

# Belonging in 'reception class'? Or on virtues and vices of 'reception class' teachers - from migrant children's perspectives

CHILD MIGRATION AND INTEGRATION: TRENDS AND CHALLENGES,  
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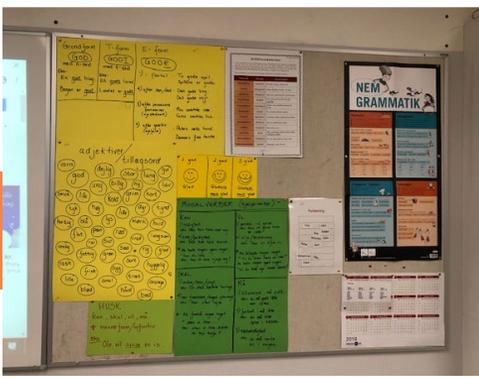
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# 'Reception classes' in Denmark

**Baran:** *'If I could learn fast enough, I would be the happiest boy [...] So, I am happy to be here [at the school] but I also want to get further on with my education [...] I learn a lot here, but I think they can do better...the teachers. If they want...'* :

- Integrated school system grade 0-9 ('Folkeskolen') – compulsory education.
- Special education programs for refugees and migrants – A. regular classes with language support or B. 'reception classes' age 6-9, 9-13 and 13-16.
- 'Late arrived': Special 'reception classes'.
- Key is to 'assimilate' to regular classes; multi-languages and cultural knowledge is not seen as a resource in practice.
- Two teachers – two years for all (delimited) subjects.



# Classes, methods and participants

Two reception classes, two schools..

- Classroom observation, one school 9 months, other school ongoing for 1½ year.
- 4 group-interviews and 14 individual interviews – migrant children age 13-18.
- Four teachers – dedicated and engaged. Mostly.

**Homeroom teacher: *'You do have a system that intervenes quickly... for now I call them the Danish students. If you have a Danish student who don't turn up at school, there's a whole system that comes into play [...] but...as long as they are in the 'reception class'... well then that's it.. there are not so many authorities stepping in [...] the parents don't have the language to help..'***



Nasri, age 15



*Nasri: 'There is a kind of border [being in a reception class] you can't get over'*

*Nasri: '.. The teachers help the students.. If they can't talk the language .. they help us with homework..so you can get an exam'*



# Nasri and Baran

Belonging to opportunities – being an ‘other’ in a reception class.

Nasri's suggestion: *‘ So, if you are new in Denmark after 9th grade.. a new [regular] school is better after one year in reception class...the next three years we are in this school [reception class].. if we were in a Danish class, maybe we will learn more..’*

- Othering and belonging as part of being in a ‘reception class’
- Ambivalent, multiple and intersectional belongings are prevalent.

# Summing up: Ferman and Tara

Ferman: Traumatized, needing a 'sanctuary at school'.

Tara: *'..he believed in me'*

Virtues and vices depending on personal engagement and sincere concern – giving space to polyvocality (Bakhtin, 1997) and critical narratives.

Geographical and social locations of 'reception classes' and a political othering as marginalizing

Tara: *'I have been in Denmark and this class for two years now ... and nobody has ever listened to me. This is the first time I tell my story'*

# Thank you!

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Powell & Menendian, 2016 *The Problem of Othering: Towards Inclusiveness and Belonging*

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