theories and practices in teacher education that students later need for indirect use, such as a general knowledge of school history, the educational act, a school's purpose, or psychological theories of a child's development, are no less important than direct relevant knowledge and skills, such as teaching methods and the school subject itself. Within a school subject there will also be theories of different relevance. In this context, it is not the degree of relevance that is interesting, but instead the type of relevance – direct or indirect.

## 6. CATEGORICAL VALUE-BASED TEACHING FOR DIVERSITY AND UNITY

I argued above that the Norwegian national curriculum is strangely ambiguous when it comes to neoliberal and neoconservative tendencies, and it therefore stands out as hybrid. This is particularly noticeable in the RE subject, and it has historical explanations. Formal learning theories (e.g., 21st-century skills) on one side, and more material and value-based aims on the other, were combined during the political and academic discussions. The result appears in a way that is easily seen as confusing for practicing teachers. However, as I argued above, this is perhaps not such a serious matter in practice. The resulting ambiguity and confusion find a solution when seen in the light of *Bildung* theories, in particular the categorical theory from Wolfgang Klafki – a theory that I would like to promote in the present situation for the sake of managing challenges in schools related to diversity among students. Schools and school subjects must, firstly, be all-encompassing (encyclopaedic) to prepare students and pupils for their lives in a democratic society, but also encyclical (comprehensive) in a categorical way to open the world for the student and the student for the world, to gain the necessary understanding for diversity, but also for a unity among diversity. All training for becoming a primary and secondary level teacher should then also move along two lines: what is of direct and of indirect relevance for the practice of teaching for that type of categorical teaching strategy. This is perhaps the only way that student teachers may be made aware of the dilemmas facing them, and the excellent solutions that the *Bildung* theory may offer. The teaching of values, as prescribed in the Norwegian national curriculum (such as “respect for human dignity and nature, on intellectual freedom, charity, forgiveness, equality and solidarity,” in Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020, para. 1.3) may be understood in accordance with this categorical strategy.

The relevance in the two types of knowledge, skills, and practice that I have highlighted, indirect and direct use, is or should be high, and its relevance for teaching clearly understood by the students. In order to achieve an understanding of relevance, teacher educators should at least be able to explain the difference for their students and what the relevance is of each subject or learning activity. Theories and skills with little or no relevance for teaching practice, whether directly or indirectly, should be able to be sorted out and used as a basis for setting priorities. The perceived relevance for students is often associated with the direct benefits, which is unfortunate, both for their assessment of their education and for their ability to respond as teachers.

## NOTES

1. *Læreplan etter Kunnskapsløftet* (curriculum according to the renewal reform of knowledge), referred to as “LK20.”

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# LES EFFETS DE LA LOI SUR LA LAÏCITE DE L'ÉTAT (LOI 21) SUR LES FUTURS ENSEIGNANTS ET LE PERSONNEL DES FACULTÉS D'ÉDUCATION DANS LES UNIVERSITÉS QUÉBÉCOISES\*

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**RÉSUMÉ.** Cet article présente les résultats d'une enquête menée auprès de 972 répondants sur les effets de la Loi 21 sur le personnel et les personnes étudiantes des départements d'éducation du Québec au cours de sa première année d'application. L'enquête montre un traitement négatif accordé aux futurs enseignants durant leurs stages, un accroissement des conflits dans les interactions en classe à l'université ainsi que des effets négatifs sur le bien-être et la réussite scolaire des étudiants. Les répercussions discriminatoires liées à la Loi 21 touchent de manière disproportionnée les femmes, étudiantes de premier cycle, les personnes issues de l'immigration et celles appartenant à une minorité religieuse. Le personnel des programmes de formation est également affecté par l'adoption de mesures préventives.

## THE EFFECTS OF THE ACT RESPECTING THE LAICITY OF THE STATE (BILL 21) ON FUTURE TEACHERS AND STAFF IN EDUCATION DEPARTMENTS AT QUEBEC UNIVERSITIES

**ABSTRACT.** This article presents the results of a survey of 972 respondents on the effects of Bill 21 on staff and students in Quebec's education faculties and departments during its first year of implementation. The survey shows negative and discriminatory treatment of future teachers during teaching internships, increased polarization and conflict in classroom interactions at the university level, and negative effects on students' well-being and academic and professional success. As well, discriminatory situations or repercussions related to Bill 21 disproportionately affect women, undergraduate students, immigrants, and members of religious minorities. More broadly, however, it affects all

staff involved in teacher training programs at Quebec universities, who have had to adopt measures in response to Bill 21 to prevent discrimination.

Comme dans de nombreuses sociétés, une série de débats polarisants concernant la neutralité religieuse de l'État a enflammé le Québec depuis 2006, année où l'enjeu des accommodements raisonnables se transforme en crise et donne naissance à la *Commission de consultation sur les pratiques d'accommodement reliées aux différences culturelles* (ou commission Bouchard-Taylor, 2007). C'est dans ce contexte tendu, marqué par l'attentat de janvier 2017 à la mosquée de Québec, que le gouvernement du Québec fait adopter, en juin 2019, la *Loi sur la laïcité de l'État* (Loi 21)<sup>1</sup>.

Cette Loi se situe entre les recommandations du rapport Bouchard-Taylor sur les accommodements raisonnables (2008) et celles de la « charte des valeurs » de 2013-2014 du Parti Québécois. Elle reprend la recommandation du rapport Bouchard-Taylor d'interdire le port de signes religieux à certains employé·e·s de l'État « en position d'autorité coercitive » dans l'exercice de leurs fonctions, comme les juges, les policier·ère·s et les gardien·ne·s de prison, mais ajoute à cette liste les enseignant·e·s, les directeur·rice·s et directeur·rice·s adjoint·e·s des établissements d'enseignement relevant d'un centre de services scolaire (CSS)<sup>2</sup> Pour adopter cette Loi, le gouvernement a eu recours à la clause dérogatoire à des fins « préventives »<sup>3</sup> clause qui permet à un gouvernement provincial de soustraire une loi à la Charte canadienne des droits et libertés. En 2018 et 2019, plusieurs syndicats et centres de services scolaires annoncent qu'ils ne vont pas appliquer la loi et déposent plusieurs recours judiciaires afin d'invalider la Loi, ou certaines dispositions. Depuis, le gouvernement de François Legault a élargi la Loi 21 en adoptant le Projet de loi no 94 en octobre 2025 (devenu la Loi 29), loi visant notamment à renforcer la laïcité dans le réseau de l'éducation et modifiant diverses dispositions législatives. Cette nouvelle loi élargit l'interdiction du port de signes religieux à l'ensemble du personnel des écoles et des centres de services scolaires. La loi impose la neutralité religieuse, exige le visage découvert et encadre strictement les accommodements, suscitant de vifs débats.

Bien que la Loi 21 ne s'applique pas aux futur·e·s enseignant·e·s en stage, mais aux personnes employées par les écoles, certains incidents ont tout de même été rapportés aux universités dès son adoption<sup>4</sup>. Certaines

universités ont pris rapidement des mesures pour prévenir, dénoncer ou gérer les discriminations réelles ou potentielles à l'égard de leurs étudiant·e·s/stagiaires en éducation. Nous avons donc décidé de mener une enquête par sondage en 2020 afin de saisir les effets de la Loi 21 dès la première année de son application, sur (et selon) les personnes qui travaillent ou étudient en éducation dans/avec les universités québécoises (Potvin et al., 2020). Le présent article expose les faits saillants de ce sondage quant aux représentations et pratiques de différents acteurs : superviseur·e·s de stage, enseignant·e·s associé·e·s qui reçoivent les stagiaires dans leur classe, étudiant·e·s de premier cycle et des cycles supérieurs dans un programme universitaire de formation à l'enseignement, professeur·e·s, chargé·e·s de cours en éducation, employé·e·s administratif·ve·s et cadres. Adoptant une approche de sociologie du droit, l'article montre comment les répondants à notre enquête ont subi, appliqué et interprété la Loi 21 dans leur milieu, et perçu des effets tangibles de la Loi. Au moment de l'enquête (2020), aucune étude ne s'était encore penchée sur les effets de la Loi 21 sur ces personnes.

L'article rappelle d'abord brièvement le contexte et l'opposition entre les différentes conceptions de la laïcité qui ont traversé les débats sur les signes religieux au Québec depuis 2006. Il situe ensuite les arguments du gouvernement Legault pour justifier l'adoption de la loi 21 et ceux d'observateurs critiquant son contenu, sa procédure d'adoption ou ses effets. Enfin, l'article expose l'approche et les concepts utilisés, puis les résultats du sondage et la discussion.

## MISE EN CONTEXTE DU DÉBAT

### *Les différentes conceptions de la laïcité dans les débats au Québec*

Les débats sur la neutralité religieuse de l'État prennent place au Québec à partir des années 1960, avec la montée d'un néonationalisme<sup>5</sup> de « libération nationale », progressiste et postcolonial, qui entretient un rapport difficile avec la religion catholique et avec le multiculturalisme canadien (Boily, 2012, p. 221). Ils se polarisent autour de la « diversité religieuse », surtout à partir du jugement de la Cour suprême sur le port du kirpan à l'école québécoise en mars 2006<sup>6</sup>, ouvrant un vaste débat sur les accommodements raisonnables, qui atteint son apogée en janvier 2007. Le 8 février, le Premier ministre du Québec de l'époque crée dans l'urgence la *Commission de consultation sur les pratiques reliées aux différences*

*culturelles* (commission Bouchard-Taylor) en plein début de campagne électorale, afin de freiner les discours populistes, qui favorisent alors l'Action démocratique du Québec (ADQ). Plus qu'un débat juridique sur l'accommodement raisonnable, la commission va amorcer un débat sociétal élargi sur les enjeux de diversité ethnoculturelle et religieuse au sein de la société québécoise (Boily, 2012), notamment en consultant les citoyens lors d'une tournée à travers le Québec, diffusée en direct à la télé. L'accommodement raisonnable sera vite transformé en « problème de société » et le débat hypermédiatisé, en « crise identitaire » et en « panique morale », faisant place à des discours d'opinion racistes de plus en plus banalisés et décomplexés dans l'espace public (Potvin, 2008, 2018).

Un autre « événement focalisateur » (Bilodeau et Turgeon, 2023) ranime le débat en 2013-2014 : le Projet de Loi 60 (PL60), appelé « Charte des valeurs québécoises »<sup>7</sup> (2013-2014), proposé par le gouvernement du Parti Québécois. S'emparant de la question pour la politiser à son avantage, le gouvernement transforme le PL60 en enjeu électoral, mais perd le pouvoir en 2014, car cette charte divise la population. Un sondage Léger Marketing du 16 septembre 2013 montre que 43 % des Québécois appuient alors la Charte, tandis que 42 % s'y opposent (Dagenais, 2017). L'élément le plus controversé était l'interdiction, à tout le personnel de l'État, de porter des « signes religieux facilement visibles et ayant un caractère démonstratif » (PL60).

Ces débats ont opposé (et opposent toujours) trois conceptions différentes de la laïcité et du rôle de l'État envers les religions depuis 2006 (McAndrew 2016), dont les arguments rejoignent ceux habituellement invoqués en faveur ou contre le port de symboles religieux dans plusieurs pays (Howard, 2019) : a) une conception « traditionaliste » ; b) une laïcité « ouverte » ; c) une laïcité stricte.

a) Les tenants d'une conception « traditionaliste » et conservatrice souhaitent favoriser « les paramètres culturels de la majorité » et la préservation du patrimoine en raison de la trajectoire historique des francophones et de sa position de « majorité fragile » ou minoritaire (par ex. conserver le crucifix à l'Assemblée nationale) (McAndrew, 2016). Cette conception a pris de l'ampleur au fil des débats, donnant naissance à différents groupes ultranationalistes.

b) Les « pluralistes » favorisent une conception de la laïcité « ouverte » et estiment que la neutralité de l'État est un principe qui assure à la fois une séparation de l'Église et de l'État et la liberté de conscience et de religion

des citoyens. L'État n'impose aucune option politique, philosophique ou religieuse à ses citoyens, ne favorise aucune religion au sein de ses institutions, mais chaque individu est libre de porter des signes religieux et a le droit d'être traité de manière égale par l'État. C'est un modèle plus près du libéralisme classique, dans lequel l'État joue un rôle d'arbitre. Ainsi, la conception canadienne de la neutralité de l'État envers les religions, les législations et la jurisprudence en matière de droits et libertés constituent des balises suffisantes, selon eux.

S'inscrivant dans ce courant, le rapport Bouchard-Taylor (B-T) ajoute l'idée du « pluralisme intégrateur », un concept qui réfère à l'interculturalisme québécois (Boily, 2012), et qui reprend les piliers de l'*Énoncé de politique en matière d'immigration et d'intégration* de 1990 du ministère des Communautés Culturelles et de l'Immigration :

... l'interculturalisme québécois a) institue le français comme langue commune des rapports interculturels ; b) cultive une orientation pluraliste, soucieuse de la protection des droits ; c) préserve la nécessaire tension créatrice entre, d'une part, la diversité et, d'autre part, la continuité du noyau francophone et le lien social ; d) met un accent particulier sur l'intégration et la participation ; et e) préconise la pratique des interactions (Bouchard et Taylor, 2008, p.121).

En 2010, plus de 150 intellectuels signent un manifeste (Bosset et al., 2010) qui s'inscrit dans la lignée des conclusions du rapport B-T. Ce manifeste, médiatisé dans *Le Devoir* (2010), s'alarme des deux tendances « rigides », l'une laïque et l'autre conservatrice, qui demandent aux minorités de se plier à la majorité (Boily, 2012). Les auteurs adoptent une « position pluraliste », « ni relativiste, ni chartiste » (Bosset et al., 2010), qui permet aux membres des minorités de participer activement à la société québécoise sans la fragmenter, rappelant, comme le rapport B-T, que le pluralisme doit favoriser l'intégration à travers les relations interculturelles plutôt que le repli identitaire.

c) La conception laïque stricte, ou le *modèle républicain* préconise d'étendre la neutralité de l'État et des institutions à tous les travailleurs et usagers des services publics. En réponse aux « pluralistes », des intellectuels de ce courant signent aussi un manifeste (Baril et Rocher, 2010) et font paraître une lettre dans *Le Devoir*, dans laquelle ils écrivent :

La laïcité permet de gérer le pluralisme social sans que la majorité, qui en fait aussi partie, renonce à ses choix légitimes et sans brimer la liberté de religion de quiconque. Loin d'être une négation du pluralisme, la laïcité en est l'essentielle condition. Elle est la seule voie d'un traitement égal et juste de toutes les convictions parce qu'elle n'en favorise ni n'en « accommode » aucune, pas plus l'athéisme que la foi religieuse. Le pluralisme ainsi entendu n'est ni celui des minorités ni celui de la majorité. Elle est aussi une condition essentielle à l'égalité entre hommes et femmes (Baril et al., 2010).

Selon eux, une société pluraliste, donc respectueuse de toutes les convictions religieuses, nécessite une totale neutralité de l'État et de ses institutions à l'égard des convictions, alors que la laïcité ouverte serait une négation de la laïcité de l'État puisqu'elle permet des accommodements. L'exemple de l'État républicain français viendrait confirmer que l'intégration survient quand l'État s'assure que les représentations religieuses sont reléguées à la sphère privée. Selon les auteurs, cette conception stricte de la laïcité serait inscrite dans l'histoire du Québec et ne serait donc pas une simple « réaction défensive face aux minorités issues de l'immigration récente. La déconfessionnalisation des institutions publiques s'est faite au nom de la liberté de conscience et du pluralisme » et marque les acquis du Québec moderne (Baril et al., 2010). La laïcité de l'État, un socle de la démocratie, contribuerait selon eux au vivre-ensemble dans une société pluraliste et au développement de l'identité nationale.

### *Les arguments pour légitimer la Loi 21*

#### *La voix de la « majorité »*

Le gouvernement Legault a tenté d'articuler ces trois conceptions de la laïcité avec la Loi 21, en se positionnant entre le rapport de Bouchard-Taylor et la « chartre et non chartre des valeurs québécoises ». Ainsi, en mars 2019, le Premier ministre s'adresse à la nation, en s'appuyant sur des éléments de l'histoire québécoise pour légitimer son projet de loi (PL21) : « Au Québec, ça fait longtemps qu'on a décidé de séparer la religion de l'État et ça fait plus de 10 ans qu'on débat des signes religieux. Il est temps de fixer des règles, parce qu'au Québec, c'est comme ça qu'on vit » (Bouchard, 2022; Ruel-Manseau, 2019)<sup>8</sup>. S'appuyant sur des sondages, il affirme que la « majorité des Québécois » est en faveur de la laïcité. La voix de la « majorité » vient ainsi normaliser l'acceptabilité de la Loi. Cette majorité jugée favorable constituerait le « véritable » Québec qui endosse nos valeurs (Bouchard, 2022). Il trace ainsi les limites de la discussion tout

en polarisant le débat, car cette « manière de vivre ici » ne fait pas consensus. L'analyse d'un sondage mené en 2019 (Meunier et Legault-Leclair, 2021) montre que cette « majorité » favorable à la Loi 21 se compose surtout de Québécois·es francophones qui s'identifient comme catholiques, qui sont âgé·e·s de plus de 35 ans (notamment les plus de 55 ans), qui vivent dans des régions moins diversifiées et qui n'interagissent pas avec les membres de différentes minorités religieuses. Une autre enquête sur les impacts de la Loi 21 menée par Léger et Métropolis (Taylor 2022) corrobore ces résultats : les Québécois ayant peu de contacts avec les membres de minorités religieuses perçoivent les religions et leurs symboles le long d'une courbe ascendante de négativité, allant du christianisme au judaïsme, au sikhisme et à l'islam, la moins bien perçue. Cette hiérarchie de négativité est amplifiée chez les fervents partisans de la Loi 21. Les écarts importants entre partisans et opposants à la Loi 21 indiquent un lien de causalité entre les opinions négatives sur les symboles non chrétiens et le soutien à la Loi 21.

Les sondages post-électorales 2015, 2018, 2019, 2022 de Vox Pop Labs montrent aussi que cette « majorité des Québécois » varie d'un sondage à l'autre au fil du temps (Breton, 2024). Si la recommandation de Bouchard-Taylor d'interdire les signes religieux aux juges, policiers et gardiens de prison ralliait 72 % de l'opinion publique en 2019, ils étaient seulement 57 % en 2022. Pour l'interdiction des signes religieux aux enseignant·e·s d'écoles publiques, l'opinion publique est très divisée :

Une courte majorité de 54 % souhaitait voir le hijab interdit pour les enseignantes des écoles publiques en 2019, mais c'est la seule des quatre années pour laquelle cette option rallie une majorité. Pour 2022, l'année la plus récente, ce n'est que 44 % qui appuient une telle interdiction. Notons que l'adoption de la loi 21 en juin 2019 ne semble pas avoir augmenté ni même stabilisé l'appui dans la population. (Breton, 2024)

Le Premier ministre Legault soutient que puisque la « majorité » est d'accord, il a utilisé la clause dérogatoire (Ruel-Manseau, 2019) et a eu recours au « bâillon »<sup>9</sup>, modifiant aussi la Charte québécoise des droits<sup>10</sup> sans délibérations, ni consensus des partis. Cette façon de procéder fera polémique et objet de recours judiciaires. Le 20 avril 2021, le juge Blanchard de la Cour supérieure a rendu un jugement<sup>11</sup> qui critique fermement le choix du législateur québécois de recourir à la clause dérogatoire :

[al. 768][...] la Loi 21 constitue le premier texte législatif qui déroge simultanément aux articles 1 à 38 de la Charte québécoise et 2 et 7 à 15 de la Charte canadienne. Donc, on ne peut que constater qu'en agissant ainsi, le constituant suspend, à l'égard de la Loi 21, presque l'ensemble des droits et libertés dans la province de Québec. Peu importe la perspective que l'on entretient face à la Loi 21, il faut souligner qu'il ne s'agit pas là d'une mince affaire, bien au contraire. Voilà pourquoi le Tribunal évoquait plus haut une certaine banalisation et indifférence quant à la portée réelle de l'exercice de dérogation [...].

Mais en mars 2024, la Cour d'appel du Québec confirme la constitutionnalité de la loi sur presque tous les aspects. Le gouvernement Legault affirme : « La Cour vient de confirmer le droit du Québec de prendre ses propres décisions. C'est vraiment une belle victoire pour la nation québécoise » (cité dans Marin, 2024). Il était donc légitime, selon lui, d'utiliser la clause dérogatoire. Selon Louis-Philippe Lampron, le gouvernement tente ainsi de minimiser « le fait qu'il suspend des droits fondamentaux » et qu'il donne aux élus le pouvoir de déterminer les « limites acceptables aux droits fondamentaux » (cité dans Sérébrin, 2024). Pour Benoit Pelletier (*Le Devoir*, 5 mars 2024), « [c]e jugement laisse par ailleurs en plan pour une bonne part la question de savoir quel sens il convient de donner à la laïcité de l'État et quelle interprétation il y a lieu de donner à la liberté de conscience et de religion de nos jours ». Dia Dabby (2020) avait déjà souligné que :

[L]'article 2 de la loi 21 offre des principes, plutôt qu'une définition de la laïcité, et met dans un même panier la séparation de l'État et de la religion, la neutralité religieuse de celui-ci, l'égalité citoyenne et, enfin, la liberté de conscience et de religion [...] L'absence d'une définition contraignante nous laisse avec une liste d'épicerie d'éléments profondément contradictoires [...] et] rend la notion de la laïcité, ainsi que sa force contraignante, plus difficile à justifier dans le cadre d'un argumentaire juridique. (p. 244)

### *Empêcher la radicalisation identitaire*

Un autre argument évoqué par le Premier ministre est la crainte d'une radicalisation identitaire dans la population, qualifiant même la Loi 21 de « rempart » contre l'extrême droite et les « dérapages » (Lebeuf, 2019). Dans un contexte encore marqué par l'attaque à la mosquée de Québec en 2017, et la présence accrue de groupes extrémistes dans l'espace public, il

souligne à maintes reprises que l'islam ne serait pas visé par la loi, qui serait « neutre ». Or, certains sondages indiquent que ceux-celles qui appuient fortement la loi 21 ne sont pas neutres : dans l'enquête de Taylor (2022), 75 % des partisans de la loi 21 avaient une opinion négative de l'islam, 66 % du sikhisme, 49 % du judaïsme et 36,5 % du christianisme.

Plusieurs reprochent au gouvernement Legault d'occulter l'effet de racialisation et de discrimination intersectionnelle de la Loi (Dabby, 2020 ; Jones et al., 2019 ; Lampron, 2020), alors qu'au cours des débats sur les signes religieux, certaines minorités religieuses ciblées ont été construites comme « problème » pour la majorité et objets d'un néoracisme (Potvin, 2008)<sup>12</sup>. Le néoracisme repose sur l'idée que le racisme est chose du passé, qu'il se manifeste essentiellement sous forme d'actes rares et isolés, par des comportements pathologiques d'individus malades, ou par des violences extrêmes, invisibilisant ainsi les rapports inégaux de pouvoir, qui perdurent sous des formes systémiques. Il se veut « respectable » et « démocratique », et se déploie dans des discours sociaux qui définissent la société comme postraciale et défendent les valeurs de la nation (Potvin, 2017). Selon Romani (2020), l'emploi d'arguments tels que : la majorité des Québécois-es soutient cette loi, donc elle-il-s ne peuvent pas tou-te-s être racistes ; cette loi n'est pas raciste, car elle vise tous les signes religieux ; la religion n'est pas une race, témoignerait de ce néoracisme *Color Blind*, qui nie la racialisation du marqueur religieux.

## CADRE CONCEPTUEL

Notre enquête s'appuie sur une approche de sociologie du droit, qui s'intéresse aux effets des normes ou des lois sur les attitudes, les comportements et les changements sociaux, ainsi qu'aux influences des valeurs sociales ou des idéologies sur le droit (Bernheim, 2013). Le droit étant un discours prescriptif, les cadres normatifs imprègnent l'expérience des acteurs et régulent les rapports sociaux et le contrôle social qui les sous-tendent. Les objets de la sociologie du droit concernent toutes sortes d'actes, d'activités de communications et d'interactions en lien avec le droit, qui font des acteurs et de leurs attributs des éléments centraux : leurs attentes, attitudes et opinions relatives aux normes juridiques, leurs connaissances de ces normes, leur application, interprétation, usage et leurs effets ou conséquences.

Plusieurs chercheurs dans le champ des études sur la conscience du droit (*Legal Consciousness Studies*) définissent le rapport au droit des individus

comme le produit d'une socialisation, d'interactions au quotidien et de constructions sociales, et analysent l'expérience concrète des acteurs envers le système légal, plutôt que le système lui-même. C'est sous cet angle que nous avons cherché à comprendre, à partir d'un court questionnaire, les effets de la Loi 21 sur (et selon) les répondants qui étudient ou travaillent dans (ou avec) les facultés d'éducation des universités québécoises. L'objectif était de saisir leurs représentations de la Loi, quant à son application et à ses effets.

Nous avons notamment demandé aux participants s'ils avaient subi ou été témoins de traitements négatifs ou discriminatoires. Nous reprenons les concepts de discrimination directe et indirecte, d'accommodement raisonnable, puis de discrimination systémique, balisés par la jurisprudence canadienne en matière de droit à l'égalité. La discrimination directe consiste en un *traitement différentiel et inéquitable* d'individus, de façon ouverte et avouée (intentionnelle), en raison de leur appartenance à un groupe, selon l'un des 14 motifs prohibés par les chartes. Une violation des droits peut aussi découler d'une discrimination indirecte, qui se définit par ses *effets préjudiciables* sur une catégorie de personnes, et ce, sans intention de discriminer. Ainsi, l'application uniforme d'une norme, d'une politique, d'une règle ou d'une pratique, d'apparence neutre, peut avoir pour effet de produire une inégalité entre deux groupes (Bosset, 2021). Pour contrer ces effets, les juges ont créé l'obligation d'accommodement raisonnable<sup>13</sup>. Enfin, la discrimination systémique, terme consacré par la Cour suprême en 1987<sup>14</sup>, combine la discrimination directe et indirecte. C'est « une situation d'inégalité cumulative et dynamique résultant de l'interaction de pratiques, de décisions ou de comportements, individuels ou institutionnels, ayant des effets préjudiciables, voulus ou non » (Chicha-Pontbriand, 1989, p. 85), qui créent un effet circulaire de discrimination pour certains groupes.

Selon plusieurs juristes (Dabby, 2020 ; Jones et al., 2019 ; Lampron, 2020), la Loi 21 est en contradiction avec plusieurs principes des chartes des droits, mais ses effets iraient au-delà :

Les dommages encourus par l'adoption de la loi 21 et les multiples recours juridiques qu'elle suscite seront bien plus que pécuniaires en nature ; on peut craindre qu'ils abimeront profondément le tissu social. Nous pourrions nous interroger [...] sur les effets potentiellement néfastes de cette loi sur la discrimination, les relations intercommunautaires et les tensions grandissantes autour des identités

religieuses et ethniques dans un contexte de mondialisation, ainsi que sur les effets à long terme d'une telle loi sur la santé mentale juvénile et l'ajustement social des individus appartenant aux groupes visés. (Dabby, 2020, p. 253)

Examinons maintenant ce qu'en pensent les répondant·e·s à notre enquête.

## MÉTHODOLOGIE DU SONDAGE ET PROFIL DES PARTICIPANT·E·S

Le questionnaire en ligne sur la plateforme LimeSurvey a été administré en français et en anglais, et envoyé pour diffusion aux directions des facultés et départements offrant des programmes de formation à l'enseignement dans les 12 universités québécoises. Il a été administré entre février et avril 2020, soit la première année suivant l'adoption de la Loi 21. Seules les données des questionnaires entièrement complétés (n = 972 sur 1875 questionnaires enregistrés) ont été conservées pour l'analyse. Ces données ont fait l'objet d'une analyse descriptive (fréquence et pourcentage). Les réponses aux questions ouvertes ont été analysées à l'aide du logiciel QDA Miner et à partir de catégories inductives<sup>15</sup>.

Sur les 972 participant·e·s, 914 (94,0 %) ont rempli le sondage en français et 58 (6,0 %) en anglais. Les superviseur·e·s de stage ou enseignant·e·s associé·e·s (26,0 %) et les étudiant·e·s de premier cycle (27,8 %) représentent plus de la moitié des répondant·e·s, suivi·e·s des étudiant·e·s des cycles supérieurs (15,7 %), des professeur·e·s (15,3 %), des chargé·e·s de cours (12,7 %), des employé·e·s administratif·ve·s (1,5%) et des cadres scolaires (0,9 %). Trois fois plus de femmes (74,0 %) que d'hommes (25,5 %) ont rempli le sondage. Plus de la moitié des participant·e·s avaient entre 18 et 29 ans (26,3 %) et entre 40 à 49 ans (27,9 %). La majorité (78,7 %) avait le français comme langue maternelle et 72,3 % étaient non-immigrant·e·s. Un peu plus d'un·e participant·e sur dix (11,9 %) appartenait à une minorité visible ou religieuse. Un peu plus de 60 % provenaient de trois universités : l'Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) (31,6 %), l'Université de Sherbrooke (22,2 %) et l'Université de Montréal (10,1 %).

Le questionnaire comprenait cinq parties, avec des questions fermées (échelle de Likert) et ouvertes, destinées aux exemples ou commentaires des répondants. Outre les questions sociodémographiques, les questions pour les employé·e·s visaient à savoir si des stagiaires en éducation

rapportaient avoir vécu un traitement négatif ou discriminatoire depuis l'adoption de la Loi 21 ou, pour les étudiant·e·s, s'ils·elles avaient été victimes ou témoins, dans le cadre de leurs études, de tels traitements. D'autres questions demandaient aux personnes si, depuis l'adoption de la Loi 21, elles avaient assisté à des échanges plus conflictuels en classe, entendu des propos préjudiciables ou remarqué des effets négatifs sur les relations, entre les acteurs (entre l'université et les écoles, entre étudiant·e·s, entre les étudiant·e·s, l'université ou les écoles). Enfin, d'autres questions portaient sur les actions posées par leur université. Ces questions sont exposées dans l'analyse ci-après, avec les commentaires intégraux aux questions ouvertes<sup>16</sup>.

## ANALYSE DES RÉSULTATS DU SONDAGE

Les résultats montrent la présence de situations problématiques reliées à l'adoption de la Loi 21.

### *Traitements négatifs ou discriminatoires envers des stagiaires*

Sur les 549 employé·e·s, seul·e·s 36 (6,6 % des employés) ont déclaré que des stagiaires de leur université ont rapporté avoir subi des formes de traitement négatif ou discriminatoire liées à l'adoption de la Loi 21. Il s'agissait principalement des cadres (doyens, vice-doyens) (33,3 % oui) et des membres du personnel administratif et de soutien (13,3 % oui), surtout aux Universités McGill (50,0 %), du Québec en Outaouais (UQO) (16,0 %) et du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue (UQAT) (10,0 %).

Chez les 423 étudiant·e·s, 70 (16,5 % des étudiants) ont répondu avoir été victimes ou témoins de formes de traitement négatif ou discriminatoire en lien avec la Loi 21, soit une personne sur six. Les étudiant·e·s ont donc vécu ou observé davantage de tels traitements que les employé·e·s. Cette proportion est plus élevée chez les étudiant·e·s de premier cycle (19,6 %) - qui font des stages obligatoires - que des cycles supérieurs (11,1 %), surtout aux Universités Concordia (41,4 %), de Montréal (28,6 %) et UQAM (26,5 %). Les personnes de genre féminin (19,6 % et 7,1 % pour le genre masculin), issues de l'immigration de première génération (36,3 %) ou de deuxième génération (30,8 % contre 8,7 % pour les non-immigrant·e·s), ayant une autre langue maternelle que le français (anglais 37,5 %) et appartenant à une minorité visible et/ou religieuse (39,2 % contre 11,3 %), rapportent davantage de tels traitements.

Parmi les 47 commentaires et exemples recueillis auprès des employé·e·s – surtout des superviseur·e·s de stage ou enseignant·e·s associé·e·s et des professeur·e·s (82,9 %) – les traitements discriminatoires cités concernent le plus souvent des propos et des gestes négatifs, des effets sur la réussite et l'insertion professionnelle, des attitudes et regards, des effets sur les droits et libertés et des effets psychologiques. Les gestes discriminatoires auraient surtout été posés par du personnel des écoles, à différentes étapes du stage (entrevue, évaluation), et ce, même si les étudiant·e·s-stagiaires ne sont pas des employé·e·s des CSS et ne sont pas soumis·e·s à la Loi. Voici quelques situations décrites aux questions ouvertes :

« Certains maîtres associés leur font des remarques dévalorisantes devant les élèves, à tort » ;

« Le refus de certaines commissions scolaires d'accueillir des stagiaires portant des signes religieux, sous prétexte qu'ils ne seront pas « embauchables » ;

« Des commentaires préjudiciables de la part de membres du personnel durant le stage (exprimaient ouvertement leur appui de la loi devant la stagiaire en lui faisant des commentaires, alors qu'elle était en position vulnérable, parce qu'en formation) » ;

« Regards inappropriés chargés de haine » ;

« Interdiction de réaliser leur stage pour les femmes qui refusent de retirer leur voile » ;

« Stagiaire voilée se faisant demander si elle compte enlever son voile » ;

« Stagiaire rapporte que son enseignante associée a justifié son échec au stage par le port du voile » ;

« Beaucoup de propos d'islamophobie directe et indirecte. ».

Les étudiants·e·s ont écrit 70 exemples en commentaires, décrivant des traitements négatifs ou discriminatoires dont ils·elles auraient été témoins ou victimes. Ils·elles font état de gestes et propos stigmatisants, d'effets sur

les droits et libertés, d'attitudes et regards suspicieux ou haineux, d'effets psychologiques ou d'effets sur la réussite ou l'intégration professionnelle, d'intimidation horizontale par d'autres étudiant·e·s et de discriminations par des personnes en situation d'autorité, comme des refus de stage et des questions insistantes sur leur intention de porter le voile. Voici quelques exemples :

« Des propos haineux provenant d'enseignants associés ou de superviseur·e·s de stage, tels que : *“Go back to your country. We don't want people like you here”* » ;

« On ne veut pas une enseignante qui convertit nos jeunes » ;

« Nous ne sommes pas à l'Halloween, nous ne voulons pas des femmes en costume au travail » ;

« Des exclusions d'équipes de travail, par leurs collègues ou par leurs professeur.es » ;

« J'ai vu et entendu des enseignant·e·s discuter de manière très péjorative (ne voudraient pas de stagiaire voilée, propos islamophobes). Les gens ont tendance à dire que les personnes devraient simplement retirer le signe religieux, alors que cela est discriminatoire et va à l'encontre des valeurs des personnes ciblées ».

Ces comportements se répercuteraient sur la réussite et l'intégration professionnelle des stagiaires. Certain·e·s auraient échoué un stage, d'autres auraient été déplacé·e·s dans un autre milieu de stage par l'université. Des étudiantes auraient été forcées d'enlever leur voile pour conserver leur place de stage. D'autres encore auraient abandonné leur programme en raison de leur impossibilité présente ou future de porter un signe religieux. Des commentaires dénoncent des cas d'exclusion des listes de suppléance dans les écoles, ou font état de sentiments de dévalorisation, d'infériorité, d'anxiété, de détresse et de découragement chez les étudiant·e·s ciblé·e·s.

### *Des effets polarisants et des échanges conflictuels en classe*

Chez les employé·e·s et les étudiant·e·s confondu·e·s, 88 (9,1 %), soit environ un·e participant·e sur 11, ont déclaré avoir assisté à des échanges conflictuels en classe depuis l'adoption de la Loi. La proportion de réponses affirmatives la plus élevée est observée chez les étudiant·e·s de premier cycle (16,3 %), suivie des professeur·e·s (8,1 %), surtout aux Universités McGill (35,7 %), Concordia (28,6 %), Laval (15,8 %) et du Québec à Montréal (12,7 %).

Au total, 68 situations conflictuelles ont été décrites, surtout par des étudiant·e·s (n=50), des superviseur·e·s et enseignant·e·s associé·e·s (n=11) et des professeur·e·s et chargé·e·s de cours (n=7). Les exemples des répondants font état de propos polarisants, de gestes d'intimidation à teneur islamophobe provenant d'autres étudiant·e·s ou d'enseignant·e·s universitaires et d'autocensure, tels que : « Lors des débats en classe, les étudiant·e·s ayant de fortes opinions sur la Loi 21 s'en prenaient aux filles voilées du groupe (t'en penses quoi, toi ?). » ; « Étudiant qui fait plusieurs propos racistes en essayant de supporter la Loi 21 » ; ou encore « Les enseignants évitent souvent le sujet en n'en parlant aucunement dans les cours ».

Certain·e·s mentionnent aussi des attitudes négatives lors d'évènements ou de rencontres administratives :

« Des étudiant·e·s regardant leurs pairs avec des regards haineux et intolérants lors d'un match de football » ;

« En rencontre prétrimestrielle, la personne à la direction refuse d'échanger sur la Loi 21 en prétextant l'absence de problème à ce sujet dans l'université concernée ».

Ou encore des effets d'ordre psychologique :

« Durant un cours universitaire, une étudiante portant le hijab a pleuré durant une de ses interventions. Nous discutons de la Loi 21 et elle s'est ouverte en expliquant qu'elle doit toujours faire le double d'efforts et qu'elle part à reculons dans une école, tout simplement à cause de son hijab ».

Une personne note de l'isolement et un climat malsain :

« J'ai observé de l'isolement et de l'inconfort. Ce n'était pas des paroles que j'ai entendues, mais j'ai observé une moins bonne intégration des étudiantes portant le voile dans la dynamique de la classe ».

Des collègues discutant de la Loi 21 dans le salon du personnel tenant des propos tels que : « On est au Québec ici, l'éducation doit être laïque... », « Ce genre de chose-là n'a pas sa place dans les écoles... », « Elles ont juste à enlever leur voile si elles veulent garder leur emploi, c'est pas compliqué, me semble ! » Et ce, sans se soucier si des personnes portant un voile (ou autre signe) étaient dans la pièce, ce qui crée inévitablement un climat malsain (et violent pour les personnes de minorités religieuses portant un quelconque signe) entre les collègues d'une même école.

### ***Effets négatifs sur les relations sociales et professionnelles***

Parmi les employé·e·s, 25 (4,6 %) ont déclaré avoir remarqué des effets négatifs associés à la Loi 21 sur les relations entre les membres du personnel de leur université. Les commentaires reçus, surtout de professeur·e·s, chargé·e·s de cours (n=14) et de superviseur·e·s ou enseignant·e·s associé·e·s (n=9), font état de tensions polarisantes (« tensions ouvertes entre les personnes d'opinions différentes, insultes, désolidarisation ») et d'interactions négatives. Voici quelques exemples :

« Des propos discriminatoires ont été émis par des collègues en faveur de la Loi 21, entre autres, lors d'une rencontre au niveau de la faculté qui portait sur la résolution à émettre afin de protéger les stagiaires. » ;

« Une professeure disant que porter un foulard est une preuve de manque d'acceptation de la culture d'ici » ;

« Les propos visent essentiellement le voile et l'employabilité... je travaillais au Service d'orientation et d'information scolaire, certains considèrent les musulmans comme malhonnêtes, prêts à déjouer le système ».

Plusieurs commentaires mentionnent aussi des effets découlant du climat, dont des effets psychologiques pour les victimes : sentiment d'injustice et d'être déshumanisé·e·s, peur des conséquences découlant de l'affirmation de ses croyances, auto-exclusion.

Par ailleurs, 23 (4,2 %) employé·e·s ont remarqué des effets négatifs sur les relations entre le personnel de l'université et les milieux de stages. Les commentaires proviennent surtout des professeur·e·s (n=11) et des superviseur·e·s et enseignant·e·s associé·e·s (n=10). Ils mentionnent par exemple un « malaise dans le salon du personnel lors de discussions » et des propos violents dans les interactions avec des parents, comme : « Parents qui manquent de respect et crient » ; « Propos islamophobes de la part de parents d'élèves et des élèves eux-mêmes » ; « Parent qui déclare à propos d'une stagiaire voilée : " J'veux pas la voilée ! " ».

Parmi les étudiant·e·s, 57 (13,5 %) ont remarqué des effets négatifs associés à la Loi 21 sur les relations entre les étudiant·e·s et le personnel de leur université ou des milieux scolaires. Les commentaires, surtout émis par les étudiant·e·s du premier cycle (n=49), font état de « conflits verbaux » aux effets négatifs sur les relations. Les étudiant·e·s constatent une légitimation des discours fondés sur des préjugés racistes de la part de parents, d'enseignant·e·s, de superviseur·e·s, ayant des effets négatifs sur le climat social ou professionnel. Voici des exemples de situations décrites :

« Pour avoir fait des remplacements dans les écoles secondaires, j'ai remarqué que les personnes (profs, parents) racistes et islamophobes sont beaucoup plus à l'aise d'affirmer leurs propos dénigrants et irrespectueux et de remettre en question les compétences des femmes portant un foulard. »

« Certains parents demandent maintenant à l'école que leur enfant ne soit pas avec un enseignant ou une enseignante en particulier parce qu'il ou elle porte un symbole religieux. C'est très négatif, puisque les parents montrent à leurs enfants que c'est "correct de ne pas aimer une certaine religion", même si on vit dans une société où il existe différentes croyances. Ça affecte aussi la relation entre les stagiaires et leur enseignant associé, parce que si, par exemple, le stagiaire porte un symbole religieux et que l'enseignant associé est en faveur de la loi 21, la relation risque de ne pas bien

fonctionner. » [traduction libre; voir l'original en anglais dans les notes]\*\*

« Quand j'ai fait part à mon professeur des problèmes que la loi occasionne à la minorité musulmane, celui-ci m'a invitée à reconsidérer mon projet d'études et à considérer l'éventualité de changer de province. »

### *Les actions posées par les universités*

Les commentaires des employé·e·s (n=53) et des étudiant·e·s (n=72) sur les actions posées par les universités se rejoignent sensiblement. Ils mentionnent des mesures pour soutenir les étudiant·e·s ou pour prévenir ou empêcher des situations discriminatoires, telles qu'une « résolution sur le placement des stagiaires avec symbole religieux dans un autre milieu de stage si elles vivaient des hostilités de la part d'un milieu de stage », ou une mesure d'« orientation des stagiaires vers des CSS qui n'appliquent pas la loi ».

Plusieurs des commentaires recueillis font aussi état d'une importante transmission d'informations sur les positions institutionnelles adoptées, surtout par l'Université McGill (21,4 %) et par l'UQAM (9,9 %) : « Aucun "repérage" d'étudiant.e n'est fait, et ne sera fait. Aucune information servant à exclure un.e étudiant.e ne sera transmise au CS » ; « Veiller à ce que les étudiants soient placés dans des écoles fiables, ce qui est effectivement discriminatoire » ; « The Internships and Student Affairs Office has indeed moved students partway through their placements due to discrimination at their original host schools » (Le Bureau des stages et des affaires étudiantes a effectivement déplacé des étudiants en cours de stage en raison de situations de discrimination dans leur école d'accueil initiale [traduction libre]) ; « Lettre envoyée au milieu scolaire » et « Lettre d'information sur le fait que la loi ne s'applique pas aux stagiaires ... » ; « Position et résolution du Conseil académique, du syndicat, des départements ou des facultés » ; « Directives à l'intention des superviseur·e·s afin qu'aucune indication servant à identifier un·e étudiant·e ne [soit] colligée ou transmise aux CSS » ; « Assurer aux étudiantes que l'UQAM était présente si elles se sentaient inconfortables en stage lors de l'introduction dans le programme. Que le bureau de la formation pratique pouvait les aider » ; « Signaler tous les gestes discriminatoires s'ils ont lieu ».

## DISCUSSION ET CONCLUSION

Notre sondage a permis de documenter des effets de discrimination directe et indirecte de la Loi 21 sur les personnes qui œuvrent et étudient au sein des facultés et départements d'éducation des universités québécoises, et ce, dès la première année d'application de la Loi. Les données aux questions fermées ou ouvertes font état :

- 1) de différents traitements négatifs ou discriminatoires subis par les stagiaires des programmes de premier cycle en enseignement, surtout les personnes musulmanes. Ces traitements auraient été plus fréquents, banalisés, décomplexés, voire légitimés après l'adoption de la Loi (alors que la loi ne s'applique pas aux stagiaires), et provenaient souvent de parents d'élèves et d'enseignants des milieux de stages ;
- 2) d'effets polarisants, d'échanges conflictuels en classe à l'université ou de propos qui auraient heurté des personnes en lien avec la Loi 21, voire des conflits ouverts dans certains cas ;
- 3) d'effets psychologiques, sur la réussite et l'intégration professionnelle, associés à la Loi 21, qui affectent les relations entre les différent.e.s acteur.rice.s. Les commentaires recueillis ont permis de détailler les formes d'interaction de nature conflictuelle, les effets de ces interactions, les postures de témoin ou de victime et les lieux des événements.

Les situations décrites par les participant.e.s révèlent la présence de problèmes éthiques, liés à la posture professionnelle de certain.e.s enseignant.e.s associé.e.s ou à la conduite de parents, qui se sont sentis légitimé.e.s de tenir des propos discriminatoires. Les situations décrites indiquent aussi que les personnes musulmanes ont été davantage visées et que, contrairement à ce qu'affirmait François Legault, c'est cette religion qui a été ciblée et l'objet de propos discriminatoires dans les milieux scolaires.

Les données montrent aussi que les situations problématiques ont affecté plusieurs catégories d'employés dans les universités, qui doivent soutenir les stagiaires et gérer les relations avec les écoles. Pour contrer ces répercussions, ils-elles ont dû appliquer rapidement des solutions, sans

balises et encadrements clairs, sans formation spécifique ou repères juridiques sur leur rôle et les recours possibles pour les étudiant·e·s.

La Loi aurait donné lieu à des décisions arbitraires dans les milieux éducatifs. L'absence de définition et de précisions quant à l'application de la Loi confère aux intervenants des milieux universitaires et scolaires une tâche interprétative, que montre la mise en œuvre variable de la Loi d'un contexte à l'autre. La loi aurait été appliquée à des stagiaires, qui n'y sont pas soumis·es, et un flou persiste lorsque des étudiant·e·s ont un double statut ; celui d'employé·e·s contractuel·le·s des écoles (qui font une pratique supervisée ou de la suppléance dans un CSS) et celui de stagiaires en formation, sous la responsabilité de leur université. Ces statuts peuvent s'enchaîner dans un court laps de temps lorsqu'un·e stagiaire accepte une suppléance pendant son stage. Ce phénomène s'est accru avec la pénurie d'enseignant·e·s des dernières années et lors de la pandémie de COVID 19.

Les universités ont parfois adopté des actions aux effets contradictoires, malgré leur objectif de protection des étudiant·e·s. Par exemple, déplacer un·e stagiaire pour la·le protéger d'un milieu de stage discriminant peut avoir des effets stigmatisants. Ces décisions ne règlent pas le problème à la source dans le milieu de stage, n'agissant pas sur les comportements, les attitudes ou les mesures adoptées. Le risque est un effet boule de neige, qui pourrait complexifier la recherche de milieux de stage sécuritaires. Comme en témoignent des expériences rapportées par les répondant·e·s, les personnes qui cumulent les facteurs de vulnérabilité ou des discriminations intersectionnelles peuvent ressentir davantage de rejet, de non-reconnaissance, d'injustice et de détresse qui accentuent l'isolement, mais aussi, potentiellement, le déficit d'appartenance et d'identification envers le Québec.

Nos données sont corroborées par d'autres sondages sur les effets de la Loi 21 aux résultats troublants. Le sondage de Elbourne et al. (2022) auprès de personnes étudiantes ou nouvellement diplômées en éducation et en droit au Québec montre que 56,5 % des personnes portant un symbole religieux déclarent avoir subi un traitement discriminatoire depuis l'adoption de la Loi 21. Ce nombre s'élève à 76,2 % chez les femmes portant le hijab. De plus, 69,5 % des participant·e·s se disent très ou assez susceptibles de chercher du travail à l'extérieur du Québec en raison de la Loi. L'enquête menée par Leger et Métropolis (Taylor, 2022) auprès des membres des communautés musulmane, sikhe et juive au Québec révèle

que les femmes, surtout musulmanes, ont connu une baisse drastique de leurs sentiments de sécurité, de liberté d'expression et d'appartenance envers le Québec depuis 2019. Ainsi, 73 % des femmes musulmanes, 85,7 % des femmes sikhes et 46 % des femmes juives ont fait état d'une baisse de leur sentiment de sécurité en public depuis 2019. Une majorité de répondants des trois communautés signalent une baisse de leur sentiment d'acceptation en tant que membres à part entière de la société québécoise, notamment chez les femmes musulmanes (82,9 %), ainsi qu'une détérioration de leur capacité à participer à la vie sociale et à la vie politique (femmes musulmanes : 63,9 %, femmes sikhes : 87,5 %), affectant leur sentiment d'appartenance. Ces répondants ont aussi relaté des interactions conflictuelles ou discriminatoires au travail, à l'école, dans les services publics, face aux autorités coercitives et dans la rue depuis 2019, comme le dénigrement de leur identité, les accusations de constituer une menace pour la société ou des propos odieux parfois accompagnés d'agressions physiques (crachats, arrachement d'un hijab) (Taylor, 2022). Bien que la loi 21 ait été présentée comme protégeant l'égalité des sexes, l'enquête de Taylor montre que les répondantes « québécoises » au sondage sont globalement moins favorables à la Loi que les hommes et sont plus conscientes de son potentiel discriminatoire à l'égard des femmes.

Pour leur part, Bilodeau et Turgeon (2023) ont analysé trois sondages (2012, 2014 et 2019) afin de mesurer les effets du Projet de Loi 60 (charte des valeurs) et de la Loi 21 sur le sentiment d'appartenance des personnes de minorités racisées au Québec. Ils concluent (2023, p. 368) que :

... les débats sur l'interdiction des symboles religieux à travers les propositions législatives qui ont pris place en 2014 et 2019 ont contribué à détériorer la relation des immigrants racisés avec la communauté politique québécoise, ou plus précisément ont contribué à creuser l'écart dans le sentiment d'appartenance à l'avantage du Canada.

Leur étude souligne qu'un déficit d'appartenance envers le Québec, qui était présent au début de leur enquête en 2012, n'est plus seulement circonscrit à certaines minorités (les non-chrétiens et les non francophones), mais qu'il s'est élargi à d'autres groupes entre 2012 à 2019, soit les non-religieux et les francophones, qui n'étaient pas directement touchés par les effets des législations proposées.

Ensemble, ces enquêtes soulignent des effets préjudiciables réels de la Loi 21, de manière directe (traitement différencié) et indirecte (effets sur tout un groupe découlent de décisions justifiées par la loi), dont des conséquences sur les sentiments d'appartenance et d'identification au Québec. Les enquêtes citées montrent que les membres des minorités religieuses trouvent la vie au Québec moins harmonieuse depuis l'adoption de la loi 21 (Taylor, 2022), notamment dans les milieux scolaires et les facultés d'éducation des universités (Elbourne et al., 2021 ; Potvin, et al., 2020).

[...] Pour ceux qui s'identifient comme musulmans, juifs et sikhs [l]es impacts négatifs [...] sont vastes, perturbateurs et profonds, atteignant des proportions systémiques qui sont tout sauf modérées concernant quatre dimensions importantes de la vie : 1. Acceptabilité et acceptation ; 2. Haine et sécurité ; 3. Citoyenneté ; 4. Épanouissement, bien-être et espoir pour l'avenir (Taylor, 2022, p. 10).

Par la Loi 21, François Legault disait vouloir clore le débat sur la laïcité, en réaffirmant la distinction et les « valeurs » de la nation québécoise et en atténuant les inquiétudes dans la population, mais il semble l'avoir fait au prix d'un déficit d'appartenance envers le Québec (Bilodeau et Turgeon, 2023). La loi envoie plutôt des messages contradictoires quant à la reconnaissance du « pluralisme intégrateur » dans la société et à l'école québécoises.

La nouvelle loi de 2025 (loi 29) vient ajouter de nouvelles barrières discriminatoires en emploi, à l'embauche et à la promotion, en interdisant le port de signes religieux pour l'ensemble du personnel de l'école. Elle vient aussi réduire davantage la portée des droits des enfants et du personnel dont la pratique religieuse minoritaire implique des congés à l'extérieur du calendrier civil. Une étude sur les impacts de cette nouvelle loi auprès du personnel s'avère donc essentielle.

## NOTES

- \* Une version différente de cette étude a été publiée en anglais: Potvin, Maryse, Low, Bronwen, Doré, Emmanuelle, Tremblay, Stéphanie, Lefrancois, David, Demers, Stéphanie (2024). Survey of the Effects of Law 21 on Students and Staff in Faculties of Education in Québec. *Journal of Canadian Studies*, Volume 58 (1), March 2024, pp. 52-77.

1. *Loi sur la laïcité de l'État*. RLRQ, c. L-0.3.  
<https://www.legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/fr/document/lc/L-0.3>
2. La Loi 21 prévoit que les personnes déjà en poste au moment de son adoption soient, à certaines conditions, dispensées de cette interdiction.
3. L'article 33 de la Charte canadienne des droits et libertés (appelé « clause dérogatoire ») permet à une loi ou à un acte d'un gouvernement d'être déclaré valide pendant 5 ans, même s'il contrevient à certains droits ou protections prévus à la Charte.
4. Dont le cas médiatisé d'une enseignante de Chelsea en Outaouais, en décembre 2021 (Morasse et Marquis, 2021).
5. Le néonationalisme est le nationalisme d'un groupe ayant été historiquement minoré, donc réduit à une situation de moindre pouvoir.
6. Le 2 mars 2006, après une longue saga judiciaire, la Cour suprême accorde à Gurbaj Singh Multani, un élève sikh orthodoxe qui fréquente une école secondaire publique, le droit de porter le kirpan à l'école sous certaines conditions strictes.
7. Le PL60 s'intitule *Charte affirmant les valeurs de laïcité et de neutralité religieuse de l'État ainsi que d'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes et encadrant les demandes d'accommodements*.
8. Le PL21 énonce de manière performative ces « caractéristiques propres de la nation québécoise », dans son Préambule : « CONSIDÉRANT que la nation québécoise a des caractéristiques propres, dont sa tradition civiliste, des valeurs sociales distinctes et un parcours historique spécifique l'ayant amenée à développer un attachement particulier à la laïcité de l'État ».
9. Au Québec, le « baïllon » ou la procédure d'exception à l'[Assemblée nationale](#) permet au [gouvernement](#) de modifier les règles relatives à l'adoption d'un projet de loi, notamment pour limiter le temps consacré au [débat](#) sur ce projet et accélérer son adoption.  
<https://www.assnat.qc.ca/fr/patrimoine/lexique/baillon.html>
10. La Charte québécoise sera modifiée pour y inscrire dans le préambule que le français est la seule langue officielle du Québec, la langue commune de la nation québécoise et la langue d'intégration à celle-ci, ainsi que l'importance que la nation accorde à la laïcité de l'État.
11. *Hak c. Procureur général du Québec*, 2021, paragr. 768.  
<https://rbdavocats.com/hak-c-procureur-general-du-quebec-loi-21/>
12. Le racisme est un processus de construction sociale de différences, réelles ou imaginaires, sous des formes « irréductibles » et dévalorisées, qui découle des rapports de pouvoir entre groupes et qui sert à justifier une infériorisation de

l'Autre pour légitimer une dominance, une exclusion ou une agression (Potvin, 2017).

13. Un accommodement raisonnable est l'adaptation de règles et de pratiques dans le but de « rétablir l'égalité dans une situation concrète et individualisée de discrimination » (Bosset, 2021, p. 261). Au Canada, il s'agit d'une obligation légale pour une organisation lorsqu'une norme générale, appliquée collectivement, a un impact préjudiciable sur l'exercice des droits et libertés d'une personne. Toutefois, l'accommodement ne doit pas créer de « contrainte excessive » pour l'organisation, que ce soit en termes de coût, d'efficacité, d'atteinte aux droits des autres personnes ou de sécurité.
14. Dans l'affaire *CN c. Canada* [Commission canadienne des droits de la personne]. (1987). 1 S.C.R. 1114. <https://scc-csc.lexum.com/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/6280/index.do>
15. Le rapport de l'enquête est disponible sur [ofde.uqam.ca](http://ofde.uqam.ca) (Potvin et al., 2020).
16. Nous avons repris les commentaires intégraux des répondant-e-s sans les modifier.
 

\*\* « Some parents are now requesting the school for their child not to be with a specific teacher because he/she wears a religious symbol. This is very negative since parents are showing to their kids that it's "okay to not like a certain type of religion" even when we live in a society where people have different faiths. It also affects the relationship between interns and their associate teacher because if the intern wears a religious symbol, for example, and the associate teacher is for Bill 21, they will not have a good relationship. »

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# TEACHER EDUCATION FOR AN INCLUSIVE SCHOOL SYSTEM: CONNECTING POLICY AND CLASSROOM PRACTICE

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**ABSTRACT.** This article examines how pre-service teachers are prepared to teach linguistically and culturally diverse learners. Document analysis examined the current policy framework in Iceland and provided an insight into how the policy is guiding praxis in teacher education. The findings reveal contrasting ideologies in education policies and measures in Iceland, as well as a missing link from theory to didactics in teacher education regarding teaching in diverse classrooms. To ensure equity in education, developing teacher knowledge and perspectives about diversity is crucial, as well as providing teachers with solid pedagogical tools. These enable them to practice inclusive pedagogy in multicultural and multilingual school environments where neoliberal and neoconservative voices have gained influence.

## FORMATION DES ENSEIGNANTS POUR UN SYSTÈME SCOLAIRE INCLUSIF : RELIER LES POLITIQUES ÉDUCATIVES À LA PRATIQUE EN CLASSE

**RÉSUMÉ.** Cet article examine comment les enseignants en formation initiale peuvent enseigner à des élèves issus de milieux linguistiques et culturels diversifiés. Une analyse de documents a examiné le cadre politique actuel en Islande et a fourni un aperçu de la manière dont ces politiques orientent la praxis dans la formation des enseignants. Les résultats révèlent des idéologies contrastées dans les politiques et les mesures éducatives en Islande, ainsi qu'un lien manquant entre la théorie et la didactique dans la formation des enseignants en ce qui concerne l'enseignement dans des classes diversifiées. Afin d'assurer l'équité en éducation, il est essentiel de développer les connaissances et les perspectives des enseignants concernant la diversité, ainsi que de leur fournir des outils pédagogiques solides.

In today's democratic multicultural societies, governments and institutions need to ensure the representation, contribution, and inclusion of people of multiple cultures and ethnicities. However, policymakers, as well as educators, are often influenced by popular, yet possibly conflicting, ideologies – such as social justice, neoliberalism, and neoconservatism – and they are forced to make sense of them in their professions (Biesta et al., 2015; Tabrizi, 2014). A key factor for ensuring that education facilitates and strengthens the creation of a cohesive, inclusive society is to address such ideologies critically. To this end, increased attention must be paid to teacher education given the reach and impact that teachers have in their day-to-day practice. Teacher education and the professional development of teachers have a crucial role in creating a foundation for enabling inclusivity, equality, and social justice in education for diversity (Goltsev et al., 2022).

The purpose of this article is to discuss the necessity to prepare pre-service teachers to work with learners from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The aim is to understand how the current educational policy in Iceland influences the structure of teacher education that prepares pre-service teachers to work with and educate multicultural and multilingual learners in inclusive school settings. Inclusive education is fundamentally grounded in the ideologies of social justice, democracy, human rights, and full participation of all (Black-Hawkins, 2017; UNESCO, 2020), and it is the official educational policy in Iceland.

Document analysis was applied to gain a deeper understanding of how the current policy framework in Iceland guides praxis in teacher education. The research question we aim to answer is: How does current educational policy in Iceland shape teacher education so that teachers are prepared to educate students with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds?

### ***The policy environment in Iceland***

The primary educational policy in Iceland centres on inclusion, a stance articulated in official policies since 2008. The Icelandic policy context for education is mainly influenced by policy developments in the neighbouring Scandinavian countries, but also international contracts and agreements that Iceland is a party to (such as the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* and the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*), as well as decrees of the European Council that have been incorporated into Icelandic law. Furthermore, the work of the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education has been influential in developing the policy framework for inclusive education in Iceland. However, the academics who research and write about the Icelandic school system are

heavily influenced by theories and ideas from Canada, the USA, and the UK due to many of them having been educated in these countries and due to the accessibility of research in English.

### ***Language diversity in Icelandic schools***

Iceland is categorized as a small nation-state, with just under 400,000 inhabitants. Historically, the country has been monocultural and monolingual with a homogenous population, but this has changed in the last 3 decades. Immigrants now comprise around 18.9% of the total Icelandic population (Statistics Iceland, 2025), and they represent around 109 languages from all corners of the world (Móðurmál, 2025). The largest minority languages are Polish, Lithuanian, and Filipino (Statistics Iceland, 2025).

This change in demographics has impacted education at all levels and has drawn attention to how schools and teachers are able to respond to the increased diversity of learners, and how teacher education is preparing teachers to work with learners of linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds in schools. Simultaneously, there has been an ongoing discussion about the danger of the Icelandic language disappearing or losing its vitality as the national language because of the small number of its speakers and because of the substantial presence and influence of English in the society (see, for example, Albury, 2014; Arnbjörnsdóttir, 2018). The presence of more than 100 additional heritage languages used by immigrant communities increases these perceived dangers for Icelandic. These ongoing tensions between the maintenance of Icelandic and pursuing culturally responsive, linguistically sensitive approaches in education seem to be confusing to many teachers.

### ***Teacher education in Iceland***

Currently, comprehensive teacher education in Iceland is provided by two state-governed universities: the University of Iceland and the University of Akureyri. Since 2008, a 180 ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) bachelor's degree and a 120 ECTS master's degree are required by law to gain a license to teach in preschools, compulsory schools, and upper secondary schools in Iceland. The *Act on the Education, Competency and Recruitment of Teachers and Administrators of Preschools, Compulsory Schools and Upper Secondary Schools* includes specifications for the general and specialized knowledge, skills, and competencies that teachers and school administrators must possess (Lög um menntun nr. 95, 2019). However, as there are no centrally defined compulsory core subjects in teacher education, the two universities set their curriculum guidelines

and determine content areas, competencies, and learning outcomes. Among the general competencies stated for graduated teachers is the competency to mediate knowledge in Icelandic (Lög um menntun nr. 95, 2019). The ensuing regulation specifies that competency in Icelandic must be on Level C1 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR; Reglugerð um hæfniramma, 2022).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In the last decade, societies have become more multicultural and multilingual, both globally and in the Nordic context. In response to increasing diversity in schools, the Nordic countries have focused their policies and reforms on inclusive education to advocate for social cohesion, promote citizenship, and shape more equitable societies (Óskarsdóttir et al., 2019; UNESCO, 2020). Internationally, inclusive education is rooted in the ideologies of full participation of all, social justice, democracy, and human rights, and can be viewed as both an ongoing process and a goal (Emilsson Peskova et al., 2023; UNESCO, 2020). The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (2022) explains inclusive education in this way: “All learners of any age are provided with meaningful, high-quality educational opportunities in their local community, alongside their friends and peers” (p. 1). Social justice is at the heart of inclusive education, with a broad spectrum of intersected concerns for human diversities, such as individual abilities, gender, sexuality, culture, language, and socio-economic background (Pantić & Florian, 2015). Inclusive education emphasizes that learning differences or difficulties in school stem from social circumstances and school systems rather than from individual learners’ identities or qualities (Schuelka et al., 2019). Thus, inclusion focuses on pedagogical work with diverse groups of students and schools’ responses to diversity, rather than mending individual disabilities (Florian, 2021). It embraces individual learners and searches for ways to support marginalized individuals and groups through structural changes, curricula, and the involvement of all stakeholders (Sleeter, 2015). However, the emphasis on equity and equality of opportunity has come under criticism, as it is believed to jeopardize efforts to produce excellence in learning outcomes (Sahlberg, 2023). In contrast, Sleeter (2015) has claimed that the efficacy in teaching to achieve high academic levels is an inherent dimension of socially just education.

Besides the ideas of social justice, two dominant ideologies continue to impact Nordic and Icelandic education policies: neoliberalism and neoconservatism. Neoliberal approaches conceive of education as

influenced by market values such as competition, emphasis on standardization, deregulation, and privatization (Magnúsdóttir, 2013). These values are visible in the prioritization of competition between schools via parents' (as consumers) choice in where to send their children, in teachers and educational options, as well as in the focus on increased measurement of standardized information about school achievement (Sahlberg, 2023). Neoconservative approaches in education, on the other hand, envision a strong state, focus on sciences, trust in national testing, national curricula and standards, morality, and uncritical patriotism (Tabrizi, 2014). Although the Nordic countries' educational policies strive to promote ideas of inclusion and social justice, policy implementation relies on the availability of funds, qualified teachers, and other resources that differ between and within each country (Emilsson Peskova et al., 2023). Thus, it is partially dependent on the economy and the political situation.

The field of multicultural education has developed since the initial work of James Banks in the US in the second half of the 20th century. Banks (2016) identified dimensions that together would lead to just schooling for diverse learners. These dimensions were: integrating subject content, constructing knowledge from students' perspectives, aiming at the achievement of all students (or equity pedagogy), reducing prejudice, and creating an empowering school culture and social structure. Gradually, critical holistic approaches that challenge discrimination in educational settings and aim at creating empowering educational spaces are also being developed in the Nordic countries (Benediktsson, 2023). Such approaches employ the cultural and linguistic assets of learners as tools that facilitate learning rather than viewing them as obstacles. These approaches incorporate personal experiences and interests to enhance the learning process and utilize learners' cultural, linguistic, and racial backgrounds as a foundation for interactive and collaborative teaching methods (Byrd, 2016).

Overall, the school outcomes of students with immigrant backgrounds are worse than their peers, as can be seen in the results from the 2015 PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) test (OECD, 2019). Other studies have shown that there is cause for concern for this group of learners, as they are less likely to graduate from upper secondary school, have a poorer social status, and are less likely to report feeling well in school (Ragnarsdóttir & Lefever, 2018). Recent findings also show that youth with an immigrant background are less likely than Icelandic-born youth to report that they feel they belong in school and are more likely to feel like outsiders (Guðjohnsen et al., 2023). Furthermore, research has

shown that many teachers consider themselves ill-equipped to teach this group of learners and find it difficult to tailor schoolwork to their needs (Ólafsson, 2019).

Teacher education plays a key role in increasing teachers' capacity to critically examine how neoliberal, neoconservative, and other ideologies shape policy and practice (Shirazi & Jaffe-Walter, 2021), and how these influences may relativize social justice values. Recent research has shown that such policy emphases are reflected in teacher education course offerings in Iceland (Gunnþórsdóttir & Óskarsdóttir, 2025), confirming that policy discourses shape programme design. The research has confirmed that participation in these courses supports teachers in implementing theoretical ideas about multicultural and inclusive education. Few courses, however, are aimed at working with pedagogy and didactics, thus generally leaving the practical application of the theories to teachers in classrooms. Research on the perspective of teacher educators at the University of Iceland has shown that they were aware of the importance of preparing pre- and in-service teachers to teach students with diverse linguistic backgrounds. However, the teacher educators felt that a special focus on the pedagogical application of multicultural education in the teacher education programs at the University of Iceland was not sufficient (Guðjónsdóttir et al., 2025).

The challenge of ensuring educational equity, particularly in preparing teachers to instruct diverse learners who learn the school language as an additional language, is significant (Emilsson Peskova, 2021). Students' ability to use complex language in speech and writing is crucial for accessing education within school settings. For immigrant students, proficiency in the majority language is important for engaging in various learning processes and interacting with teachers and peers. Addressing these issues in teacher education enhances teacher efficacy in using appropriate pedagogical tools, building up their own competence, and raising awareness of linguistic diversity (Goltsev et al., 2022).

Teachers' pedagogical approaches and decisions are significantly influenced by their own cultural perspectives and belief systems (Byrd, 2016; Pujata, 2018; Ragnarsdóttir, 2023; Rodríguez-Valls & Ponce, 2013; Smith et al., 2016). Teachers' experiences and identities play vital roles in shaping their teaching practices and perspectives on education (Smith et al., 2016). Consequently, a teacher's willingness and capacity to reflect on their own experiences and attitudes toward diverse learners can form the foundation for a strong commitment to students and a genuine interest in their academic success and emotional well-being (Byrd, 2016). As

conveyors of the dominant culture, teachers may have a worldview differing from that of their students. Studies suggest that a notable challenge in schools lies in the lack of ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity among teacher groups compared to learner groups (Ragnarsdóttir, 2023). In this context, teachers with immigrant backgrounds may bring a wealth of knowledge and experience from various cultures, fostering an understanding of the diverse needs of students as they carry their experiences to the school setting and broader socio-political discourse (Pujata, 2018). Such teachers have the potential to establish an inclusive environment where immigrant experiences serve as a foundation for cultivating critical perspectives, respect, and appreciation for the contributions of both educators and learners (Rodríguez-Valls & Ponce, 2013). In cases where teachers belong to the dominant culture, collaborating with educators from diverse backgrounds can enhance their understanding of the immigrant experience and underscore the importance of an inclusive teaching approach. Consequently, the active involvement of teachers in fostering a culture of respect and acknowledgment may foster a sense of belonging and security among learners in the educational environment, thereby facilitating the learning process.

To ensure the implementation of inclusive education in today's classrooms, teachers need to be aware of dominant ideologies and policies and be able to critically discern ideas that are in contrast with the goals of inclusive education. Appropriate teacher education helps teachers to become aware of their own biases, collaborate with others, and build upon the linguistic and cultural assets of students.

## **METHOD AND DATA**

Given the current situation in Iceland, it is pertinent to explore existing policies and frameworks and identify areas that require development to ensure that education caters to the needs of all learners, including those from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The aim of this research was to understand how the current educational policy in Iceland influences the structure of teacher education that prepares pre-service teachers to work with and educate multicultural and multilingual learners in inclusive school settings. To gain a comprehensive understanding, we conducted a qualitative analysis of relevant official documents in Iceland to discern how current policies guide practices in inclusive education. Analyzing documents serves as a method for tracking developments and changes (Bowen, 2009) while aiding in uncovering meaning, fostering deeper understanding, and revealing new insights into a research problem

(Merriam, 2009). The data were systematically selected through a review of various forms of printed or electronic documents.

The document selection process entailed identifying the most relevant documents that offer an insight into government policies addressing compulsory education and learners from diverse language and cultural backgrounds. The criteria for choosing parts of documents for analysis were that the text focused on compulsory education, teacher roles or teacher competencies, and/or linguistic and cultural diversity. Table 1 outlines the selected documents, how they are referenced, the sections within each document chosen for analysis, and the criteria used for selection.

Document analysis generates data organized into major themes and categories (Labuschagne, 2003). The analytical process involved finding, selecting, making sense of, and synthesizing the data that each document contains. As we started our document analysis, we skimmed the documents selected for the study and marked the content related to our research question. After the first round of reading the documents separately, we compared our markings and developed the themes from the data. After carefully re-reading the selected sections, discussing, and examining every marking, we interpreted and organized the themes into categories related to our question. These categories are introduced in the section on findings.

## FINDINGS

Findings are represented by two themes: (a) the overly general messages from policies to schools, and (b) teacher preparation for working with diversity. Within the theme on messages from policies, the issues of the right to learn Icelandic as a second language and the right to education in heritage languages are discussed. Under the theme of teacher preparation, the issues of teacher education are discussed.

### *The overly general messages from policies to schools*

According to regulations governing various educational levels, every learner is entitled to an equitable education at the preschool, compulsory, and upper secondary school stages (Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneytið, 2011/2021). Schools are expected to offer all students access to suitable teaching and learning experiences, irrespective of their physical or mental abilities, emotional and social circumstances, or linguistic development. The *Draft of the Policy on Education of Children and Youth With Diverse Linguistic and Cultural Background* underscores the importance of embracing multicultural education, which celebrates

diversity and is founded on the resources and strengths of children and young people, as a defining feature of the future education policy within the school system (Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneytið, 2020a). This perspective is reinforced in amendments to the *National Curriculum Guide for Compulsory Schools* from 2021, emphasizing the incorporation of multicultural values in task selection, teaching materials, teaching and learning methods, and overall school practices (Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneytið, 2011/2021).

TABLE I. Overview of documents selected for analysis

Type of document	Documents and document sections chosen for analysis	Criteria for selecting the document
Legal acts	<p><i>Compulsory School Act</i> (Lög um grunnskóla nr. 91, 2008)                      Chapters 1, 2, and 7 were chosen for analysis.</p> <p><i>Act on the Education, Competency and Recruitment of Teachers and Administrators of Preschools, Compulsory Schools and Upper Secondary Schools</i> (Lög um menntun nr. 95, 2019)  <i>Regulation on a Competency Framework with Criteria for the General and Specialized Qualifications of Teachers and School Administrators at Preschool, Primary, and Secondary Schools</i> (Reglugerð um hæfniramma nr. 1355, 2022)</p>	They provide the policy framework within which schools and teachers operate and thus directly influence the preparation of teachers.
Draft policy	<p><i>Draft of the Policy on Education of Children and Youth With Diverse Linguistic and Cultural Background</i> (Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneytið,<sup>1</sup> 2020a)                      The section on recommendations for teachers was chosen for analysis.</p>	Information about the policy vision for the education of learners with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.
Policy guidelines	<p><i>Guidelines for the Support of Mother Tongues and Active Plurilingualism in Schools and Afterschool Programs</i> (Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneytið, 2020b)                      For analysis, the first three sections were chosen. These include definitions of key concepts, explanation of children's linguistic rights, and the roles of teachers and schools in supporting the rights.</p>	Explanations and lists of examples of how to encourage and promote active plurilingualism.
National curriculum guide	<p><i>National Curriculum Guide for Compulsory Schools</i> (Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneytið, 2011/2021)                      For analysis, the general section (Chapters 1-16) was chosen, as well as the recent amendments from 2021 for Icelandic as a second language.</p>	It provides the policy frame within which schools and teachers operate.

The documents analyzed for this study all emphasize the importance of achieving competence in Icelandic as a second or additional language for learners with immigrant backgrounds as a precondition for taking an active part in society, acquiring knowledge in school, supporting further education, and participating in workplaces (Lög um grunnskóla nr. 91, 2008; Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneytið, 2020a). The recent amendment to the *National Curriculum Guide* provides competency criteria for Icelandic as a second language, as well as overall guidelines on how to assess learners' language competencies and accordingly plan support and organize their education (Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneytið, 2011/2021). The specific instructions for teachers and schools on how this should be carried out in practice are, for example, that each learner's competencies and strengths should be built upon across the curriculum. This relatively abstract message provides limited guidance to teachers.

The amended *National Curriculum Guide* states that languages are a resource and that maintaining active multilingualism is in the interest of multilingual children and society, as the educational goal for children with immigrant backgrounds is to achieve active plurilingualism. (Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneytið, 2011/2021). Yet, the guide provides limited information on how to implement this vision. However, parents are mentioned as the key persons in making sure that their children learn their heritage language and they should be encouraged and supported in “emphasizing linguistic upbringing at home by nurturing the pupil's heritage language” (Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneytið, 2011/2021, p. 106). The *Guidelines for the Support of Mother Tongues and Active Plurilingualism in Schools and Afterschool Programs* is the only document that specifically explains and lists examples of encouraging and promoting active plurilingualism in school practice (Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneytið, 2020b).

The amended *National Curriculum Guide* recommends schools and after-school centres to adopt a language policy as a guide for staff and learners in their daily work and communication:

[A] language policy must state how language is used in communication and daily work, and what methods are used to make the best use of learners' language resources, as well as to activate and maintain the interest of all learners in multilingualism. (Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneytið, 2011/2021, Section 7.14)

### **Teacher preparation for working with diversity**

The *Draft of the Policy on Education of Children and Youth With Diverse Linguistic and Cultural Background* builds on the premise that the Icelandic school system does not efficiently accommodate children and youth with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneytið, 2020a). The *National Curriculum Guide* describes the teachers' roles in teaching diverse groups of learners in aspirational terms, with an emphasis on meeting the needs of learners, a focus on equity, and employing diverse teaching and assessment methods to accommodate learners (Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneytið, 2011/2021). Although multiculturalism is mentioned in the *National Curriculum Guide* several times, guidance on how to carry out and achieve its aims is not specified. The draft policy suggests a new emphasis in the overall school policy to ensure that the pedagogy of teaching learners with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds is an intrinsic part of the basic education of all teachers and others working with children and youth (Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneytið, 2020a).

The *Regulation on a Competency Framework* (Reglugerð um hæfniramma nr. 1355, 2022) builds on the aspirations stated in the draft policy and provides clear outlines of what is expected of teachers as they graduate from teacher education. The regulation requires competencies such as being able to understand how learners' background and experience can influence their ability to learn, well-being, behaviour, and communication skills. Also, teachers are expected to utilize the influence of multiculturalism, multilingualism, and Icelandic as an additional language to support the learning of all. The framework is more demanding than the draft policy in that it requires teachers to have the competence to identify and respond to the needs of children with diverse backgrounds, and to organize learning and teaching that creates a supportive learning environment (Reglugerð um hæfniramma nr. 1355, 2022).

Finally, the draft policy suggests that efforts should be made to systematically increase the number of pre-service teachers with an immigrant background (Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneytið, 2020a). This could be problematic, as the explicit requirement outlined in the act on teacher competencies is that a general competency for teachers is to have the ability to teach in Icelandic (Lög um menntun nr. 95, 2019). This requirement was further specified in the *Regulation on a Competency Framework*, which states that teachers' competency in Icelandic needs to be on Level C1 of the CEFR, a rather steep demand that might be an

insurmountable barrier for those learners of immigrant origin who want to become teachers (Reglugerð um hæfniramma nr. 1355, 2022).

### **Summary of findings**

The current educational policy in Iceland provides teacher education with general guidelines. These state that teachers need to acquire competencies to build on the linguistic, cultural, and other resources of students with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. There are, however, no concrete guidance measures on how to implement the lofty goals included in the policy framework.

## **DISCUSSION**

The purpose of this research was to discuss the emphasis on teacher education in Iceland required for preparing pre-service teachers to work with learners from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The aim was to gain knowledge and understanding of how the concepts of inclusion and multicultural education are reflected in teacher education policy in Iceland. Below, educational policy is discussed, and then its implications for the development of teacher education in Iceland are stated.

There is a consensus that inclusive education aims to eliminate educational inequalities among people with various socioeconomic backgrounds and ethnic identities (Imsen et al., 2017). Thus, teacher education needs to instill an understanding of the macrocosmic social forces that lead to exclusion and inequality (Slee, 2010), as well as promoting a critical stance to recognize the influences of neoliberal and neoconservative ideology on policy and practice (Shirazi & Jaffe-Walter, 2021). To inculcate this spirit, proper guidance, support, and knowledge must be woven into the very ethos of teacher education by providing the necessary tools to transfer theory into praxis. The way forward for teacher education is then to entrench the values of equity, inclusion, and social justice in educational discourse and action for pre-service teachers (Gunnþórsdóttir & Óskarsdóttir, 2025), and to help pre-service teachers to translate these values into pedagogical approaches and methods.

Contrasting ideological tendencies can be identified in Icelandic policies, teacher education, and measures in schools. Neoliberal influences have become more evident in the past decade, as can be seen for example in the shortening of upper secondary education from 4 to 3 years, set into effect to push for increased productivity. There are indeed voices that warn that such measures would have a large impact on vulnerable immigrant student populations, as this gives them a shorter time to prepare for university and

they are more likely to drop out (Ragnarsdóttir & Lefever, 2018). Iceland has centralized national curricula and competency criteria, yet schools also have much flexibility and independence in their decisions. In the fashion of decentralization, preschools and compulsory education are in the hands of municipalities that have incompatible budgets to finance them (Emilsson Peskova, 2021). It can be stated, however, that these neoliberal and neoconservative influences are in a dialectic relationship with the strong emphasis on provisions for inclusion and social justice, both in policies and in teacher education. Examples of those are the cancelling of state exams in mathematics, Icelandic, and sciences, a strong focus on the inclusion of all children in mainstream neighbourhood schools, the lack of private schools, and the flexibility of the national curriculum provided to teachers.

Unlike in Norway, Sweden, and Finland, second language teaching in Iceland is not a fully independent school subject with an allocated number of hours and appropriate specialized teacher education (Emilsson Peskova et al., 2023). Research has shown that the vagueness of the guidance for schools and teachers has led to a disparity between municipalities and schools in the quality and quantity of support that learners of Icelandic as an additional language receive (Danielsdóttir & Skogland, 2018). One main root of this disparity is that policies for allocating funds and resources in schools are not the same in all municipalities, and thus each school creates different rules for how many hours are allocated for support, who is supported, and for how long (Emilsson Peskova, 2021; Emilsson Peskova et al., 2023). Research has shown that immigrant learners seem to have limited opportunities to use their languages in education, and some have experienced negative attitudes toward their use in school (Óskarsdóttir et al., 2019; Ragnarsdóttir & Hama, 2018; Tran & Lefever, 2018). Heritage language education in Iceland, unlike the other Nordic countries, is mostly in the hands of grassroots organizations, working independently of the state and the municipalities (Emilsson Peskova et al., 2023).

The education policies in Iceland seem to be, to some extent, influenced by the public neoconservative perception that the Icelandic language is under threat of extinction because of the vulnerability of being spoken by a small group of speakers under the heavy influence of English. This may be unwittingly contributing to the exclusion of meaningful participation of immigrants in society and their professional development. This also has implications for the recruitment of pre-service teachers with immigrant backgrounds, teaching of additional languages, and the role of heritage languages in education. A sole focus on achievement in the language of

education and in learning global languages while implicitly aiming at students losing their mother tongues would also correspond with neoliberal and neoconservative tendencies.

A collaboration between pre-service teachers with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds and those with a dominant Icelandic background may develop knowledge and enhance understanding of the needs of learners' diversities (Pujata, 2018). Together, they may be able to critically examine what is called for in building an inclusive space on the tenets of critical perspectives, respect, and regard for what each brings to the discussion (Rodríguez-Valls & Ponce, 2013). Currently, it is difficult for immigrant pre-service teachers to acquire a license to teach, even if they have teacher qualifications from their country of origin. The stipulation that teaching must be in Icelandic, except in foreign language teaching, is set out in the *Compulsory School Act* (Lög um grunnskóla nr. 91, 2008) and supported in the recent *Act on the Education, Competency and Recruitment of Teachers and Administrators at Preschools, Compulsory Schools and Upper Secondary Schools* (Lög um menntun nr. 95, 2019) and the ensuing *Regulation on a Competency Framework* (Reglugerð um hæfniramma nr. 1355, 2022). How this precludes immigrant pre-service teachers from offering their services to learners in an inclusive setting needs a critical examination. This also implies that their knowledge of how to cope with linguistic and cultural diversity, and of the challenges involved in learning a foreign language as immigrants, cannot be used actively in the learning environment (Pujata, 2018). However, some recent efforts have been made to counterbalance this development. For example, at the behest of the Ministry of Education and Children, the School of Education at the University of Iceland developed the program Icelandic Support to support pre-service teachers with immigrant backgrounds, who are not fully proficient in Icelandic, to attend the university (Háskóli Íslands, n.d.).

Recently, a review of the curriculum concerning teaching Icelandic as a second language has been performed so that the competency criteria are similar to those provided for other language instruction (Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneytið, 2011/2021). However, Icelandic as a second language is not a specific subject and has no allocated hours in the curriculum structure, which creates uncertainty and unequal support structures between schools. As access to education and society is dependent on knowledge of the dominant language, every effort must be made to ensure functional proficiency in the language for immigrant learners at all stages in the system.

Our findings further indicate that the educational policy in Iceland is getting clearer in terms of how to support teachers and schools to work systematically with learners' cultural and linguistic backgrounds. However, teachers have found it challenging to translate abstract terms from policies into pedagogical praxis to fulfill curricular demands (Óskarsdóttir, 2017).

Multicultural education requires a focus on students' cultures, languages, and experiences (Goltsev et al., 2022; Ragnarsdóttir, 2023), as evidenced in the competency framework (Reglugerð um hæfniramma nr. 1355, 2022), the amendments to the national curriculum (Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneytið, 2011/2021), and the *Guidelines for the Support of Mother Tongues and Active Plurilingualism in Schools and Afterschool Programs* (Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneytið, 2020b). Many teachers at the compulsory school level are, however, still insecure about including learners' use of their heritage language in school, especially as the *National Curriculum Guide* states multiple times that the official language should be the language of instruction (Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneytið, 2011/2021).

## CONCLUSION

Iceland, like most other countries, can be characterized by an increasingly diverse population, and recent policies reflect these developments. Our findings show that the policies are grounded in values of inclusion, social justice, and multicultural education, yet teacher education and various measures in schools hint at influences of other education ideologies. This indicates a gap in the implementation of laws and policies in school settings, and as Emilsson Peskova et al. (2023) have concluded, laws and policies need to be complemented by regulations and action plans to follow up on indicated issues. In order to promote the democratic values of inclusion and social justice in the Icelandic school system, policymakers and teacher educators need to be aware of the dialectic relationship of the various ideologies present in society. It is important that teacher education aims at critical understanding and discussion of the politics behind education, and also provides a concrete pedagogical foundation for teachers to implement the policies in diverse classrooms.

Our document analysis and recent research have shown that multicultural education and working with diverse learners are a focus in several courses at both the University of Iceland and the University of Akureyri. Some of the measures taken recently in Icelandic educational settings are informed by the ideas of social justice and inclusion (e.g., language support for students in upper secondary schools), while other measures reflect ideas of

neoliberalism and neoconservatism (e.g., shortening of the study period in upper secondary schools from 4 to 3 years and the requirement that teachers master Icelandic to Level C1 according to the CEFR). We would like to caution that it may be hard to tell what long-term consequences such decisions will have on marginalized groups in society. The current Icelandic education policies provide a framework of social justice and inclusion in education; however, the influences and discussions of conflicting ideologies at all levels of the system and society are present and thriving.

## NOTES

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**AUTOBIOGRAPHIES DE LECTEURS À L'ÉCOLE  
SECONDAIRE: CHOISIR UN CORPUS DIVERSIFIÉ POUR  
SUSCITER UNE MEILLEURE COMPRÉHENSION DES AUTRES  
ET DE SOI**

ALEXIE MIQUELON *Collège Jean-de-Brébeuf*

**RÉSUMÉ.** L'autobiographie de lecteur est un genre littéraire qui peut être employé en classe pour valoriser l'investissement subjectif des élèves dans leur lecture. Comme il convoque la notion d'identité, il est indiqué pour valoriser la diversité culturelle dans les corpus littéraires de façon à offrir des occasions aux élèves de se reconnaître dans leurs lectures scolaires et de découvrir des parcours de vie diversifiés. Nous proposons aux enseignants de français au secondaire un corpus d'extraits d'autobiographies de lecteurs diversifiées sur le plan de l'appartenance culturelle, du genre, de l'orientation sexuelle et de la classe sociale, afin de leur permettre d'offrir à leurs élèves un enseignement de la lecture littéraire qui rende compte de leur diversité, dans un esprit d'équité et d'inclusion.

**SECONDARY SCHOOL READERS' AUTOBIOGRAPHIES: SELECTING A  
DIVERSE CORPUS TO FOSTER A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF OTHERS  
AND ONESELF**

**ABSTRACT.** The reader's autobiography is a literary genre that can be used in the classroom to enhance students' subjective investment in their reading. As it invokes the notion of identity, it is also useful for promoting cultural diversity in literary works, providing students with opportunities to identify with their school reading material and to discover diverse life paths. We offer secondary school French teachers a collection of excerpts from readers' autobiographies that is diverse in terms of cultural background, gender, sexual orientation, and social class, enabling them to provide their students an education in literary reading that reflects their diversity, in a spirit of equity and inclusion.

L'hétérogénéité des classes montréalaises sur les plans socioculturel et linguistique est bien documentée (Gouvernement du Québec, 2021). Il s'agit d'une réalité dont nous avons une expérience personnelle, à titre d'enseignante de français à Montréal depuis quinze ans. C'est principalement à l'école que les élèves issus de l'immigration vivent un processus d'acculturation, à savoir un processus d'adaptation psychologique et socioculturelle au contact de la culture de leur société d'accueil (Kanouté et al., 2016). Dans ce contexte, comme l'ont écrit les rédacteurs invités dans l'appel à contribution de ce numéro spécial, la formation des enseignants dans le Nord global doit se doter d'une posture critique, notamment contre le mythe de la neutralité de l'école, qui sous-tend en réalité des hiérarchies culturelles et linguistiques de même que des relations de pouvoir qui renforcent des inégalités sociales.

Le mythe de la neutralité de l'école, dans les cours de langue, touche la question des corpus littéraires scolaires. En effet, ceux-ci ne sont pas neutres – ils traduisent des enjeux sociologiques et politiques auxquels il faut sensibiliser les enseignants. Par exemple, la professeure Maïka Sondarjee (2021) s'est intéressée à la composition de plans de cours universitaires et aux biais qui sous-tendent les sélections enseignantes de lectures obligatoires. Elle relève notamment que la quasi-totalité (95,0 %) des lectures obligatoires de certains cours sont écrites par des Européens et des Américains. Cette dépréciation de la connaissance non occidentale « a un impact fondamental sur la construction du savoir, et sur la hiérarchisation de ce savoir » (p. 30). Le mythe de la neutralité de l'école a comme corollaire ce que le professeur Marcus Bell (2021) appelle « *white racelessness* » (p. 18). Cela signifie que beaucoup de personnes blanches, des enseignants dans le cas de l'étude de Bell, sont en mesure de percevoir les autres (ici, leurs élèves) comme racisés, mais voient leur propre appartenance ethnique et culturelle comme « neutre ». Une étude empirique menée à Montréal au sujet d'expériences de scolarisation d'élèves issus de l'immigration a mis cette réalité en lumière, plus précisément la façon dont les participantes ont vécu à l'école secondaire des rapports de domination qui les ont essentialisées, les réduisant à la figure de l'*Autre* (Darchinian et al., 2021).

Pour contrer ces biais et leurs impacts dommageables sur les élèves, plusieurs chercheurs en sciences de l'éducation en appellent à une prise de conscience critique de la part des enseignants et futurs enseignants de langue et de littérature sur ces questions (Miquelon, 2023). Pour ce faire, les enseignants peuvent mener des réflexions sur l'impact de leur propre appartenance culturelle sur leur enseignement (Dei, 2019) et choisir intentionnellement des corpus littéraires qui traitent d'enjeux raciaux

(Smith, 2021) et reflètent la diversité humaine à travers des personnages nuancés (Washington, 2023). Une telle diversité des corpus profiterait à tous les élèves, mais plus particulièrement aux élèves racisés. Cela leur permettrait d'entrer dans une démarche de réconciliation entre les contenus scolaires et leur propre identité, en se reconnaissant dans les textes lus en classe (Smith, 2021). En effet, des élèves racisés québécois rapportent des expériences de racialisation et d'infériorisation tant dans les interactions avec leurs pairs non racisés que dans le cadre de l'enseignement (Darchinian et al., 2021). Or, tous les quartiers de Montréal sont aujourd'hui multiculturels, ce qui se reflète dans les écoles de la ville (Kanouté et al., 2016). Au Centre de services scolaire de Montréal, la moitié des élèves ont une langue maternelle autre que le français, et 27,6 % des élèves sont nés à l'étranger (gouvernement du Québec, 2021). Dans ce contexte, le ministère de l'Éducation préconise de prendre appui sur la culture personnelle des élèves pour leur permettre de s'appropriier la culture de la société d'accueil (gouvernement du Québec, 2003) et il appert pertinent de se pencher sur des dispositifs didactiques susceptibles de le permettre.

#### **L'AUTOBIOGRAPHIE DE LECTEUR, UN GENRE LITTÉRAIRE LIÉ À L'IDENTITÉ**

L'enseignement de la littérature au secondaire peut viser plusieurs finalités pour les élèves, notamment l'accès aux connaissances, la formation de sujets lecteurs, l'éducation à la citoyenneté, le regard sur l'autre et le regard sur soi (Mercier, 2018). Une étude menée à Montréal sur 484 élèves du deuxième cycle du secondaire âgés de 14 à 17 ans révélait la façon dont ces élèves adhéraient à ces différentes finalités. Alors que 84,7 % d'entre eux croient que « la lecture de livres dans le cours de français vise principalement l'amélioration de la compétence en lecture des élèves » (Miquelon, 2017, p. 129), moins de la moitié pense que « la lecture de livres dans le cours de français permet de comprendre le monde » et, plus frappant encore, moins de 20,0 % croient que « la lecture de livres dans le cours de français permet de se comprendre soi-même » (Miquelon, 2017, p. 131).

Ces représentations viennent en bonne partie de l'institution scolaire, qui a longtemps demandé aux élèves de se livrer à des lectures objectives (Bleich, 1978), ce qui a mené des générations de jeunes lecteurs à envisager leur subjectivité et leurs émotions comme des digressions les éloignant du sens des œuvres (Jouve, 2004).

Depuis plusieurs années, on assiste à un retour du balancier : les recherches en didactique du français soulignent l'importance de la prise en compte de la subjectivité des lecteurs à l'école (Mercier, 2018). La lecture d'autobiographies de lecteurs figure, d'après Sauvaire (2011), parmi les dispositifs didactiques permettant de susciter chez les élèves une diversité d'interprétations subjectives. Il s'agit d'un genre littéraire qui mobilise l'expérience singulière du sujet-lecteur et qui permet de penser la notion d'identité littéraire (Rouxel, 2004). Comme l'hétérogénéité des classes exige de la part des enseignants des actions pédagogiques et didactiques tenant compte de la construction de l'identité personnelle des élèves dans le cadre scolaire (Kanouté et Charette, 2018), nous pensons qu'il est pertinent d'intégrer ce genre littéraire à des pratiques d'enseignement qui valorisent la diversité des identités.

### *Thèmes privilégiés*

Les autobiographies de lecteurs sont généralement des extraits autobiographiques d'œuvres littéraires qui exploitent le thème des souvenirs de lecture (Bemporad, 2019). En effet, rares sont les écrivains qui n'y consacrent pas une partie de leurs récits autobiographiques ou autofictionnels (Louichon, 2009). Rouxel (2004) précise que de nombreux écrivains « ne peuvent parler d'eux-mêmes sans évoquer leurs lectures, tant leur identité de lecteur est une composante de leur personnalité, mais qu['ils] le font de façon fragmentaire, au sein d'un projet plus large » (p. 137).

Ces récits mobilisent souvent les thèmes de la bibliothèque intérieure et de l'identité de lecteur (Bemporad, 2019). La bibliothèque intérieure, selon Bayard (2007), est « cet ensemble de livres [...] sur lequel toute personnalité se construit et qui organise ensuite son rapport aux textes et aux autres » (p. 74). Au moment d'invoquer le contenu de sa bibliothèque intérieure, le sujet-lecteur recouvre généralement des souvenirs d'un soi lisant plutôt que des souvenirs des textes eux-mêmes (Louichon, 2010).

L'identité de lecteur, ou identité littéraire, est tributaire de la bibliothèque intérieure et suppose que certaines lectures contribuent à la formation de l'identité : « textes que j'aime, qui me représentent, qui métaphoriquement parlent de moi, qui m'ont fait ce que je suis, qui disent ce que je voudrais dire, qui m'ont révélé à moi-même » (Rouxel, 2004, p. 139).

Ainsi, pour que la lecture d'autobiographies de lecteurs en classe de français puisse avoir des effets positifs sur la façon dont les élèves perçoivent leur propre subjectivité de lecteurs, les textes proposés devraient rendre compte d'identités diversifiées.

## COMPOSITION D'UN CORPUS LITTÉRAIRE SCOLAIRE BASÉ SUR LA DIVERSITÉ

Nous avons fait lire à des élèves de cinquième secondaire – des élèves de 16 et 17 ans – le roman *Là où je me terre*, de Caroline Dawson. Ce roman relate l'arrivée au Québec en 1986 d'une jeune réfugiée chilienne de 7 ans. Le personnage principal, nommé « la petite Caroline », est un alter ego de l'autrice. La lecture de cette œuvre, qui aborde plusieurs enjeux liés à l'immigration et au racisme, a donné lieu, dans notre classe multiculturelle, à de nombreux échanges sur les enjeux raciaux et les expériences d'immigration des élèves du groupe.

Caroline Dawson inclut dans son roman des références à sa bibliothèque intérieure, à son identité de lectrice et à des « évènement[s] de lecture » (Louichon, 2010, p. 183). Par exemple, elle se remémore ses souvenirs d'enfance à la bibliothèque d'Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, qui « ressemblait à une cathédrale » (p. 146); l'abonnement familial à *Québec Loisirs*, qui lui permettait de posséder des livres pour la première fois; la découverte d'œuvres littéraires qui traitaient de sa société d'accueil et d'autres souvenirs faisant écho à son identité latino-américaine.

À la suite de la lecture du roman de Caroline Dawson, nous avons mis les élèves en contact avec des extraits d'autres autobiographies de lecteurs pour leur permettre de les comparer, d'y réagir et de s'y identifier. Suivant les recommandations énoncées précédemment au sujet de la diversification des corpus littéraires scolaires, une attention toute particulière a été apportée à la sélection du corpus pour que celui-ci reflète une importante diversité quant aux identités des auteurs. On y lit des expériences qui allient la découverte de la littérature et des enjeux d'appartenance culturelle (Dawson, Laferrière, Fontaine, Vuong, Slimani), d'orientation sexuelle (Tremblay) et de classe sociale (Ernaux, Vuong). Nous présentons aujourd'hui ce corpus pour qu'il puisse inspirer des enseignants en exercice ou de futurs enseignants à rendre leurs corpus plus inclusifs et diversifiés. Dans le Tableau 1, de courts extraits significatifs sont retranscrits. Les extraits complets qui figurent dans le recueil sont d'une longueur d'une à trois pages – celles-ci sont également présentes dans le tableau à titre indicatif.

TABLEAU 1. Aperçu du corpus diversifié d'autobiographies de lecteurs

	Auteur	Appartenance culturelle	Œuvre citée et pages de l'autobiographie de lecteur
Extrait 1	Caroline Dawson	Québécoise d'origine chilienne	<i>Là où je me terre</i> (p. 110-111 et 145-150)
	<i>À ce jour, je ne comprends toujours pas que la bibliothécaire n'ait rien dit quand j'ai emprunté le livre, qu'elle n'ait pas sourcillé en voyant une petite Latine de onze ans emporter avec elle Réjean Ducharme. [...] Rien ne pouvait me faire soupçonner l'incongruité d'avoir ce livre entre mes brunes mains enfantines, à un point tel qu'avant le cégep, je croyais que L'avalée des avalés était un livre jeunesse.</i>		
Extrait 2	Dany Laferrrière	Québécois d'origine haïtienne	<i>Je suis un écrivain japonais</i> (p. 27 à 30)
	<i>Et moi, fiévreux tous les soirs, en train de lire Mishima sous les draps. [...] [P]our moi, Mishima était mon voisin. Je rapatriais, sans y prendre garde, tous les écrivains que je lisais à l'époque. [...] [T]ous vivaient dans le même village que moi. Sinon, que faisaient-ils dans ma chambre? (p. 27-30)</i>		
Extrait 3	Michel Tremblay	Québécois d'origine canadienne-française	<i>Un ange comu avec des ailes de tôle</i> (p. 123 à 126)
	<i>Wornals et Freckels sont les deux premiers personnages de littérature qui m'ont fait soupçonner de l'existence du lesbianisme. J'avais déjà accepté, compris, nommé mes propres tendances [...] J'analysais chaque phrase des romans qui les mettaient en scène, chaque réplique qu'elles se disaient, surtout les farces qu'elles faisaient, à la recherche du moindre petit indice; [...] je l'avoue, j'étais un peu jaloux d'elles.</i>		
Extrait 4	Naomi Fontaine	Innue	<i>Shuni</i> (p. 141-142)
	<i>Avant de découvrir la littérature des Premières Nations, avant de m'attacher à la poésie de Joséphine Bacon, à la clairvoyance d'An Antane Kapesh, [...] je lisais principalement les auteurs québécois. J'ai lu Le Survenant à deux reprises. La première fois, je ne saisisais pas que ce personnage s'ancrait dans ma culture. À la deuxième, j'ai eu le cœur en compote lorsqu'il a quitté le village, même si j'approuvais sa fuite.</i>		
Extrait 5	Daniel Pennac	Français	<i>Chagrin d'école</i> (p. 99-101)
	<i>Considérée comme une perte de temps, réputée nuisible au travail scolaire, la lecture des romans nous était interdite pendant les heures d'étude. D'où ma vocation de lecteur clandestin : romans recouverts comme des livres de classe, cachés partout où cela se pouvait, lectures nocturnes à la lampe de poche, dispense de gymnastique, tout était bon pour me retrouver seul avec un livre.</i>		
Extrait 6	Ocean Vuong	Américain d'origine vietnamienne	<i>Un bref instant de splendeur</i> (« On earth, we're briefly gorgeous ») (p. 14-18)
	<i>La fois où j'ai essayé de t'apprendre à lire comme Mme Callahan me l'avait enseigné, mes lèvres contre ton oreille, ma main sur la tienne, les mots qui bougeaient sous les ombres que nous faisons. Mais cet acte (un fils qui enseigne à sa mère) renversait nos hiérarchies, et avec elles nos identités, qui dans ce pays étaient déjà précaires, captives.</i>		
Extrait 7	Annie Ernaux	Française	<i>Mémoire de fille</i> (p. 24-35)
	<i>C'est davantage dans les poèmes et les phrases d'écrivains soigneusement recopiés dans un agenda de 1958 en carton rouge [...] que j'ai la plus forte probabilité de saisir les bribes de mon discours intérieur. C'est là que la fille de cette époque se dit par procuration, dans des mots qui dessinent idéalement son être au-dessus de la platitude et la brutalité – pense-t-elle – du langage de son milieu.</i>		

Extrait 8	Leïla Slimani	Française d'origine marocaine	<i>Le parfum des fleurs la nuit</i> (p. 122-123 et 131-132)
	<p><i>[J]'ai retrouvé cet exemplaire dans la bibliothèque de mes parents [...] et je me suis souvenue comment, enfant, je lisais pour impressionner mon père. Je pensais que si je tenais un livre à la main, il s'intéresserait à moi. Il me venait.</i></p> <p><i>[...] Lorsque je suis arrivée en France, je ne me suis pas sentie tout à fait une étrangère. J'avais le sentiment de connaître ce pays, d'en maîtriser les codes, la culture, la langue. Je les connaissais, mais eux ne me connaissaient pas. Je sentais bien que Notre-Dame, Flaubert ou Truffaut m'étaient familiers. Ils ne parlaient pas de moi, ils m'ignoraient et pourtant, par un étrange accident de l'Histoire, ils étaient mon patrimoine.</i></p>		

## CONCLUSION : APPORTS ET BILAN

Les questions posées aux élèves en classe à la suite de leur lecture du recueil d'extraits visaient à travailler les composantes de la compétence à lire que sont la réaction et le jugement critique fondés sur plusieurs textes (gouvernement du Québec, 2009). Parmi ces questions se trouvait « Quel est votre extrait favori? Pourquoi? » À cette question, presque tous les élèves répondaient en nommant des éléments qui rapprochaient leur propre autobiographie de lecteur d'une de celles qu'ils avaient lues. Dans leurs réponses, on pouvait constater un fort désir de raconter leurs propres expériences de lecture et leur propre subjectivité. Fraichement sortis de l'enfance, plusieurs élèves ont ainsi mentionné avoir apprécié les autobiographies qui abordaient les premières lectures passionnelles et clandestines, notamment celles de Michel Tremblay (« J'en avais déjà lu une bonne centaine, je les dévorais comme je dévorerais plus tard les Agatha Christie ou les Maurice Leblanc, d'une seule traite ») et de Daniel Pennac (« romans recouverts comme des livres de classe, cachés partout où cela se pouvait, lectures nocturnes à la lampe de poche »), puisque cela recoupait leurs propres souvenirs de lecture. D'autres élèves, en se basant sur l'autobiographie de lectrice de Leïla Slimani (« Mon père lisait beaucoup. [...] [Il] empilait les livres à ses pieds comme un maçon empile des briques pour construire un mur ») ont raconté des souvenirs de proches lisant abondamment durant leur enfance. Pour un élève, il s'agissait de ses grands-parents, chez qui il passait ses étés, tandis que pour une autre élève, il s'agissait de son grand frère, qui avait appris à lire avant elle. Finalement, des élèves ont fait des rapprochements sur le plan de leur identité avec les textes de Tremblay (« J'avais déjà accepté, compris, nommé [mon homosexualité], je scrutais chacun des livres que je lisais à la recherche de personnages qui partageaient mes goûts sans jamais en trouver ») et de Slimani (« C'est en France que je suis devenue une Arabe. ») pour raconter des expériences qu'ils avaient vécues en lien avec la lecture et qui relevaient de leur propre identité queer ou culturelle.

La lecture d'autobiographies de lecteurs en contexte scolaire, quand le corpus est choisi de façon à représenter l'hétérogénéité de la classe, semble ainsi servir les objectifs que sont la valorisation de la diversité subjective des élèves (Sauvaire, 2011) et la prise en compte de l'identité personnelle des élèves dans le cadre scolaire (Kanouté et Charette, 2018). Il n'est pas étonnant que les élèves aient d'emblée apprécié davantage les autobiographies de lecteurs qui présentaient des similitudes avec leur propre rapport à la lecture, puisqu'ils s'intéressent plus spontanément aux contenus scolaires qui leur parlent d'eux-mêmes (Jouve, 2004). Cela signifie aussi que les récits qui mobilisent la notion d'identité les poussent spontanément à réfléchir à la leur, répondant ainsi à une des finalités de l'enseignement de la lecture littéraire, le regard sur soi (Mercier, 2018), qui est la moins endossée chez les élèves (Miquelon, 2017). Susciter le regard sur soi par le biais des textes littéraires contribue à valoriser l'investissement subjectif des élèves dans leurs lectures et à faire de leurs lectures scolaires des expériences plus significatives. D'autre part, la lecture d'un corpus diversifié d'autobiographies de lecteurs dans la classe de français permet aussi de mettre en contact les élèves avec des récits de vie différents des leurs (Rabatel, 2019). Même s'ils ne les retiennent pas forcément comme étant leurs favoris, ces récits permettent de répondre à une autre finalité de l'enseignement de la lecture littéraire, à savoir de leur permettre de « porter un regard sur l'autre par l'expérience de la différence [...] [de les] initie[r] à l'ouverture, à la tolérance, à l'empathie » (Mercier, 2018, p. 75). La diversification du corpus, en plus de permettre aux élèves non racisés de rencontrer des récits divers et de développer leur ouverture, permet aussi et surtout de faire en sorte qu'un plus grand nombre d'élèves se voient représentés dans les lectures scolaires (Sleeter, 2020; Smith, 2021). Pour ces raisons, cette initiative pourrait contribuer à favoriser des climats d'apprentissage plus signifiants et plus équitables. La formation des maîtres au Québec prévoit explicitement que les futurs enseignants doivent être formés à l'éducation interculturelle pour être en mesure de jouer adéquatement leur rôle (Potvin et al., 2018). Malgré les programmes officiels, cependant, la recherche montre que tant les formateurs universitaires que les enseignants du primaire et du secondaire craignent d'aborder des questions sensibles liées à l'identité, et, en conséquence, déclarent les aborder peu en classe (Potvin et al., 2018). Or, l'une des missions fondamentales de la formation des maîtres est de préparer les enseignants à enseigner aux enfants de tous les citoyens (Zeichner, 2009), et cela passe notamment par la réflexion au sujet des choix curriculaires visant à outiller les enseignants et futurs enseignants en ce qui a trait à la diversité.

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## BOOK REVIEW / COMPTE-RENDU

TAVARES, V., & SKREFSRUD, T. A. *Critical and creative engagements with diversity in Nordic education*. (2024). 367 pp. \$170.95 (hardback). (ISBN 9781666925852).

The year 2025 saw significant rollbacks in diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts across many sectors, including education. This was particularly visible in the United States where the government conflated race-based inclusivity efforts with the violation of civil rights, ordering an end to programs that support equity, diversity and inclusion efforts (U.S. Department of Education, 2025). Amid this ongoing backlash, it is more important than ever for schools to continue to be concerned with teaching to diversity. Tavares and Skrefsrud's book explores how pre-service and in-service teachers can be more equipped to teach diverse groups. While the book engages with diversity in Nordic settings (Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, and Iceland), the pedagogical insights and reflections are relevant to teachers, education administrators, policymakers, and educational researchers globally.

The volume contains 17 chapters and five sections. The first section, entitled *Student Teachers' Intercultural Competences*, is comprised of five chapters. These chapters investigate questions of interculturality in teacher education. Chen and Dervin discuss a study in which student teachers in Finland examined essays written by Chinese student teachers. Exposure to perspectives such as those found in the essays can better prepare student teachers for dealing with difficult questions related to diversity in the classroom. Tavares and Skrefsrud look at how museums can support intercultural learning. Guðjónsdóttir, Kristinsdóttir, Lefever, and Óskarsdóttir examine practices among teacher educators in Iceland for teaching students about working in increasingly multicultural classrooms. Benediktsson presents findings related to a study on Danish student teachers countering discrimination in their teaching practice. Among Finnish first year student teachers, Haara, Rissanen, and Kuusisto investigate questions of growth mindset, experiences of cultural diversity, and social justice beliefs.

In the second section, *Multilingual Learning in Diverse Classrooms*, the two featured chapters explore teachers' perspectives and practices relating to the use of languages other than the dominant one being spoken in educational settings. Alisaari, Bergroth, Harju-Autti, Heikkola, and Sissonen examine how Finnish teachers can come to value students' use of their whole linguistic repertoire. Also presenting results from a study in Finland, Yli-Jokipii, Rissanen, and Kuusisto discuss how mother tongue teaching can improve student success rates.

The third section, *Identifying Skills and Competencies for Future Teacher Religious Education*, contains two chapters which cover skills and approaches that can be taken to support and teach about religious diversity in Nordic contexts. Kimanen shows how teachers can more critically engage with religion in the classroom by developing an understanding of diverse religions, including through engaging in self-reflection on one's own worldviews. The other chapter by Skrefsrud and Tavares uses Paulo Freire's theory of liberationist pedagogy to bring students' personal lives into educational processes, emphasizing dialogue as a means to create transformational educational experiences.

*Educators Supporting Cultural and Linguistic Diversity* is the fourth section, containing four chapters. Here, Larsson connects movement education with Kumashiro's idea of teaching for uncertainty as a form of anti-oppressive education. Rusk and Ståhl explore the potential for gaming to develop technological competencies and a sense of belonging among students. They also address ways in which teachers can use gaming to teach students to be critical of social and cultural norms. Wolff, Peskova, and Draycott then connect multicultural education with questions of social justice, arguing that for real change to happen in classrooms, teacher educators need to become aware of undergraduate students' understandings of multicultural education. Reporting on a study with school principals in Iceland, Ragnarsdóttir then discusses how diversity education initiatives in preschools tend to be led by specific people who are interested in taking up those challenges, rather than institutionally led, although training for staff on working with diverse groups could improve such practices.

In the last section, *Students' and Parents' Encounters with Diversity*, the first three chapters take place in Norway, and the final one in the Swedish context. Rasmussen and Iversen explore Polish parents' experiences of engaging with schools in Norway when their children were having language-related difficulties. Basha and Skrefsrud draw on interviews and photo-elicitation to understand how Norwegian students experience

multicultural school events. Melnikova examines how migrant parents support their children's high school education and how students and teachers view this support. The last chapter features Winlund's exploration of how recently arrived immigrant students to Sweden can contribute to their understanding of the new culture in which they live; it is the only one in the book that touches on gender and sexuality.

It should be noted that the book provides insights into diversity mostly as it relates to language, culture, and ethnicity. It does not really address other areas of diversity education such as gender, sexuality, ability, and class. While a book need not be comprehensive, the title offers little insight into *which* diversity/ies will be studied.

Many chapters in the book highlight the need for greater structural and institutional supports, such as better-quality education to equip teachers to teach about and for diversity (Ragnarsdóttir; Yli-Jokipii et al.) The book offers some insight into what this support could look like, for example, by outlining specific approaches to diversity training (as seen in Chen and Dervin or in Tavares and Skrefsrud), this being a key strength of the book. An example of such an approach, emphasized by many authors as fundamental to teaching for and about diversity, is that students' linguistic and cultural differences should be seen as an important and effective resource or tool for helping them learn, not as a weakness.

A main critique, though, was the relative absence of author positionality statements. Discussion of positionality is a common feature in qualitative educational research (Lincoln et al., 2024) as well as in research relating to questions of identity and culture. Although there were some notable exceptions such as Rasmussen and Iversen, authors rarely discussed how they related to the aspect of the diversity being explored, such as whether they belonged to the linguistic or cultural minorities they were studying or their personal experiences teaching for or about diversity. Positionality statements may have offered some insight into the biases or assumptions that authors (and teachers) bring to these subjects and may have strengthened the book.

Overall, the book provides useful insights for teachers, education administrators, policymakers, and educational researchers into challenges and opportunities related to diversity and education. It also suggests important avenues for further research, especially developing criticality in multicultural teacher education, while connecting multicultural and diversity education to social justice issues. In addition, the book offers practical methods for researching diversity in education, and teaching practices that can contribute to creating more inclusive classrooms where

all can thrive. Given the anti-diversity sentiments growing worldwide, exploring questions of diversity in education is increasingly pressing.

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