

# Migration Policies as Risk Factor in Education of Migrant Children in Denmark

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NB. *Work in progress!*



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# Inclusive education of migrant children: Risk factors in the national 'reception context'?

- Analysis of 15 interviews with school principals of schools with migrant children in Denmark
- Denmark as reception context: immigration policies, integration policies, and education policies

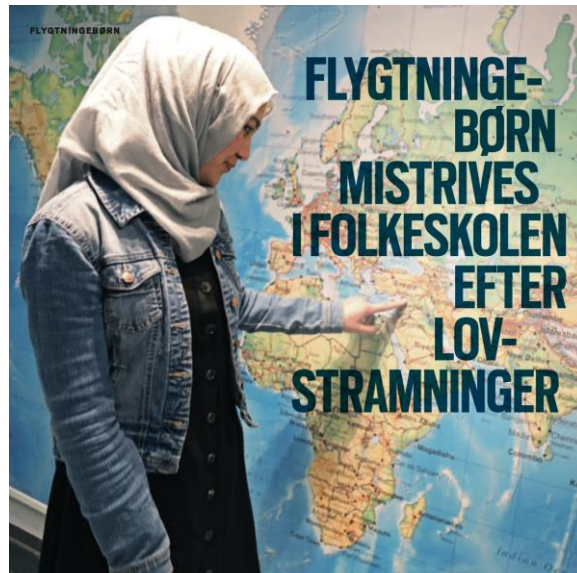
How do constructions of migration as a risk in the public discourse and immigration policies influence the possibilities for practicing inclusive education according to school principals of schools receiving migrant children?

Whether and how do official policies and public discourses on immigration constitute risk factors, contributing to conditions of uncertainty, in the everyday work in schools, according to narratives of school principals?

How can schools support inclusion of migrant students when migrant policies claim that migrants should return to their countries of origin?



# 2018: 'Paradigm shift' in immigration policy



Ny lovgivning betyder, at flygtninge ikke længere skal integreres. De skal sendes hjem, når der er fredeligt nok i deres oprindelsesland. Uvisheden om fremtiden gør elever med flygtningebaggrund urolige og fraværende i skolen. Det påvirker også lærerne og de andre elever.

TEKST OG FOTO: LARTE LARSEN

I løbet af få måneder omkring årsskiftet mistede mange elever med flygtningebaggrund motivationen og evnen til at knække på i de danske skoler. Først kom finansloven med udlændingstramninger i skoleåret af november 2018, og i februar 2019 vedtog Folketinget L.140, det såkaldte paradigmeskift. Flygtninge skal ikke længere integreres. De skal sendes hjem, når der er fredeligt nok i deres oprindelsesland, og deres ophold i Danmark er derfor kun midlertidigt og på ukendt tid.



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## An Island for 'Unwanted' Migrants Is Denmark's Latest Aggressive Anti-Immigrant Policy

## Somalisk familie står til udvisning trods mønstereksempel på integration

Rektor på Nyborg Gymnasium kæmper for to somaliske elevers ophold i Danmark og har nu besluttet selv at betale for pigernes skolegang.

### Styrelse finder ikke grundlag for kritik af Nyborg-rektor

Selv om DF-politikere mener, at det bør have »følger«, når rektor Henrik Stokholm fra Nyborg Gymnasium tillader fortsat undervisning af to somaliske piger, så har først undervisningsministeren og nu også Styrelsen for Undervisning og Kvalitet vurderet, at der ikke er grundlag for kritik af rektoren. DF's Alex Ahrendtsen kalder rektoren »heldig« og ønsker at stramme lovgivningen.



# Policies on education

**Context:** In Denmark, primary and lower secondary education is integrated in a single structure from year 0 to 9, called 'Folkeskole'. Compulsory education lasts 10 years (grade 0 to 9), including one pre-school year (grade 0) and grade 1-9

- Education is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education and Science and the national legislation covers the aims and framework for education.
- Policies for migrant/refugee children are valid concurrent with or as a compensation for the national standard 'Folkeskole' policies → learning the Danish language is a main reason, and the aim is foremost to assimilate migrant children and youth to standard classes.
- Mainly two types of spec. ed.: Participating in regular class with language support or enrolling in 'reception classes' - up to 18 pupils for no more than 2 years; classes divided by age (6-9, 9-13 and 13-16).
- Bilingual children and 'reception classes': *'a not insignificant need for language support in the form of teaching Danish as a second language, and it is considered educationally necessary to refer the pupils to the special offer.'*



# Integration policies



The ‘parallel society’ initiative and the ‘ghetto plan’, 2018

- Language test in grade 0 → schools with 30 % or more pupils from ‘marginalised residential area’ – ‘ghettos’.
- Mandatory nursery and/or kindergarten
- ‘Strengthening parents’ responsibility with objective obligation’ – economic sanctions and enforcement.

New criteria for defining ‘ghettos’: 25 ghettos in Denmark (2018), about 60.000 residents, 2/3 with ‘non-western background’.

- Decommissioning, partly demolition, privatization, prevent settlement if on welfare or ‘integration benefit’, toughen punishment... etc.

# Navigating 'at risk' policies: The questionnaire

Based mainly on the *MiCREATE* -  
questionnaire:

- 1. How do you experience the importance of having refugee and migrant children at your school?*
- 2. Do you find that the current immigration policy has an impact on the school's work with refugee and migrant children, and if so, how?*

# Principal M: *'The utmost impact...'*

A 'Folkeskole' with 70% bilingual students, adjacent to a 'ghetto'-area.

- The only school with 'reception classes' from age 6-15/16 in a medio sized provincial town.
- The policies *'...do have the utmost impact...'* [...] *this new ghetto-plan which means some of these buildings right here at the school have to be demolished [...] we do have 22 children living in Block xx and they know it has to be demolished ... in about 10 years and obviously things like that affects (them)... also the rhetoric... that is.. Are we going to be kicked out of the country or what will actually happen?'* [...] *that causes anxiety and insecurity in uttermost way.'*

Risk and advantages of the 'language test': Advantage to be part of a 'language test preparation programme', but a far-reaching risk for the children and the teachers as the children can fail the test: *'(before)... the school decided if the child could proceed to first grade or should wait... it was the headteacher who knew[...] well, it is a overall consideration ... something you just reduces to... Now it's only language who determines...'*

# Principal E: ‘*...Hmm the tone in the trend..*’

Principal for a ‘cluster’ of 4 ‘folkeskoler’ – focus on one ‘folkeskole’ with a *culture profile* in a medium sized provincial town.

- Seems to be more neutral and distanced regarding the questions → a problem for the children, not the school/educational practice:

*‘..hmm.. a specific thing I could mention... you can say ..hmm the tone in the trend about...[...] things to debate that creates unsecure families. That we can tell. [...] children who are aware of being in a family where mom and dad not are sure to stay... it is a simple dilemma...’*

Maybe the ‘problem’ is not that simple: *‘...ahm, it’s getting close, after all... suddenly it is about human beings, you know.’*



# Principal K: *'You need to be looking for trouble! You can't just be this way!'*

Principal at a 'Youth school' for socially or personally marginalized youths (age 13-17) AND for newly arrived adolescents (14-17) - two independent tracks.

- Principal: The school and the teachers are responsible for educating vital human beings – focus is on macro levels of communication and rhetoric.
- Challenging his pupils faith in authority: *'I tell them: You need to be looking for trouble! You can't just be this way! In Denmark, young people make a big fuss.'* Warning his teachers about confusing the pupils faith in authority with well-being.
- He talks about 'his students' - the relational aspect: *'Two students where admitted to secondary education and the local newspaper published the positive story...after that, the ugly people came out of their cage and smeared my students in the comment box'*
- Discussing the meaning of integration: *'We are responsible for enlightenment. They are a looked down on minority - and if they are muslims they are even more a minority and if they wear a scarf they are further minoritized..'*

## Principal V.: *'it's about sorting out how big a role the public debate plays in relation to school'*

Principal at Folkeskole (grade 0-9) with few newcomers but many students with migrant background

*'The public debate is absolutely influencing the school and maybe some of the things that both children and parents are likely to comment on, as the latest general election and Rasmus Paludan [far right politician striving to deport all Muslims from Denmark] and so on. Well that is also something that the children talk about. So it does have influence. But that being said, in many ways we also create our own reality, inside the walls here [in school] on how to work on things...'*

- Sometimes students face challenges because of discrimination in the society outside, but sometimes they just have to work harder

*'Because they have also gradually become such a large part of the natural group, you can say, so I do not think that speculation about what you say about bilinguals leaves that much impression on them. So I rarely hear that today [...] we should probably go back to 2006, the Mohammed cartoon crisis and so on [...] today [we seldom see] anyone who become offended, neither by Rasmus Paludan nor by anyone else.'*

Principal G.: *it's such a small thing that I don't experience in my daily life or anything'*

Principal at Folkeskole (grade 0-9) with many '2nd and 3rd generation migrant children'

*I have seen a bit [of reactions towards discrimination], but I think it is not something we experience here in our school, because here we just find ourselves in our own little bubble. Umm I have experienced a hint of frustration among parents and it is not that they have actually said that it is because of this and that policy, but rather a discouragement really uhh, that I somehow relate to 'we see tightenings and I feel that the system is chasing me' [...] but it's such a small thing that I don't experience in my daily life or anything'*

# Principal F.: *Our role is not to categorize people into 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> class people*

Principal at upper secondary school:

*'We strive to be a place where diversity and tolerance are two core areas and maybe the most important of all... I think it is really important that we as a school create a community that reflects the society in which we live, that is, there must be representation of all the people and cultures and ways of living [...] it is something that we are ready to take a fight for [...] we see the right to education as essential, so we are big proponents of having the reception class up here'*

*'I am clearly opposed to the policy that has been conducted so far in the integration field, and I think it is shameful that we try to teach all our students to go out and be a decent human being in all aspects, and that you have to treat everyone equally... and respect people, and the way that the integration policy is conducted both in terms of ways of living and the way you should treat them [newcomers], and the way you talk about them is so far from the way that we would like to work with the young people. We have a fundamental obligation to take care of all young people living in Denmark. They need to be educated so that they can become an active and beneficial person in the Danish society [...] no matter if you are brown or yellow or blue, if you have a lot of money, if you have little money, we have to create equal education for all.'*

# Education policy and integration policy: 'Danish values'

"If these children [migrants and descendants] don't get *the Danish language and the Danish values* in under their skin when going to school, they will never do. To believe anything else is a naïve and romantic stand. We have to maintain the free choice of school of the parents, but schools without *a single Danish child* - that does not work." (my italics)

*Inger Støjberg, former Minister of Immigration and Integration (2014)*

Canon on Culture <https://kum.dk/temaer/temaarkiv/kulturkanon/laes-om-vaerkerne/>

Canon on Democracy <http://static.uvm.dk/Publikationer/2008/demokratikanon/index.html>

Risk factor: a unsuccessful assimilation process



# Quotations from principals

- "The (newly arrived) students are in 'welcome classes' in order to learn a functional Danish - they are not in classes together with other students. As soon as they speak a functional Danish they are transferred to 'common' classes." (Adds that they are inspired by an advisor on bilingualism employed by the municipality).

*Vice principal - lower secondary school - 10th grade - many migrant children*

- "I do focus on the needs of the students, and the needs of the parents. When focusing on the needs of the students why do we put them in boxes? They are just as different as Danes are."

*Advisor on bilingualism employed by the municipality*

# Quotations from principals

- "Integration - that is to show the students that they have the right to be in Denmark, that they have their own voice, and that they are taken seriously. Their words are just as valuable as others'. Being integrated is understanding that you are an equal citizen in the country inhabited by you and others.

We have to tell them that, I think. Especially, because many people tell them that it is not so.

(...)

This is a school characterized by diversity - and this is our starting point - and we insist that everyone acts and speaks as herself/himself. Nobody speaks on behalf of anybody else.

There is no 'we', 'we can', 'we have the opinion that'. You have your own individual history and your own opinions. We respect that."

*Principal - upper secondary school - 10th-12th grade - many migrant students*

# Different approaches to the curriculum

Transformation

Knowledge is constructed  
Strategy for integration/transformation  
Intercultural or transcultural regime

Infusion

Essentialism? Supported by Canon of Culture and Canon of Democracy – written on behalf of the  
Government  
Strategy for assimilation (or segregation)  
Monocultural regime

James A. Banks: *Multicultural education. Sixth edition.* 2019



# Concluding remarks and questions

