

EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL SYSTEMS: DENMARK

Migrant children and communities in a transforming Europe



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The project Migrant Children and Communities in a Transforming Europe (MiCreate) aims to stimulate inclusion of diverse groups of migrant children by adopting child-centered approach to migrant children integration on educational and policy level.

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Research partners

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Fakulteta za dizajn, Slovenia (FD)

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1. Introduction

This report highlights the relationship between members of the educational community and migrant children at selected Danish schools, focusing on the school representatives' perceptions from encountering migrant children, and their approach to the integration of migrant children in Denmark. We focus especially on professionals' handling of diversity with respect to approaches informed by monoculturalism, multiculturalism and interculturalism.

The analysis is the result of a compilation and cross-referencing of 15 interviews with school headmasters and also five focus groups involving members of the school communities, two interviews with parents, and 19 interviews with professionals at the schools, such as teachers, counsellors and librarians. Furthermore, we present an analysis of examples of visual displays, curriculums and teaching materials from the six schools.

The six schools selected vary regarding size, geographical location and age group, years offered and organisation. However, they are all characterised by diversity regarding religious, cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the students, and by the fact that they all host reception classes for newly arrived children and young people.

In the report, we discuss the main ideas emerging from the empirical material consisting of interviews, focus groups and teaching material, focusing on the schools' approaches to integration, how they are affected by migration, the resources and mediators employed for integration, and finally, obstacles and difficulties in the integration process as well as possibilities for improvement.

2. Methodological approach

The information gathering strategies were sensitive to the underlying fact that we are carrying out interviews and observations in the schools' territories and that a primary objective is to establish a good relationship with the school staff and become familiar with the perceptions of and practice surrounding migrant students, in order to be able to conduct field work with children in MiCREATE WP 5-7.

The interview guides were highly structured and organised in accordance with the project plan. However, while the MiCREATE project differs between local children and migrant children, in our case defined as children born outside Denmark, some informants referred to migrant children as first and second-generation migrant children interchangeably. We entered the field by email, phone, or by gatekeepers arranging interviews. All interviewees were informed about the project and signed the declaration of consent. All interviews were transcribed and pseudonymised, and subsequently coded in NVivo version 12 software. When analysing data, we systematised the statements of the informants and presented their different approaches to and positions on the topics (cf. the section headings).

Furthermore, we suggest how the different approaches can be characterised. In doing this, we were inspired by Banks (2019). He distinguishes between an infusion approach and a transformation approach to the curriculum. The first approach is monocultural, privileging assimilation; the second is either multicultural or intercultural. Thus it may open the way for either parallel/separate cultures or integration and dialogue.

2.1. School sample¹

Beechwood School

The school is a public elementary school (years 0-9, including special education classes) with approximately 700 students, located in a small town with a middle-class/socioeconomically mixed population. In 2015, the school hosted several reception classes due to many new refugee students, mainly from Syria and Somalia, but today there is just one reception class at the school, with less than 10 students (aged 9-15). The share of bilingual students (of which some are born in Denmark) is about 15 per cent and it has been like that for several years.

Belltown School

The school is a public elementary school (years 0-9) situated in a large city. It receives children from an urban area which is officially categorised as a 'ghetto', a definition used by the Danish authorities for areas with high rates of crime, unemployment, low incomes, and migrants (first or second generation) among the inhabitants. The school is nationally and linguistically diverse, as many of its students and/or parents have family ties outside the EU, predominantly in Arabic-speaking countries and Somalia. Consequently, the proportion of students with Danish as their second language is about 80 per cent, although the number of students who have gone through transnational migration themselves does not exceed a fifth of the total number of students.

Elderflower School

The school is a lower secondary school with year 10 only in a large town. The school has about 170 students, of which 20 per cent were born abroad. Year 10 is an optional year for students uncertain of what youth education programme to choose. Most students are 15 or 16 years old. Elderflower School has one reception class with approximately 14 students aged 14-18. The students in the reception class are taught Danish as a second language, mathematics and English, and are offered project weeks with excursions. Furthermore, they have elective courses (sports, music, outdoor activities, etc.) together with the mainstream classes. Promoting integration is a central aim of the school according to its website. Observations

¹ The Danish school system includes one comprehensive elementary school consisting of primary school (year 0-6) and lower secondary school (year 7-9/10).

Cities are categorised as follows:

Rural area or villages: less than 1.000 inhabitants

Small town: 1.000-19.999 inhabitants

Large town: 20.000-99.999 inhabitants

Large city: Capital area and cities with at least 100.000 inhabitants

from a reception class parent-teacher conference showed that parents were encouraged to send their children to the annual gala.

Maple School

Maple School is an alternative option for the lower secondary level of elementary school. The school is situated on the outskirts of a large town. There are two types of schooling at Maple School: reception classes and alternative lower secondary level, each situated at different addresses. The reception classes are reserved for newly arrived migrants, age 15 to 18, since they are too old for enrolling on the regular reception classes in elementary school. Being at a separate address means very poor contact with native or long-term migrant students. One reception class is for the very newly arrived and the other is for those preparing for school-leaving examinations. There are two teachers assigned to the two classes. The teachers are together with the students during the whole day, including breaks.

Meadow School

The school is a public lower secondary school (year 10 and reception class) situated in a small town with mostly middle-class inhabitants. There is one reception class at the school with 10 students aged 14-17. The class is taught Danish as a second language and mathematics. In other subjects, such as English and PE, the reception class students join the mainstream classes. The share of migrant students is about 10 per cent.

Oak Tree School

Oak Tree School is a public elementary school (years 0-9) located in a large city. The school is one of 51 Save the Children Ambassador Schools in Denmark, which means that the school should explicitly articulate children's rights and live up to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The school highlights inclusive education, providing both special education classes and reception classes at the same school. The school has pupils from around 20 different nationalities and 15 per cent of the pupils are bilingual. Diversity is seen as resource as the school reflects the surrounding society and socioeconomic diversity of the city.

Table A. Schools and community characteristics.

School	Typology (public/charter/private)	School level (primary/secondary/both)	Location (city, small village, countryside, etc.)	Total number of students (approximately)	Migration rate	Languages (apart from Danish)	Religions
Beechwood	Public	Primary and lower secondary	Small town	700	15 per cent, estimated	Polish, Ukrainian, Kurdish, Turkish, Arabic, Mandarin, Romanian, Somali, etc.	Different forms of Christianity and Islam
Belltown	Public	Primary and lower secondary	Large city	400	20 per cent, estimated	Arabic, Greenlandic, Kurdish, Pakistani, Somali, Swahili, Turkish, Urdu, Vietnamese, Filipino	Different forms of Christianity and Islam
Elderflower	Public	Lower secondary (year 10)	Large town	170	20 per cent, estimated	Turkish, Kurdish, Dari, Arabic, Mandarin, Vietnamese, Polish, Romanian, Serbian, Spanish, Somali, Tigrinya, etc.	Different forms of Christianity and Islam, Buddhism
Maple	Public	Lower secondary (years 15-18)	Large town	35	100 per cent	Arabic, Kurdish languages, Greenlandic, Somali, Tigrinya, Polish, Vietnamese, English, etc.	Different forms of Islam and Christianity
Meadow	Public	Lower secondary (year 10)	Small town	130	10 per cent, estimated	Polish, German, Serbian, Kurdish, Turkish, Arabic, Somali, Tigrinya, Filipino, Thai, etc.	Different forms of Christianity and Islam
Oak Tree	Public	Primary and lower secondary	Large town	550	15 per cent, estimated	Danish, Arabic, Turkish, Russian, Italian, Kurdish	Different forms of Christianity and Islam

						languages, Tigrinya, etc.	
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2.2. Participants

Beechwood School

By 31 January 2020, three interviews have been carried out. Two interviews with one teacher in year 6 (Cecilie) and one interview with the deputy headmaster responsible for years 4-6 as well as the reception class (Sune). Later in the project it is expected that more interviews will be carried out, among them one interview with the teacher of the reception class and year 4.

Belltown School

Five interviews have been carried out among the teaching staff working with years 4-6 either as class teachers (Lise and Henrik), as regular teachers (Ahmad and Dorte), or as a teacher (Gitte) in a special class for Danish as a second language for students with a migration background. Furthermore, the headmaster of the school has been interviewed. Finally, two focus groups were planned; one interview with a group of librarians, and one interview with a group of parents. The former has been completed, whereas the latter was only partly completed (with one parent), because identifying and inviting parents interested in participating provide to be unexpectedly difficult.

Elderflower School

Several teachers from the year 10 classes and the reception classes have been interviewed. So have the headmaster and the deputy headmaster, as well as a member of staff at a group home for unaccompanied migrant children housing students from the school. Two focus group interviews with teachers have been completed, and one focus group interview with parents was planned. This interview was completed as an email interview with one parent from the school board.

Meadow School

By 31 January 2020, four interviews have been carried out with one year 10 teacher (Marianne), the counsellor in the reception class (Adel) and the school's deputy headmaster (Niels). The latter was interviewed twice, in spring and in autumn 2019. Later in the project it is expected that more interviews will be carried out, among them one interview with the main teacher of the reception class.

Oak Tree School

Three interviews have been carried out: one individual interview was with the headmaster and another with the art teacher of the reception class. Furthermore, one focus group interview with the two teachers of the reception class was completed.

Maple School

Two interviews have been carried out, since the school is distinctive as it only accommodates two reception classes and two teachers permanently employed. The two interviews were

undertaken as one individual interview with the headmaster and a focus group interview with two teachers.

Table B. Participants in focus groups and interviewees.

School name	Interviews	Focus group parents	Focus group teachers
Beechwood School	Sune (deputy headmaster) Cecilie (teacher); interviewed twice	-	-
Belltown School	Ahmad (teacher) Lise (teacher) Gitte (teacher) Henrik (teacher) Dorte (teacher)	Heidi (parent)	Torsten (librarian) Thomas (librarian) Birger (librarian) Ester (librarian)
Meadow School	Niels (deputy headmaster); interviewed twice Adel (counsellor) Marianne (teacher)	-	-
Maple School	Elias (Headmaster)	-	Charlotte & Michelle (class teacher and teacher)
Oak Tree School	Lorna (headmaster) Agnete (teacher)	-	Majbrit & Hans (class teacher and teacher)
Elderflower School	Formal interview (recorded): Jette (teacher) Tina (member of staff at a group home for unaccompanied migrant children). Ulla (deputy headmaster) Informal interviews: Søren (headmaster) Ulla (deputy headmaster) Line (teacher in the reception classes), twice Mette (teacher in the reception classes), three times Anders, Hanne (teachers, year 10)	Mail interview: Lene (parent, chair of the School Board)	Line and Mette (teachers in the reception classes) Uffe and Hanne (teacher in year 10 and reception classes; teacher in the reception classes)

2.3 Analysed teaching materials

Table C. Analysed teaching materials.

School	Typology/name of the material	Description/context	Educational purpose	Who brought/created the material	Relevance for the project
Beechwood 1-3	3 paintings done by children showing objects and symbols associated with Denmark: flag, LEGO, same sex marriages, pigs, fairy tale characters, etc.	Main entrance hall	Decoration?	Children	National symbolism
Beechwood 4-5	Large display regarding school's wellbeing policy, signed in 2007	Large central indoor space	Showing that wellbeing is highly prioritised (or was in 2007)	School Board	Wellbeing, anti-bullying
Beechwood 6	Poster on break rules	Middle school corridor	Reminding children of rules for behaviour in breaks	Probably teachers of years 4-5	Making rules explicit and visual to children
Beechwood 7	Decoration of door to classroom showing the globe with children of different hair and skin colour placed around it	Door to year 4 classroom	Signalising diversity (many national backgrounds in this class)	Probably a teacher ordered decoration sticker at a shop	Cultural/ethnic diversity
Beechwood 8	Custom-made signpost showing direction and distances to different cities all over the world	School yard	Geography – being part of a global world	Unknown	Globalisation
Beechwood 9	Exhibition of books written by children in year 4	School library	Danish	Children	Complexity of content; most children wrote fictitious stories but one child (a seemingly successful student) wrote only "school sucks" and "f*ck"
Belltown 1	Teaching materials (3 pieces)	Text handed out to migrant students	Teaching Danish as a second language	A teaching material publishing house	Aimed at migrant students
Belltown 2	Poster	At the entrance to the classroom for Danish as a second language teaching	Inspiring migrant students to practice Danish	A teacher, probably	Its content and where it is placed
Belltown 3	Poster	On a wall in a hallway	Assisting and inspiring teachers of students	A teaching material publishing house	Its content and aim

			with Danish as a second language		
Belltown 4	Series of posters	The posters are about democracy and placed in a centrally located shared space	Information about and inspiration for democratic practices in the school	The Ministry of Education	Its placement and message
Belltown 5	Exhibition on Danish history (5 pieces)	In a centrally located shared space	Information about Danish history	Unknown	Its placement and content
Belltown 6	Photo of library shelf.	A shelf with books categorised as 'culturally diverse'	Aiding students in finding books with intercultural themes	Member(s) of staff at the library	The categorisation practice
Elderflower 1	Maths assignment (year 10)	Hand-out to students	Practising what to do at a written examination	The Ministry of Education	How to practice maths in Denmark
Elderflower 2	'Maths Professor' computer programme	Accessible for the students on the internet	Practising maths	Publisher	How to practice maths in Denmark
Elderflower 3 + 4	Copy from textbook Teaching material – elementary English	Hand-out to the students	Practising grammar, discussing culture	Text by textbook author (3) Questions answered/filled in by a student (4)	Language and culture education
Elderflower 5	Student text – Danish as a second language	Presenting the house of my dreams (picture, written text)	Writing/speaking about the house of my dreams	A student	Discussing housing
Elderflower 6	Copy from textbook Fiction – Danish as a second language	What is fiction? Hand-out to the students	Understanding concepts (composition, summary, conflict) used when analysing fiction	Copy from a textbook – filled in by a student	How to analyse fiction in Danish schools
Elderflower 7 + 8	Texts written by teachers and students: Project: The body	How to describe the body in Danish Hand-out (7) and form filled in by student (8)	Practising Danish grammar Talking about the body	Texts produced by students and teachers	Discussing the body. How do you do that in Denmark?
Elderflower 9 + 10	Text written by the teachers (9), poster on the wall produced by student (10) Project: Danish history in the Middle Ages	Comparison of Danish history in the Middle Ages with the history of your 'home country' in the same period of time	Discussing history in a Danish national and a global perspective	Texts produced by teachers and poster produced by students	Discussing history from an multi- or intercultural perspective
Elderflower 11 + 12	Two paintings by students Elective course: Art and design	Paintings exhibited in the classroom	Creative work	Two paintings by students	How to be creative in a new context/ school

Elderflower 13	Student text from an excursion	Student writing about an excursion	Being able to report on an excursion	Text written by a student	Practising how to report on an excursion
Elderflower 14	Poster on the wall	Picture of Nelson Mandela and quotation: "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world"	Empowerment	The staff	Aiming at empowering the students
Elderflower 15	Poster on the wall	Picture of John Lennon and quotation: 'Imagine' – the song	Empowerment	The staff	Aiming at empowering the students
Elderflower 16	Poster on the wall	School regulations	Education	The staff	Educating the students
Meadow 1	Poster by the main entrance	Showing three girls coming out of a communal shower – the one in the front with dark skin and hair. Text: 'Shower happily in school'	Making it clear that it is expected of young people (boys and girls respectively) in Denmark that they shower naked together after physical education in school	Teacher organisation	Cultural habits; showering together is a matter of concern among PE teachers and is highly disputed in the Danish multiculturalism debate
Meadow 2-4	Posters at e-sport corner (part of communal room) in school	Explaining pillars of gaming health (in English), ethical code and rules of the game (in Danish)	Making rules clear and visual to young people; including young people's interests in school activities	The staff	Balancing adult perspective and young people's perspective
Oak Tree 1	Textbooks and teaching materials (3)	In class, on shelves and on the teacher's desk.	Texts for teaching Danish and practising reading	Different teaching material publishing houses and the teacher (self-produced)	Content; learning Danish and reading practice
Oak Tree 2	Maps and posters in the classroom (3)	Classroom walls	Danish grammar	Public/teaching material publishing; brought by teachers	Pointing out correct grammar as a goal for language learning.
Oak Tree 3	Posters of idioms	Classroom wall; students' worksheets	Cultural and language diversity – learning idioms and comparing	Published as teaching material	Language diversity, multicultural knowledge.
Oak Tree 4	Photo of 'stopwatch' (hour timer) (1)	Teacher's desk	Compartmentalisation of work time	School material, most likely from special needs education	Used in all lessons as a tool in teaching for and working in class
Oak Tree 5	Posters in the library and the staffroom (2)	On noticeboards	Instruction in Danish as second language acquisition	Official teaching materials publisher.	Mono-cultural and single-

		in and around staffroom.			language approach.
Oak Tree 6	'Save the Children'-logo	In the hall by the school entrance	Ambassador school for 'Save the Children'	Save the Children	Inclusion, diversity and the rights of the child.
Maple 1	Photo of grammar-posters on a noticeboard in class	In the classroom	Grammar instructions and mnemonic rules.	Teaching material publishers.	Correct grammar as part of language acquisition; monolingual.
Maple 2	Photo of worksheet booklets	In the classroom and communal area/school hall.	Rehearsing grammar and Danish language, in copies with an infinite workflow.	Officially published/teaching material	Learning grammar, mainly single language (Danish) and monocultural, but with some aspects of diversity.
Maple 3	Photo of communal area/school hall with table tennis, billiard, etc.	In the area outside the classroom	Leisure time, relationships with peers and teachers	Schools' choice.	Diversity, relations and friendships and being together with teachers as equals.
Maple 4	Photos of posters for written assignments	In class.	Information on and instruction in writing assignments on the subject of Danish.	Produced by teacher	Bridging the gap between curriculum and writing practices. 'Translation' of demands and goals.

3. Results

In the following, we discuss the main ideas emerging from the empirical material consisting of interviews, focus groups and teaching materials, focusing on the schools' approaches to integration, how they are affected by migration, the resources and mediators for integration, and finally, obstacles and difficulties in the integration process as well as possibilities for improvement.

3.1 How schools approach integration

3.1.1 Knowledge, perceptions and attitudes towards integration of migrant children

There is a great deal of similarity in the way members of the educational community from different schools approach the issue of integrating migrant children. In terms of terminology, 'integration' (Danish "*integration*") and 'inclusion' (Danish "*inklusion*") prevail, whereas terms such as 'diversity' (Danish "*diversitet*" or "*mangfoldig*") rarely occur in the materials. By adopting, transforming and expanding the theoretical framework of Berry (1997), the analysis of the statements of the informants indicates that one position in particular regarding the

integration of migrant children prevails within the educational community, namely an integrationist position. Here, integration is perceived as a matter of assisting migrant children in becoming part of the school and society as a whole, while taking note of individual differences among children and taking an inclusionist stance towards customs and practices of the children's cultural backgrounds.

Another prevailing, yet less prominent, position is an assimilationist position, where integration first and foremost means that migrant children and youth should learn about Danish culture and language. This position ranges from a softer version, which partly overlaps with the integrationist stance, to a harder version, where the cultural background of migrant students is perceived, explicitly, as a barrier that integration must overcome.

Less prevailing positions are a segregation or separation position, where temporary placement of migrant students outside the normal school system is perceived as the most promising route to integrating them into the school system and society; and an 'ignorant' position, where integration is not perceived as a matter of special concern, because migrant students, seen from an egalitarian point of view, should be perceived and treated as students on equal terms with their Danish peers.

3.1.2 Knowledge, perceptions and attitudes about migration

Overall, members of the educational community take the issue of migration into account when reflecting on their practice and institutional setting. Thus, their statements indicate that they are deeply preoccupied with dealing with questions related to migration and reflecting upon migration, its meaning and effects.

In general terms, migration is, predominantly, an issue that is perceived as contentious. A small minority of informants even perceives migration as problematic as they, implicitly or explicitly, point to migration as a source of segregation and/or conflict along ethnic minority lines, or between members of migrant communities and the majority of society. Other informants, who explicitly express a positive attitude to migration, seeing it as a resource from which the school community can benefit, counterbalance this image.

When reflecting on migration and schooling, two tendencies come to the fore. On the one hand, a large group of informants display a nuanced and differentiated level of knowledge and perceptions, for instance by pointing to the country of origin and pre-migration school experiences, when relating to migrant children and their families, and taking socioeconomic factors into consideration. On the other hand, some informants perceive migrants in generalising terms, for instance referring to children's (often Arabic) culture as an explanation for how they behave.

A last theme, occurring in a few interviews, is how political discourse and legislation frame the phenomenon of migration. Here, some reflect on migration politics affecting the influx of

immigrants into Denmark in terms of who and how many. Others perceive political discourse on migration as a factor that negatively affects the school community.

3.2 How diversity in a migratory context affects school

Across the educational community, diversity in the migratory context is, in general terms, perceived as having a profound impact on schools, both in terms of 1) their institutional features and the everyday life in schools, 2) how schools are recognised in their neighbourhood, 3) the academic outcomes of the schools, and the academic trajectories that students follow when leaving lower secondary school.

In terms of the first theme, members of the educational community consider schools receiving migrant children special in different ways. This is related to the fact that this group of students (and their families) have extraordinary backgrounds and experiences which the school must consider, for example when it comes to children and families who has been subject to traumatic experiences. Some informants also stress the point that schools receiving migrant children are entitled to extra funding. Furthermore, some informants experience that cooperation between parents and the school is particularly challenging in these schools (cf. Section 3.4 below). Finally, some teachers indicate that the presence of students with a migration background in schools involves personal engagement as a profound part of their professional identity, and that teaching in such educational contexts is considered particularly stressful.

In terms of the everyday life at schools, some informants indicate that the presence of migrant children in their schools prompts teachers to develop and employ alternative teaching strategies. A small minority of informants experience that the behaviour of migrant children related to their social and/or cultural background, has a negative effect on everyday life at the school. Some point to the lack of knowledge and experience with certain cultural customs, specifically the celebration of birthdays in (connection) to schools, as problematic. Others, on the other hand, stress that the presence of migrant students enriches the everyday life in schools, for instance because this group of students are found to be particularly tolerant.

In terms of the second theme, how schools are recognised in the neighbourhood, there is a widespread impression across the educational community that the presence of migrant students at schools affects the reputation of schools, often in negative ways. Some report that well-off parents opt out of schools with high percentages of first- and second-generation immigrant students, resulting in an uneven distribution of students compared to the general composition of the population in the school district.

Regarding the last theme, outcomes in schools and the academic trajectories of students, informants generally report that the migrant students struggle academically due to insufficient schooling in their countries of birth and/or the limited time they have been in Denmark. A few informants, on the other hand, experience migrant student outperforming peers born in Denmark, due to previous schooling in their countries of birth. Informants find

that they lack knowledge of the academic trajectories that migrant students follow when leaving lower secondary school. However, some have the impression that migrant students mainly enter shorter educational programmes or take no educational courses at all.

3.3 Resources and mediators for integration

3.3.1 *School reception policies*

In this section we examine which integration programmes and projects the schools implement. Additionally, we discuss the ethical concepts and values guiding the programmes.

All schools in the study arrange reception meetings for staff members, parents and the migrant child. An interpreter can be present too. One school produces a leaflet for the parents. Reading specialists, language specialists, social educator assistants and mentors can be subsequently allocated to the migrant child for support. Sometimes they support individual students and sometimes they are part of a team in the classroom. Informants from several schools say that they try to help the students to establish social networks with Danish students. One informant tells that they urge the students in the reception class to attend the yearly gala, and another informant stresses the importance of migrant children (year 0-4) using the after-school care facilities. Informants from two schools find it important to refer migrant children to a Pedagogical Psychological Guidance Centre in order to find out if they are suffering from trauma.

The informants emphasise the need to take care of the migrant children. They must have the opportunity to learn Danish, get an education and be socially integrated in an environment characterised by cultural diversity. To master the Danish language in an instrumental way is not enough. Most informants seem to have a multi- or intercultural approach to the integration of migrant children, but also find it hard to get there, protesting against 'the lack of resources'.

Reception classes are no longer mandatory in Denmark, and in many municipalities newly arrived migrant children are enrolled in mainstream classes lacking supporting teachers in general and teachers being able to speak the mother tongues of the migrant in particular. One informant finds it hard to get time and resources both to give the migrant children an education and to integrate them socially. Another informant declines to take responsibility for the whole situation, but admits to having a guilty conscience about it.

3.3.2 *Practices addressing migrant children's integration*

In this section we examine the actions taken to facilitate integration in the fieldwork schools, taking the narratives of the informants as the starting point.

One teacher says that new students are offered a walk around the school to get used to it right from the beginning and in order to get to know other students; to 'network'. Many informants find this 'networking' important in the integration process, other factors being 'summer fêtes' and 'market days', etc., involving migrant children and their parents.

A teacher from another school states that the students become integrated by learning Danish. Most informants emphasise language acquisition and mention pronunciation and the appropriation of disciplinary concepts of school subjects. The informants do not agree when it comes to the relationship between Danish and mother tongue. One headmaster emphasises that the migrant children have to speak Danish and assimilate Danish traditions. Others stress that the mother tongue of the migrant child is an important resource in learning a new language and in learning the disciplines in the school. Some even stress the importance of involving the holidays of migrant children, such as Eid.

Textbooks and teaching materials are mentioned by most of the informants. According to one teacher, the Danish as a second language textbooks are much better than they used to be. Other teachers claim that they lack good textbooks in – literally speaking – all subjects. They find existing textbooks stigmatising migrant children and not involving their experiences and life-world. E.g. one teacher criticises a textbook in religious education. When talking about the wedding ritual, only the Christian/protestant ritual is examined, thus excluding Muslim students from dialogue and integration. Many teachers find students' independent reading important. They must read fiction, easy readers, fantasy, or whatever they want to read, just to get used to reading and to read about what they find important. Integration practices also include one teacher taking a migrant child to the dentist and another teacher discussing the need for diet with a migrant child.

Tests and assessment are important to most of the informants. They are eager to screen the language skills of the migrant children, and to prepare the students for the examinations at the end of lower secondary school in order to get them ready for upper secondary school or vocational education. Many of the migrant children have difficulties passing the exams, and the teachers are worried about that.

None of the informants talk about how children's initiatives are considered or how children participate in decision-making at school. It's hard to say whether the practices have a mono-, multi- or intercultural approach, rather the material seems to be characterised by interdiscursivity (Fairclough, 1992/2004).

3.3.3 Teaching material resources

In the following analysis we focus on how the visual displays of the school and the teaching materials employed by the teachers (e.g. textbooks, web-based resources, teacher-produced materials, etc.) address and represent the topic of cultural plurality, interculturality, cultural integration and intercultural co-existence.

The teaching materials have been analysed in order to examine what kind of teaching the material prepare the ground for, though when analysing teaching materials, we do provide an account of either the teachers' expansion, support for and 'cultural translation' of the material or for the students' outcome of teaching. Thus, focusing on the domain of the perceived curriculum (Goodlad et al, 1979), we distinguish between an infusion approach and a transformation approach (Banks 2019). The first approach is monocultural, the second is either multicultural or intercultural.

At the fieldwork schools we have recorded a lot of textbooks and hand-outs for teaching Danish as a second language. The number of grammar and language exercise sheets is substantial, thus there seems to be a discourse of migrant children 'lacking language competencies' (roughly a discourse of deficiencies). In the material, the development of awareness of Danish as a language is explicit, while addressing the communicative competence in the language of origin or a positive and inclusive attitude towards languages other than Danish are rare. At one school we saw a poster instructing teachers in '5 stages of language acquisition' with the aim of using Danish as a 'single-language' user, with only minor influence of the mother tongue. At another school we saw a poster about teaching students who do not have Danish as their mother tongue emphasising the importance for teachers to facilitate engagement between local and migrant students, thus perhaps promoting a more inclusive outlook.

When it comes to content, the teaching materials are mainly monocultural, presenting white children and adults, the Danish language, and Western middle-class culture. In one textbook on the concept of the 'family', a Danish nuclear family (father, mother, three children) is presented. The students read about the family's house, their Christmas Eve, and a trip to Copenhagen. Examples and content from a variety of cultures and groups are not included. The narration effectively reproduces a stereotypical image of middle-class life in the Christian, constitutional monarchy of Denmark, leaving only a small amount of scope for reflection on internal differences and issues related to transnational migration.

All teaching materials we have seen are in Danish (except when teaching English), but at one school library some books in Arabic and Turkish are available or can be ordered. Google Translate is used as a mediating tool at all schools.

At one school we saw in a public area an exhibition on Danish history and a poster series on democracy. The former consisted of various objects and posters. The importance of Christianity in Danish history played a prominent role in the exhibition, leaving no room for reflection upon internal diversity, struggles and non-linear historical developments. The poster series is from the Ministry of Education and conveys a more inclusive message. The layout and use of font show democracy as a core value. The wording emphasises the practical and participatory aspects of the institution of democracy, conveying the message that democracy is for everyone to influence and develop and that this process starts in the classroom. The exhibition is seemingly monocultural, while the poster series is intercultural, inviting dialogue and common action within the framework of democracy.

At another school, a picture of Nelson Mandela welcomes you at one of the main entrances. A quote next to the picture states: "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world". So a well-known black man is urging all students to educate. At another school we saw another exhibition on Danish history in medieval times. Reception class students produced the posters, and next to the posters about Danish history they had put up posters telling you about the history of their countries of origin in the same era.

Thus, an infusion approach clearing the way for a monocultural regime is visible when observing teaching materials and visual representations. But this approach does not stand alone. Materials pointing towards a transformative approach and multicultural or intercultural regimes are also recorded. While an assimilative approach seems prominent at first, and perhaps is the dominant approach, pointing to the high degree of interdiscursivity is also important. With some aspects of the teaching material, a transformative school culture empowering students from diverse ethnic and cultural groups emerges.

3.3.4 Training and accompaniments

This section provides information about the professional background of the teachers and how it relates to the integration of migrant children, as well as information about in-service training and external support received by the schools for integration of migrant children. When talking about these matters, informants – both teachers and headmasters – primarily talk about language acquisition. Several of the informants complain about the lack of funding for in-service training.

Teacher training is a four-year education course in Denmark. Students study three main subjects. Between 2004 and 2012, Danish as a second language was offered as a main subject (35 ECTS), but today all student teachers attend a short course in Danish as a second language (10 ECTS). Teachers having the formerly available main course are requested at all fieldwork schools. One headmaster adds that social-pedagogical knowledge is important too.

In-service training in language acquisition is mentioned by most of the informants, as are courses about inclusion, migrant experiences, supervision, conflict resolution and trauma/PTSD. One teacher has an inclusion advisor education. In-service training is conducted as courses for one or two teachers from the school at University Colleges or as courses for all teachers held at the school. Supervision and action learning also occur.

Furthermore, the schools draw on internal and external support. Several schools have mentors for migrant children and they include reading specialists and school psychologists (as part of the regular school system) who work with migrant children. Several schools have had refugees speaking Arabic and Somali in job training, or have employed former refugees, such as from Syria, as counsellors for migrant children. In one school, a municipality consultant in bilingualism offers three-days courses for teachers. At another school, volunteers from Red Cross Denmark act as homework assistants for migrant children.

The teachers and headmasters do not say much about the content of teaching and courses. Based on the interviews, it cannot be concluded whether the approaches are mono-, multi- or intercultural.

3.4 Obstacles, difficulties and weaknesses

In the following we describe the main obstacles and difficulties in trying to promote the integration of migrant children, according to school professionals. Main topics of the analysed interviews are the challenges of school organisation; difficulties related to didactics and teaching; communication difficulties and value differences among professionals as well as between professionals and parents; professionals' experiences of powerlessness, and lastly, insecurity among children related to, among others, immigration politics and discourse.

In relation to school organisation, the organisation of teaching of newly arrived migrant students is often mentioned. Both reception classes segregated from mainstream education and the alternative, placing children in mainstream classes shortly upon arrival (which is a relatively new practice in Denmark), are seen as hindering integration – the first due to both students and teachers experiencing being secluded from the mainstream system, the latter due to immense language problems.

The system is especially unsuitable for late arrivals (lower secondary level), not offering them the time and support needed to reach upper secondary level. In particular, young people with poor English skills are vulnerable since too little help is offered in a language that they understand.

Related to didactics and teaching, the main difficulties are lack of supervision and counselling and lack of suitable teaching material (linguistic and cultural) for the children, and particularly for new arrivals at lower secondary level and onwards. Teachers also call for realistic and feasible teaching methods and approaches to bilingual children. Moreover, tests and exams are seen as obstacles to integration. Examples are maths tests requiring comprehensive Danish skills and mandatory language tests in schools in exposed city 'ghetto' areas, perceived as unjust by both parents and teachers.

Some professionals share intercultural reflections on how to improve, such as being aware of navigating between universal content that is immediately intelligible and nationally specific content requiring explanation for migrant children.

Several professionals mention communication and value differences with their colleagues as problematic. They call for more communication and dialogue across education contexts and more time for professional collaboration. Some find that colleagues complicate integration due to poor pedagogical skills and having a deficit perspective on migrant children.

Communication and value differences with parents are also seen as hindering integration. Due both to language problems (complicated by lack of qualified interpreters) and to differing

understandings of, for example, the helpfulness of psychological counselling (seen as stigmatising by some parents), physical punishment of children (illegal in Denmark) and child-rearing in general.

Professionals' experiences of powerlessness are remarkable in several interviews. They report lack of political commitment to support migrant children in general and individual children at risk and express feelings of despair and not being able to make a difference.

In some cases, professionals mention that children's feelings of insecurity are hindering integration. Three main causal factors are mentioned. Firstly, worries about relatives still in war zones obviously affect refugee children's wellbeing. This is combined with the second factor, namely dread of deportation to their countries of origin (refugee children in general) or of not achieving family reunification (especially young unaccompanied refugees). Children of migrant women married to Danish men fear deportation too. The third reason for insecurity according to professionals is the hard-line immigration policy and heated anti-immigration debate in Denmark. Children feeling dread and insecurity often underachieve in school and show signs of lack of wellbeing.

3.5 Possibilities of doing it better

In this section we describe what school professionals need and recommend for improving the integration of migrant children

Firstly, the informants in general regard high-quality reception programmes as important. Especially for migrant children arriving 'late' (middle school and lower secondary school), intensive teacher support to obtain the complex language skills required at this level is of utmost importance. In general, reception classes must work systematically with language learning, and must encourage reading, for example by visiting the library every week.

For children of all ages, buddy programmes are recommended. Newly arrived children may be matched with a peer buddy to help them in school during the first weeks; either a Danish peer or a peer with the same mother tongue. Another integrative measure is twin classes from schools with many migrant children and schools with many majority children.

Another measure is out-of-school learning and open school initiatives. For newly arrived children and adolescents, field trips are recommended (for example going shopping). For long-term migrant children, visiting museums and going to concert halls are mentioned as improving integration (however, also indicating a deficit perspective on children as lacking high cultural capital). Professionals also recommend opening the school to the local community, hosting activities such as bicycle repair workshops, helping parents with reading letters from authorities, food sharing organised by local grassroots organisations, birthday parties (see below), etc.

Several informants mention cross-professional cooperation as improving integration, such as teachers cooperating with family guides, intercultural counsellors, librarians, and youth education counsellors. Co-teaching is also valued by teachers, either literally being two teachers in class, one teacher and one social educator in class, or the mainstream class teacher taking part in teaching in the reception class and vice versa. Also, supervision for teachers is recommended, including pedagogical counselling for teachers who are often in conflict with their students, allowing teachers the time necessary to supervise each other, and offering support from inclusion counsellors.

As for didactics and teaching, some informants mention initiatives which may be associated with inclusive and/or intercultural education. Some teachers recommend that children with language difficulties are supported in class rather than a special language centre. Support in class must sometimes be offered in discreet ways, directed at groups of children, so that the child concerned does not feel stigmatised. Others mention visual material as helpful in teaching newly arrived migrant children. One teacher explains that longer sequences of teaching, allowing children to concentrate on a topic (e.g. fantasy literature) for a longer time and in more detail, has proven successful. Teachers also mention that professional judgment is important to know which topics to explain in detail (requiring pre-understanding of local culture) and which topics are more universal (such as maths). One teacher recommends teaching children more specifically about Danish culture (also long-term migrants and second-generation migrants), yet concurrently also giving space for 'their own culture'.

Also, teaching materials may support integration. As mentioned above, many teachers regret the lack of or poor quality materials. However, they mention that producing suitable material is possible, and that financing is the only obstacle. Self-developed material, adapted to children's needs and interests, often prove successful, as do online learning material offering texts with different levels of complexity and in different formats (e.g. including audio and visuals).

Lastly, related to communication with parents, some concrete experiences of efficient cooperation were mentioned. Concrete and literal messages to parents often facilitate cooperation. For example, making parents support concrete activities such as field trips or school parties is easy. Another suggestion is to support parents with meeting traditional Danish standards. Hence, to encourage parents to arrange a birthday party for their child's classmates, one school offers a room at school as the party venue as well as a social educator helping out during the party. In this way, migrant families are supported with taking part in an important Danish tradition, which otherwise, as stated above, may be difficult for migrant parents to do due to lack of resources and knowledge.

4. Conclusions and discussion

Our analyses in the report show that perceptions and attitudes about migrant children in educational communities tend to accentuate integration and inclusion rather than explicitly valuing diversity aims. On the one hand, the schools' approaches to integration are about

acknowledging children's migration experiences and their cultural and linguistic backgrounds, while on the other hand there is an immense focus on learning Danish language and culture, sometimes tending towards an assimilationist position.

The reception class system is a central educational mediator for integration. In the schools studied (as in most of Denmark), these classes are separated from the mainstream system, but employ gradual, increasing participation in mainstream classes in selected subjects and activities in which the teachers estimate that the migrant child is ready to take part.

The analysis of teaching material and visual representations at schools point to an infusion rather than a transformation approach (Banks, 2019), thus facilitating a monocultural approach. However, at some points a transformative or intercultural approach seems to be emerging in the teaching materials.

School communities experience challenges regarding school organisation, resources for teaching, communication difficulties among professionals and with parents. Some professionals experience powerlessness and difficulties in handling migrant children's insecure life situations.

From a critical standpoint, our analyses of experiences of educational communities point to insufficient quality of reception programmes and teaching materials as well as lack of teaching resources and skilled teachers for Danish as a second language. In particular, migrant children and young people who arrive 'late' (lower secondary level) cause concern, since it is very difficult for them to reach the required level of Danish skills to continue in education in a very limited period. The analyses also point to possibilities for improvement, since more resources for teaching and supervision of professionals, better teaching material, etc. – essentially a reception system of higher quality and given higher political priority – is recommendable.

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