

Migration and Inclusion in Work Life  
– The Role of VET



MIGRATION AND INCLUSION  
IN WORK LIFE  
– THE ROLE OF VET

EMERGING ISSUES IN RESEARCH  
ON VOCATIONAL  
EDUCATION & TRAINING VOL.7

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## PREFACE

The variety of research questions and development tasks at the levels of vocational education and training systems (macro level), the organization and design of vocational training programs and institutions (meso level) and the analysis and shaping of education and learning processes (micro level) leads to the integration of different scientific disciplines and research traditions. VET research therefore can be organized only in an interdisciplinary way (Rauner & Maclean, 2008, p. 13)<sup>1</sup>.

This book is the seventh volume in the book series *Emerging Issues in Research on Vocational Education & Training*. The series is published by the research group VETYL (*Vocational Education & Training/Yrkeskunnande och Lärande*), at the Department of Education, Stockholm University, Sweden. VETYL was created in 2011 with twofold aims: contributing to the advance of knowledge in the intricate area of vocational education and training (VET) and strengthening the research basis of the teacher education program for VET that is offered at the Department of Education, Stockholm University. The Swedish term “yrkeskunnande och lärande” in the name of the research group translates as “vocational knowing” and indicates one of the major research concerns of the group.

The research book series started primarily as dissemination venue of selected papers, after a peer review process first presented at the international conferences organized yearly since 2012 by our research group VETYL. The conference has had two

1 Rauner, F. & Maclean, R. (2008). *The International Handbook of Technical and Vocational Education and Training Research*. New York: Springer-Verlag.

core aims: becoming a forum for sharing state of the art research in the field of VET and serving as a forum for networking and cooperation. The *Stockholm International Conference of Research in VET* is one of the major academic events organised in Europe as part of the European Network for Vocational Education and Training (VETNET).

Even though the primary source for our research book series has for long been the conference's papers, at present the research book series is open to contributions of other scholars in the field regardless of participation in the conference. This is particularly the case in this volume where researchers from different contexts submitted proposals of texts, dealing with different dimensions of the important theme of the role of vocational education and training in inclusion in work life, with specific focus on migrants.

The title of this volume *Migration and Inclusion in Work Life – The Role of VET* is an umbrella for the presentation of research outcomes focusing on a variety of aspects influencing the inclusion in working life and the role that VET plays or could play. The main aim of this volume is to present current research in an area that at the present is getting major attention by policy makers as well as practitioners in Europe and other contexts. Migration and immigrant integration/inclusion has long been a contested issue in national and international politics as well as in research. With migration on the rise globally, integration faces many challenges. Usually, integration is associated with establishment into the labour market. Getting a job or some kind of employment is taken as a strong indicator of successful integration in the new country.

VET, along with other measures, is expected to play a key role in the process of integration of immigrants in the economic and

social life of the host country. Successful inclusion becomes beneficial for all involved by reducing disparities, filling local labour market shortages, and improving livelihoods and social cohesion. VET systems and providers in most immigrant-receiving countries are trying to find effective ways to facilitate migrants' labour market inclusion by means of specially designed training programs.

The contributions in this volume show a diversity in theoretical frameworks of reference and methodological grounds, ranging from empirically based texts to policy analysis. Even though some of the texts are case studies or national policy analyses they will surely be of interest to an international audience interested in this theme.

This volume continues the tradition of our research book series to depict the diversity and complexity of research in the field of vocational education and training. We hope it will meet the expectations of a variety of readers including undergraduate students, in particular students in initial and in-service teacher training programs for VET, post-graduate students, and policy makers.

Finally, we would like to thank the reviewers for valuable criticisms that helped to improve the contributions that are finally presented in this book. Our gratitude goes also to all the contributors to this volume.

*Lázaro Moreno Herrera,*

*Marianne Teräs,*

*Petros Gougoulakis*

*& Janne Kontio*

Stockholm, October 2021.

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## **Section I:**

### **VET systems and policies for inclusion**



Vocational education and training (VET) is probably the most demanding of all educations. From a pedagogical point of view VET is a multifarious and complete activity, which engages mind and body in a holistic way. In a vocational program, theory and practice are intertwined – unlike more so-called academic programs. Vocational learning and knowing has to date not been researched and addressed enough, probably because this has not been a particularly meritorious engagement within the mainstream educational research community. The fact that there have also been preconceptions that VET requires a lower order thinking and learning of those attending a vocational program, has contributed to the malicious myth-spreading and the depreciation of a significant education sector. This is no less true, when we add the theme of this volume (inclusion and migration) to the discussion. As noted by the authors of one of the chapters in this volume; vocational education is often constructed as a vehicle for social inclusion and it is often taken for granted but rarely defined, the overall aim of the chapters in this section is to turn the lights towards this issue and seek to find definitions and empirical evidence.

Vocational education is in many aspects distinct from other education that leads to general qualifications, which require

a distinct way of teaching and learning, i.e. another pedagogy. This pedagogy is described as “the science, art and craft of teaching and learning vocational education” consisted of various characteristic features (see for example: Ingle & Duckworth, 2013; Lucas, Spencer & Claxton, 2012).<sup>2</sup> Techniques and approaches vary according to the vocational subject being taught and the context in which teaching takes place. The methodology applied is basically experiential, which means that the students learn by doing. Their concrete experiences receive feedback from their teachers, peers and supervisors that triggers reflection and theoretical grounding.

Due to its complexity, vocational teaching and learning is a very demanding task and vocational teachers need continuous professional support from research and other stakeholders, including new curricula and ways of learning a vocation. In the wake of large waves of migration across the continent, student groups have become more heterogeneous, and a need for upgraded and updated VET systems and policies to face the issues have arisen. A contribution to the otherwise under-researched and under-theorised dimensions of vocational pedagogy in regards to this is this section consisting of six (6) chapters.

In “*Beyond ‘Migration’ and ‘Inclusion’ in Work Life: Racialisation and VET*”, James Avis Kevin Orr & Paul Warmington investigate social justice in relation to race, ethnicity and the experiences of students of colour in VET, and the authors suggest that VET could address this but would need to move beyond

- 2 Ingle, S. & Duckworth, V. (2013). *Teaching and Training Vocational Teachers*. London: Sage Publications Ltd;  
Lucas, B., Spencer, E. & Claxton, C. (2012). *How to teach vocational education: a theory of Vocational pedagogy*. London: City & Guilds



its traditional remit of serving capitalism in the production of surplus value.

In the following text, Julián Bell Carmen Carmona & Fernando Marhuenda and colleagues analyse the existing literature that attempts to elucidate the state of the art regarding research on students with a migrant background in the Spanish school-based VET system in the last decade, providing an insight into European policies from the Spanish situation and trends.

Ramona David, Ioannis Katsikis & Antonio Ranieri introduce us to an empirical evidence of labour mobility of refugees (from Greece to Portugal) and they reflect on the skills of the refugees profiled and conclude with considerations on whether or not this policy idea is feasible and under what conditions.

Migration and inclusion is also the focus of the article by Nicole Kimmelman, Susanne Miesera, Daniela Moser & Silvia Pool Maag. The delivers a comparative comprehensive overview of the educational policies connected with migration and inclusion in Germany, Austria and Switzerland to identify similarities/differences in dealing with migration and inclusion.

Social exclusion is the topic discussed by Ali Osman, Marianne Teräs & Eva Eliasson in the chapter *“The Concept of Social Exclusion and Its Ideological and Theoretical Roots: Towards an Alternative Discourse of Exclusion and Inclusion”*. The aim of the chapter is to dwell into the ideological and theoretical roots of the concept social exclusion. In addition, the authors will introduce other concepts related to social exclusion such as concepts of difference, social division, and differential social exclusion.

In the last article of this section, Manos Pavlakis explores how recent developments in distance and online education and changes in the workplace due to the pandemic have greatly

affected the way by which learning at work is achieved. Through a systematic review of articles recently published, the chapter examines how institutions, enterprises, HR professional and VET trainers are responding to the pandemic and how they support workers who are less likely to be involved in learning activities due to new workplace conditions.

## Beyond 'Migration' and 'Inclusion' in Work Life: Racialisation and VET

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**Abstract:** The salience of the fourth industrial revolution and its associated rhetoric is that it, in part, posits a future of worklessness set alongside a demand for highly skilled, innovative and creative workers. In this paper the social justice implications of our analysis are explored in relation to race, ethnicity and the experiences of students of colour in VET.

An analysis of discourses of race and migration is placed alongside an analysis of VET, its relationship to waged labour,

the reproduction of inequalities, and the potential contributions VET could make to wider society as it undergoes revolutions in industry, technology and social justice. The analysis relates English experiences of race/ethnicity in VET to broader European and Nordic experiences.

In particular, we interrogate tendencies to conflate race with migration and the effects that viewing communities of colour as ‘migrant’ communities has on sociological understandings of the structuring of multiracial societies. English experiences illustrate a particular trajectory of migration, permanent settlement and race.

The social justice implications of our argument suggest that if we wish to go beyond migration and inclusion in work-life we need to refuse such notions and need to adopt an expanded conceptualisation of work-life. Such a conceptualisation would recognise the salience of ‘really useful’ labour/work that contributes to societal well-being. VET could address this but would need to move beyond its traditional remit of serving capitalism in the production of surplus value.

**Key words:** Vocational education and training, Race, Multiculturalism, Neo-liberalism, Worklessness, Racialisation

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Education plays a key role in the perpetuation of the capital relation; this is the skeleton in capitalist education’s dank basement. It is just one of the many reasons why, in contemporary capitalist society, education assumes a grotesque and perverted form. It links the chains that bind our souls to capital. (Allman, et al, 2003, 149-150)

Allman et al (2003) draw our attention to the relationship between capitalism and education, which has even greater salience when we consider vocational education and training (VET)<sup>(i)</sup>. Whilst VET's aims are much debated and can go beyond the narrowly work-related (Augar review, 2019; Winch, 2012), VET policies emphasise the relation of education to the needs of capital and the reproduction of labour-power as in policy concerns with employability and employers' needs (CBI 2021).

It is important to avoid the determinism embedded in the quotation above and use it to pose questions about the relationship between VET, wider society and the way this plays out in relation not only to class but also gender and race – the ‘modalities’ in which class is lived (cf. Hall *et al*, 1978). In this paper we explore the social justice implications of the ‘fourth industrial revolution’ in relation to race, ethnicity and the experiences of students of colour in VET. To begin with we considered the relationship between VET and capitalism with the following section discussing migration and race. This is followed by an examination of the socio-economic context and the labour market leading into a discussion of race and VET. The conclusion brings together the divergent strands of our argument. VET provides a backdrop to the paper as does the European and Nordic experience of VET and migration. We wonder about the applicability of our analysis of the English experience of race and VET to a wider context, particularly the conceptualisation of racialisation.

## 2. MIGRATION AND RACE

How should we understand racialisation in VET? It goes without saying that we need to consider VET, and indeed any aspect

of education, in the context of wider racialised social relationships. Sivanandan's foreword (2007, vii) to Kundani's *The end of Tolerance* states,

The war on terror, in demonising multiculturalism, seeks to put an end to Britain's proud record of integration and ally it instead to Europe's assimilationist policies in a descent into nativism.

There are several points to raise about Sivanandan's comments. First, as Malik (2009) has noted, in Britain the term multiculturalism is used both to refer to the 'social fact' of cultural diversity and the challenges of living with difference and the policies designed to address those challenges. Secondly, multiculturalism is not all of a piece but has developed both as a placatory practice and as a response to the struggle of those marginalised on the basis of their 'culture' and/or race (Parekh, 2006). Indeed, the degree to which migration becomes a site of political anxiety tends to correspond to whether migration is 'Black' or 'Brown', being defined as racially different.

There is also a danger in Sivanandan's comments that we reify and homogenise European responses to migration and fail to recognise national differences between for example the Dutch version of multiculturalism and France's assimilationist policies, and so on. Whilst we might celebrate Britain's multiculturalism, it needs to be set against a VET system in which Black youth has historically been located in low level programmes, at some distance from the workplace, with little opportunity for mobility into waged labour. Currently there is a tendency for

black and minority ethnic groups to have attained higher levels of post 16 education than their white counterparts, which does not translate into labour market outcomes (DfE, 2021, 33). As a result, these young people, like their forbearers, are warehoused becoming disposable labour facing unemployment. When we consider the statistics over the last 40 years little has changed. Indeed, when black and minority ethnic groups gain higher levels of post-16 education the courses entered become devalued (Williamson, 2019), with teachers called upon to manage student expectations.

The British state's response to migration has veered between a multiculturalist discourse to one based on moral panics over migration. The latter 'others' the migrant whilst the former refuses nativism and values difference. In VET we encounter the outcome of a racism that marginalises and ghettoises black youth despite the prevailing discourse, whether this echoes multiculturalism or immigration.

A number of European states draw on a discourse of migration, using this to refer to subsequent 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> generation 'migrants'. Such discourses may foreground citizenship, ethnicity, culture and religion but they tend to address them through the lens of assimilation, the impact the arrival of migrant communities have upon 'host' communities. The extent to which these 'cultural' concerns are proxies for race and are shaped by racism receives less attention. In discourses dominated by anxieties over migration the migrant becomes 'othered' and the 'other' becomes an eternal migrant who may be included but is subject to the diktat of the state and its members (Ahmed, 2012). The spectre of worklessness haunts the British social formation, as does the absence of decent jobs. This poses the question of

how VET should respond. In part, the Augar review addresses this in its acknowledgement of the multifaceted purposes of VET but ultimately fails as it is rooted in economism.

Notwithstanding societal and institutional variations, it is important to note Billett's (2020, 161) comment that,

the societal standing of vocational education is often perceived to be low, compared with other education sectors, albeit more so in some countries than others. However, this issue of standing is global and prevalent in countries with both developed and developing economies.

However, VET is not all the same and can encompass 'low level' interventions oriented towards marginalised migrant and black youth as well as TVET (technical VET) focused on those Esmond and Atkins (2020) refer to as a 'technical elite' (Barack and Shoshana 2020). Guile's (2011) aircraft engineers studying for a foundation degree<sup>(2)</sup> would be a case in point. Whilst VET's articulation to waged labour is paramount, it is also a site of contestation. The Augar review refers to the core purposes of VET as comprising a commitment to 'equity and equal opportunity', 'democracy and civic integration' 'scholarship', 'open enquiry and dialogue' 'and of course, to maintaining economic prosperity in a world of global competition' (2019, 19). The broader purposes become increasingly pertinent where low skilled marginalised workers become a source of disposable labour. The question then becomes, how should VET respond to worklessness? A question for this paper is how this relates to migration and race. In addressing this, we also acknowledge that the demography of England differs widely between regions as do



patterns of VET provision. London is exceptional with 40 per cent of people living in the city from ethnic minorities according to the 2011 census (ONS 2012).

Our previous research on race and VET (Avis, Orr and Warmington, 2017) focused on the experiences of young Black people. The term 'Black' denoted those of Black Caribbean, Black African and Black mixed heritage. We focused on Black students in VET because of the size and longevity of Britain's Black communities and because of their particular histories of racialisation within the education system and the labour process. In short, our concern was – and remains – racialisation rather than ethnicity. By this we have in mind the process whereby black and minority ethnic groups become racialised and othered which in turn is reflected in institutional racism and structural relations. In terms of presence, Black students began to enter the English education system in sizeable numbers in the late 1950s and early 1960s: the children of workers from Britain's 'New Commonwealth' who had migrated to England following World War Two (Warmington, 2014).

In the 1950s and 60s it was children from Caribbean families who formed the largest grouping of 'immigrant children' (as they were then termed, whether or not they were British-born) in primary and secondary schools. Black parents, pupils and their teachers negotiated the 1950s, 60s and 70s with minimal policy support. Local education authorities improvised school provision out of a tangle of poor resourcing, prejudices about the educability of black children and panics over their concentrations in particular schools (Warmington, 2014). The most scandalous instances saw, for example, disproportionate numbers of Black children placed in schools for the 'education-

ally subnormal' or permanently expelled from secondary schools (Tomlinson, 2008). Faced with incomprehension, and sometimes naked hostility, black parents and community workers campaigned energetically against educational injustices. With regard to VET, in the 1970s, 80s and 90s there were concerns among educational researchers that working-class Black youth were being channelled into low status VET that offered limited skills development and led to little improvement in labour market position (Avis *et al*, 2017). In short, working-class black youth were in the vanguard of those labelled surplus to capitalism's labour requirements (Warmington, 2015).

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century the demographic of England's Black communities has shifted. Census data from 2011 showed that in England and Wales the proportion of people identifying themselves as 'white British' had declined from 87% to just over 80% between 2001 and 2011. People of Indian descent were the largest of the 'black and minority ethnic' (BME) communities, comprising 2.5% of the population of England and Wales. Black Africans comprised 1.76% of the population, now outnumbering black Caribbeans (1.06% cent) and far outnumbering them in schools in major cities such as London. Two-thirds of children of Black Caribbean origin under the age of ten now have one 'non-Black' parent. Yet Black youth remain over-represented in school exclusions, prison and unemployment. In March 2021 it was reported that, amidst the economic downturn caused by COVID-19 41.6% of black people aged 16-24 were unemployed, while unemployment among white workers of the same age stood at to 12.4% (Thomas 2021).

### 3. SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT

We have defined this paper's understanding of race, multiculturalism and VET, but what of the contemporary socio-economic context? Neo-liberalism and the concern with privatisation, markets, competition and deregulation, as well as the development of human capital, has impacted not only on the English social formation but also on Nordic and European societies (Chrysochou, 2018; Rosvall and Nylund, 2019). While the parameters of neo-liberalism are mediated by the social formation in which it is located, more abrasive forms were found in pre-COVID Anglophone societies with somewhat softer versions developing post-COVID and in societies where there is a residue of social democratic and corporatist sensibilities (Thelen and Bussemeyer, 2011). However, neo-liberalism has undermined forms of collectivity embodied within corporatism and has exacerbated the salience of atomistic individualism (Fleming, 2021). In some senses, this has blurred a clear-cut distinction between the liberal market and co-ordinated market economies of the UK and Europe. Thelen and Bussemeyer (2011:69) draw our attention to the shift in Germany away from collectivism, whereby employers 'over-train' workers developing broad portable skills, towards segmentalism where training focuses on a company's narrow and specific requirements.

It is important to note that co-operative strategies will vary across societies, regions and occupational sectors. Emmenegger et al (2019) remind us that cooperation in collective training systems such as in Germany and Switzerland are vulnerable to disruption. Conflict of interests can arise that undermine cooperation – this is however as Emmenegger et al (2019) point out

an empirical question which cannot be determined by theoretical fiat. Similarly, in liberal market economies cooperative strategies may develop in particular circumstances, which is again an empirical question (Espirito, 2004; Applegate, 2007). This is also illustrated in the government's commissioned Review of Post-18 Education and Funding, the Augar review, (2019, 8) which celebrates marketisation and competition, but qualifies this, calling for a more directive role for the state in Post-18 education.

In recent years the shibboleths of neo-liberalism, marketisation, privatisation, deregulation and competition, have become increasingly questioned and to have exacerbated inequality. Issues of race, racism and race equality are spaces in which neo-liberalism's individualism has been contested. In the UK the incorporation of 'institutional racism' into policy and legislation (MacPherson, 1999; Race Relations Amendment Act 2000) was an admission of the limitations of atomistic understandings of racism as expressions of prejudice (Warmington et al, 2018). Currently, the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement has asserted collectivity as the basis of race-conscious social analysis. The continued contest is apparent in the recent Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities (2021) report (ostensibly produced in response to BLM protests of 2020), which has queried what it sees as the overuse of the concept of 'institutional racism'.

In addition, the promise that neo-liberalism has potential to enhance societal well-being is misplaced. Wilkinson and Pickett's research (2010, 2018) illustrates the social and economic costs of widespread inequality to both society and an individual's mental health. Immediately prior to the COVID-19 pandemic there was a discernable shift towards a post neo-liberalism marked by a deep cynicism which accepted as almost inevitable

the abuses of power of bankers and capitalists, etc. – this was the way of the world (Avis, 2020; Avis, et al, 2021). The response to COVID-19 in the UK and Europe resulted in the use of fiscal stimulus, various forms of furlough and job retention schemes, further challenging neo-liberal assumptions about the primacy of the market. Mayhew and Anand (2020, S216) write,

A centrepiece of UK policy has been its Job Retention Scheme (JRS)...

Other countries have introduced policies with the same general aim, whether through furlough schemes, subsidized short-time working or other forms of wage subsidies. These countries include France, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland (Fujita *et al.*, 2020). The precise content and strength of such policies differs from country to country.

Various forms of JRS as well as the concern to invest in health services suggested that the preceding politics of austerity had run its course, was unnecessary and that there might be different ways of managing the economy. Yet the pandemic has also brought into stark relief deep-set inequalities, not least in terms of mortality related to ethnicity and class (Public Health England, 2020). In the UK the disproportionate direct and indirect impact of COVID-19 on minority ethnic communities has entered national debate. A report commissioned by the UK's opposition Labour Party found that Black Caribbean, Indian, Pakistani and Chinese groups had between a 10% and 50% higher risk of death than white British people. Author Baroness Lawrence concluded that 'Black, Asian and minority

ethnic people have been over-exposed, under-protected, stigmatised and overlooked during this pandemic – and this has been generations in the making’ (Labour Party, 2020, online).

#### **4. THE LABOUR MARKET**

The immediate response to COVID-19 across the UK, continental Europe and the Nordic societies followed similar trajectories (Avis et al, 2021). The result was lockdown, the closure of schools, colleges and workplaces, which gave rise to a rush towards remote learning and on-line working for those who had access to the appropriate technology. Such developments were often shaped by classed, gendered, aged and raced relations. Powell and McGrath (2019) writing about sub-Saharan Africa refer to the uneven impact of the pandemic on those who face multi-dimensional poverty. Not dissimilar patterns to those found in Europe and South Africa were present in the US, with Groshen (2020, 226) pointing out that male white workers have fared better than women, African-American, Asian and Hispanic workers. The International Labour Organisation pointed out that special attention should be given to particular groups,

- Women, who hold 70 per cent of jobs in the health and social care sectors and are therefore often on the front line of the response to the crisis (they are also over-represented in the informal service sector and in the labour-intensive manufacturing sector);
- Informal economy workers, casual and temporary workers, workers in new forms of employment, including those in the “gig economy”;

- Young workers, whose employment prospects are more sensitive to fluctuations in demand;
- Older workers, who even in normal times face difficulties in finding decent work opportunities and are now burdened with an additional health risk;
- Refugees and migrant workers, especially those engaged as domestic workers and those working in construction, manufacturing and agriculture;
- Micro-entrepreneurs and the self-employed – particularly those operating in the informal economy, who may be disproportionately affected and are less resilient. (ILO Brief, 2020, 3)

Regardless of the society in which they are located the most vulnerable will be low-waged workers who have limited financial reserves, many of whom are young and drawn from ethnic minorities and who are often referred to as (im)migrants in continental Europe (in contrast to England where the term migrant is reserved for ‘first generation’ arrivals, not for subsequent generations). This is borne out in recent statistics for the European Union. “The risk of monetary poverty in the EU-27 in 2019 was approximately twice as high for foreign citizens (32%) as it was for national citizens (15%), and was particularly concentrated among non-EU citizens (38%)” (Eurostat 2021a). Within the 27 countries of the EU in 2020, 20.3% of employees born outside the EU were on temporary contracts, compared with 11.8% of ‘native-born’ employees and 13.8% for employees born in a different EU member state (Eurostat 2021b). The UK’s Social Mobility Commission (SMC 2019, p14) found that between 2014 and 2018:

Overall, ethnic minorities ... face a double disadvantage in earnings: people from professional and ethnic minority backgrounds earn 11 per cent less than white professionals, while ethnic minorities from working class backgrounds earn 25 per cent less than individuals from white professional backgrounds.

In addition, Dubois (2021) found that in the EU the wages of those employed in long-term care and other social services were 21% below average, with many of these being women.

Some of the affordances and challenges surrounding what has been termed the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution or Industrie 4.0 have been accelerated as a consequence of COVID-19 (WEF, 2020a, 3). A number of these have been mentioned earlier, the increased use of information technology to facilitate on-line learning and working, whilst others include the development and increased use of artificial intelligence, algorithms as well as the automation of routine work tasks. These processes are reflected in the changing demand for skills as well as up- and re-skilling. The World Economic Forum (WEF) calls for 'a great reset' in response to COVID-19 and the crises of neo-liberalism and post-neo-liberalism (Schwab with Davis, 2018; Schwab and Malleret, 2020). It calls for a form of stakeholder capitalism that is thought to overcome the failings of what may be described as 'really existing' capitalism (Schwab with Davis, 2018, 49-65; WEF, 2020b). The parameters of 'the great reset' whether following on from COVID-19, or the failings of neo-liberalism, reflect a type of progressive capitalism. This echoes corporatist models that emphasise the move towards green and sustainable economies characterised by social democratic sensibilities and a concern with 'fairness'. Such models seek to reduce the excesses



of neo-liberalism in relation to the polarisation of income and wealth, placing these on a fairer more equitable basis and also challenge and address aspects of the racism and sexism manifest in many societies. This version of progressive capitalism aims to provide all members of society with ‘decent’ work and the opportunity to flourish, thereby developing their human capital. Schwab and Malleret, (2020, 244) write,

It’s about making the world less divisive, less polluting, less destructive, more inclusive, more equitable and fairer than we left it in the pre-pandemic era. Doing nothing, or too little, is to sleep walk towards ever-more social inequality, economic imbalances, injustice and environmental degradation. Failing to act would equate to letting our world to become meaner, more divided, more dangerous, more selfish and simply unbearable for large segments on the globe’s population.

There are a number of points to be made about the preceding scenario. It could be seen as an attempt to manage ideologically the contradictions of capitalism to secure its sustainability, with Schwab and Malleret, (2020, 95-103) calling for a new ‘less divisive’ social contract. This project aims to shape a new settlement and common sense, hoping to gain popular assent. The ‘great reset’ offers an imaginary and ideological resolution to the contradictions of post- and neo-liberal capitalism. Avis points out that a number of themes are brought together in this erstwhile settlement which call for,

- the development of meaningful, fulfilling and safe work
- human-centred economic growth

- the provision of ‘agile safety nets’
- incentives for job protection
- ‘smart’ job creation
- The development of mass entrepreneurship
- The Inclusion of the left behind [in the US and UK a racialised term]
- The rebuilding of the global economy in a more socially just, fairer, greener way
- The recognition of diversity
- The requirement for societies to battle and beat racism

This is a phantasy discourse that seeks to develop a persuasive fiction in order to secure consent. (Avis, 2021, 173)

This emerging settlement could be seen as a project spawned by a particular fraction of capital. Nevertheless it provides a space that could be used by ‘progressives’ to struggle for a more human form of capitalism (which would, by definition, have greater concern for racial equity and justice). Yet, a project concerned with decent work for all is likely to encounter ‘really existing global capitalism’ which follows a qualitatively different logic. McGrath (2020) comments on the UN’s Sustainable Development Goal that seeks to ‘promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all (UNGA 2015, 14)’. McGrath, argues that this is impossible under capitalism (Avis et al, 2021, 7; and see Roose, 2019) and in a not dissimilar vein Blacker (2013, 1; and see Marsh, 2011) suggests,

The current neoliberal mutation of capitalism has evolved beyond the days when the wholesale exploitation of labor

under-wrote the world system's expansion. While "normal" business profits plummet and theft-by-finance-rises, capitalism now shifts into a mode of elimination that targets most of us – along with our environment – as waste products awaiting managed disposal.

David Harvey (2014:104–111) refers to Marx's (1976 [1867]; 1981 [1894]) argument that the logic of capital leads to the substitution of machines for living labour, which in the short term for a particular capitalist maximises the accumulation of capital but in the long term results in a crisis of profitability. However, we need always to recall the adaptive capabilities of capital. The crises of post and neo-liberalism as well as COVID-19 opened-up sites of struggle and what we have described as a new settlement seeks to contain this. Such processes are illustrated in recent history with social democracy managing class conflict by offering concessions to the working class and formulating a discourse of national interest. However, the extent to which communities of colour and 'migrant' communities are included in such settlements is always ambiguous (Carby, 1982; Warmington, 2014). When circumstances change concessions can be clawed back by capital. The current use of fiscal stimuli and furloughs etc. will be time served and it remains to be seen what will happen. Nevertheless, the eliminatory logic that Blacker and Harvey discuss is likely to remain in place, though this process may be softened for a time in parts of Europe, the US and UK. The aspiration for decent jobs for all is hampered by the limited number of such jobs currently available (Brown, et al, 2020), but this is experienced more acutely by ethnic minorities. The difference in activity rates (the proportion of the working population in

employment) for ‘native-born’ and ‘foreign-born populations’ in the Netherlands in 2019 was 12.8% higher for ‘native-born’ than for the ‘foreign-born population’. For Denmark it was 10.2 and France 9.4% higher (Eurostat 2020). If the aspiration for decent jobs is taken seriously it will require a fundamental transformation of social and economic relations and it is unlikely this will be feasible under current capitalist relations.

What we have described as a new settlement skirts around questions of (neo-) colonialism, white supremacy, nativism and the manner in which these are embedded in racialised capitalist relations. If these questions are to be seriously addressed, other than through the rhetoric of diversity and fairness, this would serve to fundamentally undermine the ideological supports of the ‘great reset’.

#### **4. RACE AND VET.**

People like me who came to England in the 1950s have been there for centuries; symbolically, we have been there for centuries. I was coming home. I am the sugar at the bottom of the English cup of tea. The sugar plantations that rotted generations of English children’s teeth’ (Hall, 1991, 48).

Stuart Hall alludes to the long history of the English, or more correctly the British, engagement with race. Indeed, there would be no exaggeration in claiming that not only is English, but also European capitalism, wholly entwined with race, ethnicity and the construction of white supremacy (Bhopal, 2018; Leonardo, 2009). Whilst these comments may appear somewhat alien to a European readership we need only consider France’s relation-

ship with Algeria, Belgium with the Congo, Germany with East and South-West Africa and so on – a silence about which may have been spawned by recent European history. However, the Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests have brought to mind these histories and contemporary manifestations of racism. The point is that whilst analytically we can examine capitalism independently of race the two are in practice inseparable (cf. Bhat-tacharyya, 2018). Whilst there is a substantial literature that addresses and prioritises race, decolonisation and white supremacy in English research on schooling and higher education there is far less work on VET (Arday, & Mirza, 2018; Bhopal, 2018). Avis, Orr and Warmington, (2017) noted that in the UK a substantial body of writing on race and education has emerged since the 1960s. It is a diverse body of work that has explored issues of race, class and gender (now often termed intersectionality); multicultural education; school (and latterly university) attainment; curriculum; school exclusions; and access to higher education. However, as Avis, Orr and Warmington (2017) noted there has been relatively little academic writing on race and VET.

Importantly, UK writing and research on race and education overlaps with writing on race, social justice and wider society. For the purposes of this paper, it is worth offering a few brief but salient reflections drawn from the wider literature, insofar as they relate both to race and VET and to points of divergence between England's history of race and migration and those of other European nations.

First, the category of 'migrant', particularly where it used generically to refer to communities of colour, has the potential to stabilise these as inherently 'other' and 'outside' the national interest (Chin, 2017; Goodfellow, 2019). This 'othering' can

operate at an institutional level, even in policies designed to be inclusive. For instance, Ahmed (2012) has argued that policies on inclusion, by definition, position the objects of inclusion as the 'other' that 'we' (institutions, organisations and nations) need to 'include'. Thus while diversity and inclusion has become a default policy in educational institutions, it contains a paradox and may perpetuate the tendency to 'minoritise' and 'other' communities of colour.

Secondly, from the 1970s and 80s onwards, Britain opted for a path of 'state multiculturalism' (Parekh, 2000). This entailed encouraging a 'community of communities' approach in theory, at least, 'tolerating' the use of home languages and displays of culture and faith, using racial/ ethnic categories to monitor social inequalities and funding community-specific projects in a way that was anomalous to Germany or France. This has arguably produced divergent paths in understandings of race equality in policy (Lentin, 2004; Chin, 2017). In public/policy discourse the UK ostensibly rejects the idea that 'second' and 'third' generation descendants of immigrants are 'migrants'. However, the disproportionate effects felt by these young people at moments of economic crisis (the mass unemployment of the 1980s; the steep rise in black youth unemployment during the COVID pandemic) raise questions about their position within the nation.

The Black Further Education Leadership Group (BFELG) have developed a ten point plan to address the systemic racism present in FE, and by default VET. The plan seeks to intervene in the curriculum, culture, climate and communicative practices in order to undermine systemic racism and processes of racialisation found in the sector. Basi (2020, online) a member of the group whilst reflecting on his experiences as an FE student writes,

My lived experiences mirror those of the current generation of black students and staff within the FE sector. The FE system's propensity to allow race inequalities to persist, fester and threaten the very communities we all purport to represent is untenable. Apart from affecting the esteem of students, curtailing the careers of staff and diminishing the reputation of local institutions, it perpetrates a climate of fear.

Although BFELG is primarily orientated towards FE leaders, its intervention aims to have a wider remit and to undermine the racism that is a feature not only of FE students lived experience but also of those at whatever level in the educational system. However, the claims and solutions put forward by BFELG have been implicitly questioned by the now notorious report of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities (2020), set up by the government following the BLM protests in the UK (see for example, Wall, 2020; The Guardian, 2021a). The Commission suggests that the concept of institutional racism has often been misapplied, being used as something of a 'catch-all' explanation for social inequalities. The Commission (2021a, 9) argues instead that many of the disparities associated with race are better explained by socio-economic disadvantage, commenting that 'the evidence shows that geography, family influence, socio-economic background, culture and religion have more significant impact on life chances than the existence of racism'. Paradoxically, they then add 'we take the reality of racism seriously and we do not deny that it is a real force in the UK'. Moreover, Gillborn et al (2017) have argued that forms of regression analysis used to argue that social inequalities are better explained by socio-economic background rather than race/racism are ham-

pered by a fundamental misunderstanding of how racism works, in that socio-economic status or family background are themselves structured by racism.

In contradistinction to the CRED report *The Guardian* (2021b, online) draws our attention to the rate of unemployment of young people aged 16-24 with 41.6% of black youth being unemployed in comparison with 12.4% of white youth (and see, Cominetti, et al, 2021). The commission downplays the lived experiences of ethnic minorities, the manner in which race is entwined and indivisible from other oppressions and veers towards a cultural explanation of disadvantage which serves to pathologise particular communities. Yet the report provides a wealth of data that indicates the presence of institutional racism and racism that it seeks to discredit, or at least marginalise. Whilst the discussion of VET, FE and lifelong learning is notably brief in comparison with that devoted to schooling and higher education, it does point towards some important data on apprenticeships and by default, systemic racism (2021, 102). It evinces concern that 'young ethnic minority people are under-represented in the apprenticeship system' citing *Ethnicity Facts and Figures* (2020), though the picture is more complex. The figures cited by CRED indicate that the number of apprenticeships started by people from ethnic minority groups decreased from 51,350 to 48,390 (a drop of 6%) in the year to July 2019, but the proportion of apprenticeships started by these groups rose from 10% to 12%. This is partly because the total number of apprenticeships starts significantly decreased from 520,580 to 393,380 (a drop of 24%), a fall that is especially acute among apprenticeship starts by under 25.

In acknowledgement of the specificity of London the commission cites the London assembly's report that found that



whilst ‘Black ethnic groups were well represented in apprenticeships overall – however, they were also more likely to be clustered in lower level and lower paid apprenticeships’ (102). In England all ethnic groups, apart from whites, had a slightly higher representation in FE than their proportion of the population in 2018-19. For example, black people make up 3.8% of the population but 6.8% of participants in FE; for Asians the figures are 9.6% and 8.4%; whites make up 84% of the population but 77.3% of FE participants (Ethnicity Facts and Figures 2021). This is also the case for higher level VET. Statistics on participation in other undergraduate (OUG) courses in England produced by the Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA). These OUG courses leading to well-established qualifications such Higher National Certificates and Higher National Diplomas are at levels 4 and 5 and are most usually technical or vocational. Recent research has suggested that these qualifications may in many cases lead to higher earnings than degrees (Espinoza et al 2020). 77% of students starting on these courses covered in the HESA statistics in 2019-20 were white against 9% for black and 10% for Asian students (HESA 2021). Once again, however, the bigger picture is one of falling numbers overall as more young people are attracted to bachelor’s degrees. In the same year 516,345 people started bachelor’s degrees, while only 72,570 started OUG courses (HESA 2021). To reiterate, whilst black participation at levels 4 and 5 may lead to higher earnings the numbers involved are insignificant. For an individual this may provide a route to upward mobility but when set against the labour market as a whole black young people face higher levels of unemployment than white. In other words, VET can make a difference for specific individuals but the labour market is pivotal in facilitating or

inhibiting social mobility. In comparison with our earlier work (Avis et al, 2017) in which black youth were more likely to be in low level VET, it is important to note that currently, 'Black and minority ethnic groups tend to have higher levels of post 16 education, when compared with those from the White British group, yet not necessarily better labour market outcomes' (DfE, 2021, 33)<sup>(3)</sup>.

Jørgensen et al (2019), in their study of school-to-work transitions in Sweden, Denmark and Finland noted,

Children from lower socioeconomic status families and immigrant youths are more likely to be excluded from further education and working life than the rest of the population. In addition, they face more difficulties in moving on from being NEETs, advancing their careers and finding stable employment. (284)

and that,

ethnic and gender minorities have considerable difficulties gaining access to apprenticeships. (292)

These processes reflect those discussed by Barak and Shoshana (2020). Billett (2020) in his commentary on their paper, which analyses VET policy in Israel remarks that these authors draw a clear-cut division between technological education, what we might describe as TVET, and vocational education. The former is modern, elitist, high status and anticipates the future, with the latter being linked to manual and menial skills associated 'with lower educated migrants who exist on the periphery of Israeli society' (Billett 2020, 164).

Even when attempts are made to enhance the status of vocational education by increasing entry requirement, as has been the case in Denmark, the result has been the exclusion of ‘socially marginalised students’ and those with ‘migrant backgrounds’ (Billett 2020, 166; citing Aakrog, 2020). Such findings are mediated by the social formation in which they are located. However, the exclusion of ethnic minorities from apprenticeships is a common finding and is allied to their location in ‘low’ status VET. Hupka-Brunner et al (2012, 27) write,

our results indicate that regardless of social origin, academic achievements and records, it is harder for women and some groups of young migrants to gain access to apprenticeships. All in all, the findings suggest that the effect of social origin and migrant background cannot be fully attributed to the educational choices of young people and their families.

Imdorf’s, (2017) research in Switzerland echoes these findings. Wilson (2021) conducted a vignette experiment in which she invited respondents to rate their willingness to hire fictional candidates who had varying socioeconomic positions, academic achievements and ethnicities. In contrast to Hupka-Brunner et al (2012), Imdorf, (2017) and a number of other researchers she concluded that her study does ‘not suggest that any discrimination based on ethnicity or socioeconomic background is playing a determining role in the apprentice recruitment in the commercial occupation’ (142). This finding may be a consequence of the methodology adopted and the sensitivity of recruiters to questions of race and ethnicity. Bray, (2017 np) commenting on neo-liberalism and the disparaged ‘white’ working class

who have been constructed by the elite as predominantly racist, enables liberals to 'believe themselves to be antiracist, deny their denial of racial history, and do nothing much about the racial structures they help to reproduce'. Perhaps such an argument could go some way in explaining the stance of Wilson's recruiters.

## CONCLUSION

In this paper we have sought to use British, or more correctly English VET to raise questions about the social justice claims of VET in the 'fourth industrial revolution.' In current conditions, the rhetoric of the 4<sup>th</sup> IR is prominent, calling as it does for the development of a technical elite to meet the economic demands for skilled labour. It is unlikely that this aspiration is achievable within capitalism as the demand for skilled workers and decent jobs is limited, available only to the few. In addition, there is another tendency, the expulsion and warehousing of the marginalised who become a source of disposable labour. The paper alerts us to the interrelationship of capital and race and their imbrication. This is often an overlooked feature of capitalist relations and is echoed in processes of racialisation. It is necessary to recognise that this is structural, being shaped by the interrelationship of capitalism and race.

Although there are parallels between England, Europe and Nordic societies in the positioning of 'migrants' at the margins of society we found ourselves wondering about our analysis and how it maps onto these contexts, whilst recognising there are subtly different approaches to migrants. Sivanandan refers to multiculturalism and 'Britain's proud record of integration,'

which he sets against Europe's assimilationism. However, the English experience suggests that as far as VET is concerned discourses of assimilationism or multiculturalism are of limited relevance. What is of greater importance is the labour market, capitalist relations and processes of racialisation.

In the English economy worklessness and marginalisation are a common feature and pose the question of how VET should respond without stigmatising those concerned. We could think about 'really useful' labour, which exists beyond waged work and is productive in that it addresses community needs and well-being but not surplus value. Alternatively, the notion of a guaranteed social income could be explored. There is a paradox here in that these strategies are directed towards the marginalised and do little to transform the structure of society and its inbuilt inequalities. The social justice implications of our argument suggest that if we wish to go beyond migration and inclusion in work life, we need to refuse such notions but also need to adopt an expanded conceptualisation of work-life. Such a conceptualisation would recognise the salience of 'really useful' labour/work that contributes to societal well-being. VET could address this but would need to move beyond its traditional remit of serving capitalism in the production of surplus value

Finally, BFELG does suggest a starting point for the development of VET that moves beyond racist structures. Following this position, we could consider what would be required to decolonise the curriculum and reconfigure the cultural climate in which VET is set. Importantly, VET can only do so much and if a socially just society is the goal, there is a need for the transformation of political and social relations.

## NOTES:

1. Colleges of Further Education (FE) are a major provider of Vocational Education and Training. On occasion FE and VET will be used as equivalent terms.
2. A foundation degree is the equivalent to 2/3 of a BA or Bsc.
3. The UK's Social Mobility Commission definition of social mobility derives directly from employment, 'Social mobility is the link between a person's occupation or income and the occupation or income of their parents. Where there is a strong link, there is a lower level of social mobility. Where there is a weak link, there is a higher level of social mobility' (SMC, undated online).

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## **Migrant students in formal VET in Spain: reflections for European policies**

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**Abstract:** The present paper contains an analysis of the existing literature that attempts to elucidate the state of the art regarding research on students with a migrant background in the

Spanish school-based VET system in the last decade. The aim of this research, taking into account the policy and socio-demographic context, as well as enrolment data and the introduction of reforms concerning formal VET in Spain, is to reflect on the extent to which there is evidence to justify VET as the main post-compulsory pathway for migrant students. In order to carry out this research, we will consider previous studies that highlight the differences between students of immigrant origin and native students in the Spanish education system. We conclude our paper by reflecting upon the Spanish situation from a European perspective, considering other European studies, recommendations and policies in order to review whether VET helps integrating or segregating students of migrant origin compared to native students; as well as providing an insight into European policies from the Spanish situation and trends.

**Keywords:** social inclusion, enrolment, completion, career development , migration

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, most regions of the Western wealthy world have experienced an unprecedented increase in the foreign population. In Spain, according to the database of the National Statistics Institute (INE, 2021), as of 1 January 2020 there were 5,375,917 foreign residents, which represents 11.4% of the total population. These figures accentuate the uniqueness of the migratory phenomenon, in comparison with the process followed in Europe, making Spain the fourth country with the highest number of non-nationals (4.8 million) registered in

absolute terms on 1 January 2019; preceded by Germany (10.1 million); Italy (5.3 million); and France (4.9 million) according to the European Statistical Office (Eurostat, 2020).

Consequently, taking as a starting point the migrant background, the proportion of students of foreign nationality has also grown exponentially, as suggested by data from the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (2020). However, education systems have not adjusted to the demands of this new cultural diverse scenario, resulting in an existing educational gap between native and immigrant students (Aparicio & Portes, 2014; Bayona & Domingo, 2018; Luna, 2011). These results are a far cry from the system's initial claim to become a means of progressively modifying the physiognomy of educational contexts (Mikander et al., 2018). This increase of immigrant students in the education system highlights new needs and challenges.

Therefore, this paper aims to analyse and comprehend the social, academic, professional and personal difficulties or challenges of foreign students with respect to local students in the educational field -more specifically, in the area of Vocational Education and Training (hereinafter, VET) – and to abstract conclusions based on the existing literature on these topics.

Despite the limited literature, the problem is of great magnitude, as linking the concepts of immigration and VET are still under research in Spain. Moreover, ethnic profiling in school segregation is a reality in the Spanish education system (Murillo et al., 2017) that needs to be reduced (Alegre, 2017), mostly due to the clear negative impact that grouping immigrant students has on their results (Jensen & Rasmussen, 2011; Karsten et al., 2006; Nordin, 2006; Szulkin & Jonsson, 2007).

Similarly, one of the issues of greatest concern to European societies is the future of young people, more specifically those

who are most at risk of social exclusion. There is a growing body of research that aims to study the educational processes of young people at risk of exclusion. For example, the European Commission's 2005 Report on Social Inclusion identified disadvantaged young people as a strategic objective, proposing to address these disadvantaged situations from two priority areas: a) the education and training of young people and b) increasing their participation in the labour market. However, in 2011, school dropout was identified as one of the main problems of European education systems (European Commission, 2011). This is an issue that has been extensively addressed in recent years, as argued by several authors (De Witte et al., 2013; Hovdhaugen et al., 2015) and tackled by Cedefop<sup>3</sup>.

The VET is often conceived as an appropriate choice for students who are not able to take other academic chances. VET itself, however, suffers also from dropout: there is literature addressing school dropout from VET, thus it will be important to take this aspect into account in order to accurately understand the educational reality that surrounds the Spanish system (Cedefop, 2016a, 2016b; Cerdà-Navarro et al., 2017; Dore & Lüscher, 2011; Pinya-Medina et al., 2017; Psifidou, 2016; Tanggaard, 2013).

## 1.1. IMMIGRATION IN SPAIN: EVOLUTION AND HISTORY

There has been an explosion in migration in most regions of the world over the past few years, and Spain is not an exception, where the foreign population and ethnic and cultural diversity,

3 <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/toolkits/vet-toolkit-tackling-early-leaving>  
<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/early-leaving-education-and-training>

as a result of the migratory flows caused by globalisation – especially towards Western countries – has increased considerably. For example, the percentage of students with an immigrant background in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, hereinafter) countries stood at 23.1% in 2015 and 21.49% in the EU (OECD, 2018). In this sense, at least one in five 15-year-old students in OECD countries has a first- or second-generation immigrant background (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2018).

This fact has given rise to multiple measures of attention and resolution in different areas such as: economic, political, educational, social, legislative and health, among others (Ceobanu & Escandell, 2010). On the basis that the phenomenon of migration is global, complex and changing, migration affects both the people who migrate and the people in the host country (Guichot-Muñoz & González-Monteagudo, 2016). Spain has not remained on the sidelines of the global phenomenon of increasing migration. Thus, as we have pointed out, this increase in the foreign population can cause a perception of competition associated with material well-being and cultural identity in the receiving societies (Moldes-Anaya et al., 2017).

Immigration has changed the social, cultural and ethnic context in Spain, creating a new school ecosystem that challenges the functioning of the overall education system to support the integration and inclusion of different groups, including immigrants, promoting a space of cultural diversity and social cohesion (Cerdà-Navarro et al., 2020). All this has given rise to a permanent and unfinished phenomenon (Valero-Matas et al., 2014). Spain's economic development, driven and encouraged by the process of democratisation and industrialisation from



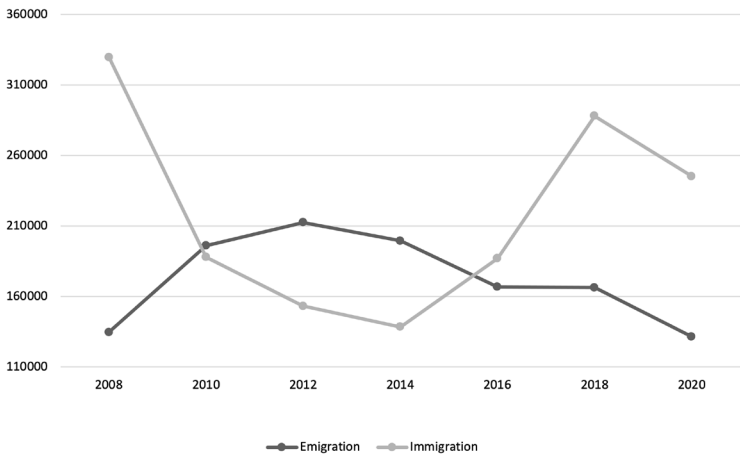
1975 onwards, which was a period marked by Western values (Zaunstöck et al., 2021). In addition, another revealing fact, especially after 1986, when the country joined the European Union, was an important transformation, as it went from being a territory of emigrants to becoming a country of immigration (Izquierdo, 1992). Thus, with the transition to democracy, the process of economic and social transformation began.

It was in the 1990s that Spain experienced during the economic boom, a period of an unprecedented immigration explosion among the countries of the OECD, as Cebolla-Boado and González-Ferrer (2008) state. Migratory flows turned the country into a recipient of immigrants, to the extent that 12% of the Spanish population became foreigners (Portes & Aparicio, 2013). However, from 1990 to the present day, Spain has become one of the countries in Europe that receives the most immigrants, and it is possible to distinguish three decisive stages in this immigration process: the first stage from 1978 to 1985, the second stage from 1986 to 1999 and the third stage from 2000 to the present day. These three stages are different in terms of the volume of immigrants and their characteristics (Nieto-Merino, 2015). Accordingly, there has been a reaction in educational policies in order to address this changing demographic profile of students (Aparisi & Marhuenda-Fluixá, 2020).

After the end of the first demographic transition in many countries of the world, migration replaced natural growth as the main agent of demographic change (Bell et al., 2015). During the first years of the 21st century, Spain was one of the most important recipients of foreign immigration (Arango, 2015; Domingo & Cabré, 2015; Galeano & i Coll, 2016; López de Lera, 2015; Recaño, 2002; Reher & Requena, 2011). The arrival of foreigners

contributed to demographic growth and the rejuvenation of the population structure (Domingo & Blanes, 2015). The economic crisis was a turning point, as it brought with it a reduction in inflows from abroad and the departure of some foreigners settled in our country, although most remained in the territory (Prieto-Rosas et al., 2018). At the same time, Spanish emigration abroad experienced a growing trend (González-Ferrer, 2013; Herrera-Ceballos, 2014; González-Enríquez & Martínez-Romera, 2017).

Figure 1. Evolution of emigration and immigration in Spain\*



Note: Data population extracted in thousands (INE, 2020)

\*Data based on the Spanish population of 47 million

In addition, it is worth noting that Spain's transition from a country of emigration to a country of immigration led to the education system undergoing an important process of cultural

diversification, bearing in mind that immigration is one of the most important social, cultural and economic phenomena today. In this way, cultural diversity and the phenomenon of immigration are latently manifested in the educational sphere, where the fabric of its institutions is represented by foreign students and/or descendants of second or third generation immigrant groups.

This situation gives rise to the creation of discourses and representations about these students that often present interculturality encounter as a problematised situation (García-Castaño et al., 2008; Poveda et al., 2014), sometimes stigmatising the immigrant population as conflictive (Campoy, 2006) and focusing on the negative aspects of immigration, instead of the positive opportunities that offers (Aguilar et al., 2017; Maza & Sánchez, 2012).

From this perspective, it is essential to recognise the importance of education as a process that enables the right to participation and comprehensive development. Thus, equal opportunities for all students, especially the most vulnerable ones, remain a priority for educational policy and research (Ballarino et al., 2009). And in Spain, the increased presence of immigrant students is challenging institutions to become an inclusive and combative space in the face of inequalities. However, the education system has not fully adapted to this scenario. Proof of this is the academic gap that exists between native and non-native students, a situation that has been contemplated in various national and international scientific productions (Glaesser, 2006; Gronborg, 2013; Jäppinen, 2010; Jordan et al., 2009; Salvà-Mut et al., 2019; Tangaard, 2013). Therefore, it would be necessary to adapt the education system to the diversity of cultural backgrounds by

adequately managing this complexity and fostering intercultural competences, for example, among students, families and teachers. In this way, it is undeniable that the point from which we are starting generates new challenges to teaching practice and to the management and functioning of organisations in order to provide an educational response adapted to the new needs of our society (Tenreiro et al., 2020).

As a result, the interest in continuing to explore and respond to issues related to cultural diversity, social inclusion, immigration and education is becoming increasingly important (Alegre et al., 2008). Thus, the interest of the scientific community in this subject has generated a specific area of study and an increase in the production of content, although there are still areas that have not been fully explored, especially in the area of VET. All this has been evolving in a highly globalised period, which stimulates continuous mobility and an ever-expanding migration cycle (Jensen et al., 2011; Mewes & Mau, 2013; Terrén, 2007). Studies related to cultural diversity and migratory processes have an important social relevance, as they attempt to produce knowledge related to everyday social problems for intercultural educational communities. However, the inclusion of immigrants is not easy to quantify, because there is no universally accepted measures of a successful integration (Vasilescu et al., 2020).

In view of the above, the aim of this chapter is to analyze to what extent VET can be considered as the main post-compulsory route for students with a migrant background. First of all, it should be pointed out that the concepts of “foreigners” and “immigrants” will be used in this paper to refer to people who were not born in Spain. According to Organic Law 4/2000, of 11 January, on the Rights and Freedoms of Foreigners in Spain

and their Social Integration, modified by LO 8/2000, 14/2003 and 2/2009, “immigrant” refers to the social condition of a person who comes from another country and “foreigner” is the administrative-legal condition of a person in a country. It is also important to differentiate between “immigrant” and “refugee” status, as refugees are often treated simply as a subset of immigrants, under the assumption that attitudes towards both groups of foreigners are similar (Abdelaaty & Steele, 2020). Both immigrants and refugees are newly arrived foreigners but there is a distinction in law and policy between these two groups. There is a well-established international regime for refugees, based on the 1951 Refugee Convention, as well as the activities of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Following the signing of the Refugee Convention in 1951, a refugee is legally defined as “someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group” (United Nations, 1951). Immigrants are considered individuals who decide to move to another country based on their free will, for reasons of personal convenience, and without the intervention of an external compelling reason such as war or a natural disaster (UNESCO, 2017). However, these definitions and categories are, as is the case for all social constructs, somewhat arbitrary. As can be seen, clearly defining a person’s status is not an easy task. In addition to being subject to a legislative framework, it is also subject to a social framework. It is therefore important to point out these lines in our research.

In order to facilitate the understanding of our work, it is worth mentioning that the Spanish education system – regu-

lated by the Organic Law on Education (LOE) of 2006 and the Organic Law for the Improvement of the Quality of Education (LOMCE) of 2013, which modifies it – is structured into general education and special education. The former will include: Pre-school Education; Primary Education; Compulsory Secondary Education (ESO); Baccalaureate; Vocational Educational and Training (VET); Adult Education and university education. The second category includes: Language Education, Artistic Education and Sports Education. In this research, we will focus on VET in the school context, which will be briefly explained below. Currently, there have been significant changes regarding the Spanish education system. On the one hand, it is worth mentioning Organic Law 3/2020, of 29 December, which modifies Organic Law 2/2006, of 3 May, on Education (LOMLOE). On the other hand, on 19 January 2021, Organic Law 3/2020, which amends Organic Law 2/2006 on Education, entered into force. Its entry into force has repealed Organic Law 8/2013, of 9 December, for the improvement of the quality of education (LOMCE). The Ministry of Education has proposed to bring forward what will be the new Vocational Training Law, still under parliamentary debate.

## 1.2. VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN SPAIN

Adapted from *Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport* (MECD) and European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP), VET is understood as the set of training actions that aim to develop needed competencies for working in professional settings and preparing themselves for the changing labour market, enabling their steps through

regulated and non-regulated education system and their personal development. In Spain, since 1990, there have been various partial changes and reforms of VET with the main purpose of improving the quality. According to LOMCE (2013), among others, the main objectives of VET are linked to students' training to work in a professional field, to facilitate their permanence in the training context and to make possible their adaptation to labour changes.

Today it is theoretically accepted that the vocational education and training (VET) system plays an important role in youth employment (López-Fogues, 2017; Toner & Woolley, 2016) and in fostering European labour mobility (Kaleja & Egetenmeyer, 2017). Initial VET in Spain has improved significantly over the past 30 years (Brunet & Moral, 2017; Marhuenda-Fluixá, 2019a). In addition to this, it is worth noting the positive influence that these VET programs have had on young Spaniards' abilities to find work when compared to young people in general (Albert-Verdú et al., 2009; Casquero-Tomás, 2009). This has not been an easy process, as there have been two different movements throughout this time. This paper is focused on the analysis of VET in Spain that consists of Initial VET, Intermediate VET and Higher VET.

Defining the current state of VET in Spain in a clear and absolute manner is an arduous and complex task. This is because, throughout its history, it has varied in form and references (Chisvert-Tarazona & Marhuenda-Fluixá, 2012). According to RD 1147/2011, of 29 July, which establishes the general organisation of vocational training in the education system, the purpose of VET is, according to art. 2 of the aforementioned regulation, to prepare people for activity in a professional field and to facil-

itate their adaptation to changes in the labour market that may occur throughout their lives, as well as to contribute to their personal development and the exercise of democratic citizenship. This comprises a set of training cycles with a modular organisation, of variable duration and theoretical-practical contents appropriate to the different professional fields.

The Spanish VET, as part of the education system, is governed, regulated and coordinated by a central legal framework that includes a wide range of institutions and whose regulations are applied throughout the country (Marhuenda-Fluixá, 2019b). Since the approval of Organic Law 1/1990, of 3 October, on the General Organisation of the Education System (LOGSE), and subsequently, with Organic Law 5/2002, of 19 June, on Qualifications and Vocational Training, VET has been integrated into two subsystems: Regulated Vocational Training and Vocational Training for Employment. On the one hand, Regulated Vocational Training or formal VET depends on the Ministry of Education and is considered part of the Spanish education system. On the other hand, Vocational Training for Employment, or non-formal VET, is regulated by the Ministry of Labour; it is considered non-formal because it is provided outside the education system (Zaunstöck et al., 2021).

For VET in the Education System and for VET for Employment, the reference framework is the National Catalogue of Vocational Qualifications (SNCFP, 2020), which gives coherence to the two subsystems, as it is the common source for the curricular design of the VET qualifications of the education system and the Certificates of Professionalism of the system for employment. The National Institute of Professional Qualifications, a body made up of specialists from the Ministry of



Labour and the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, is responsible for detecting, describing, defining and officially publishing the qualifications needed to accredit the professional profiles of the productive structure.

The Vocational Training Subsystem of the Education System has the mission of enabling students to receive training tailored to their needs-as is the case of the specific offer of VET for Employment for the immigrant population-, as well as lifelong learning and the awarding of official qualifications for professional practice. The Vocational Training for Employment System has the mission to train and qualify people for work and to update their skills and knowledge throughout their professional life. The VET Subsystem of the education system is regulated by LOE 2/2006, of 3 May, modified by LOMCE 8/2013, of 9 December and RD 1147/2011, of 29 July, and as cited in this law, currently, VET is a priority of educational policy, of the economic policy of the European Union and of the Government of Spain (Brunet & Moral, 2017).

Vocational Education and Training is an option that is increasingly in demand in the Spanish labour market. Moreover, the current productive fabric has serious difficulties in absorbing all university graduates and there is an increasing demand for intermediate technical positions with specialised training. The current education system allows students to choose a training option that is increasingly adapted to their needs and the demands of the labour market, also allowing access to the world of work under better conditions and with better training. In Spain, the current structure of formal VET is formed by 26 vocational families (LOE certificates), with theoretical and practical contents adapted to the different pro-

fessional fields or areas, each including different certificates of Level 1, 2 and 3 (more than 150 in total), with a few exceptions (based on website of the Ministry of Education and VET of the Government of Spain<sup>4</sup>).

## **EUROPEANISATION OF VET: EUROPEAN EDUCATION POLICIES**

The evolution towards a common vocational training policy has a long history in Europe. Currently, the most recent measure as far as VET is concerned would be the Osnabrück declaration, 2020. The Declaration continues the process of enhancing European cooperation in VET, started in Copenhagen in 2002 and followed by the Bruges Communiqué (2010) and the Riga Conclusions (2015); and pursues the following aims: Boost economic resilience; establish a culture of advanced training; mainstream sustainability in TVET; and reinforce and promote the international dimension, with cross-border mobility.

European and international processes are increasingly influencing educational policies and practices at the national level. The European Union (EU) has identified education and training as a key sector and has included it among its interests and objectives, and this is particularly true for Vocational Education and Training (VET) with regard to a so-called common European labour market. In the 1950s, political science theories deal with the question of how and why the states united in the EC/EU have become increasingly intertwined and co-operative. In the

4 <https://www.todofp.es/inicio.html>

context of European integration, processes of change in EU member states have been labelled ‘Europeanisation’ (Zaunstöck et al., 2021).

In recent decades, a European VET agenda and policy have been developed. VET policy is addressed differently than policies in other areas (Zaunstöck et al., 2021). The European Union aims to increase activities aimed at integrating education and training activities at European and national level. It also aims to improve the performance, quality and attractiveness of VET in Europe. This is done through cooperation and cohesion between different European structures and bodies, such as the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP).

The main feature associated with the Europeanisation of VET is work-based learning, i.e., specific training for professional skills and jobs (Korber, 2018; Loogma, 2016). In fact, the European Commission (2018) currently recommends a policy of developing work-based skills to adapt the workforce to constant change in a globalised world. This is one of the main reasons why dual VET system is booming in Europe, consolidated in countries such as Germany, Switzerland and Austria and developing in other Southern European countries where practical training is carried out to a lesser extent, inherited from Central Europe, as is the case in Spain and Italy, where VET not only promotes practical training but also offers a wider range of qualifications (Korber, 2018). Although this modality has been widely implemented in other contexts, in Spain the foundations are based on *Real Decreto 1529/2012* and the LOMCE (2013), so its implantation is still in process (Pineda et al., 2017).

## **MIGRANT STUDENTS AND VET: STATE OF THE RESEARCH AND BASIC THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS**

The literature proposes a broad set of aspects to highlight in terms of academic difficulties rooted in migrant status, ranging from school-based explanations in terms of school segregation, to individual, family and socio-economic characteristics (Lamonica et al., 2020). According to Hippe and Jakubowski (2018), being a migrant is one of the most important determinants of school dropout, especially when associated with a low socio-economic background. In Europe, the percentage of students leaving school during compulsory education is twice larger among foreigners -born abroad- than among natives (European Commission, 2014). In order to reduce youth disadvantage, European countries implement different measures and programs that carry out prevention, intervention, and compensation actions. Prevention policies aim to support students at risk (Aslan et al., 2019; Bernard et al., 2018; European Commission/Eurydice, 2004; Nusche, 2009).

Nonetheless, education systems have not fully adapted to the demands of this new scenario and thus need to be realigned. A clear sign of this need is the academic gap detected amongst native and immigrant students seen in many national and international reports, with data from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA); (Calero & Escardíbul, 2016; MECD, 2016; OECD, 2016) or from other sources (Aparicio & Portes, 2014; Bayona & Domingo, 2018; Luna, 2011). This gap in academic performance translates into: (a) lower continuance rates in higher secondary education amongst immigrant stu-

dents (OECD, 2016), (b) a greater percentage of NEETs (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) amongst immigrants (OECD, 2018b) and (c) higher school dropout rates amongst immigrant students.

It is worth noting that in terms of dropout rates in the EU, for example, in 2017 the percentage of those aged between 18 and 24 who were born overseas and dropped out of the education system early doubled the rate for native-born individuals: 19.4% vs. 9.6% (European Commission, 2018). It should be stated that there are huge discrepancies between different countries, with the rate being particularly low in the Netherlands (below 7%) and especially high in Spain and Italy (above 30%); (European Commission, 2018). It should also be noted that in this regard, and amongst the migrant population itself, there can also be significant differences depending on the country of origin (Aparicio & Portes, 2014). Dropping out of school early is a serious problem, which is further accentuated by the focus on the migrant population.

Regarding the most significant results on immigration and VET, there are not differences in terms of gender between the immigrant and native students; age is not a determinant, but it can be predicted that the older the immigrant student, the greater the difficulties. Socio-economic status is a key factor in the choice of VET studies; immigrant students seem to have more problematic previous academic trajectories; the choice of VET courses depends on the students' perception of employability; and young people of immigrant origin have less social support than local young people (Cerdà-Navarro et al., 2020).

## **VET STUDENT'S PROFILE: SPANISH CONTEXT**

As noted, VET characterization varies a lot from country to country, although factors such as those related with socioeconomic background tend to distinguish VET from general upper secondary education. Regarding Spain, the number of students enrolled in VET has risen by 19.8% in the last 5 years, according to the Vocational Training Student Enrolment Statistics for the 2018-2019 academic year published by the Ministry of Education. In total, 837,199 students enrolled in some VET cycle in that academic year and the majority, 71.7% (600,113 students), in public centres. By grade, 73,810 students studied basic vocational training, 2.3% more than in the previous academic year. There were 322,736 on-site students at the intermediate level, 1.1% more than the previous year, and 353,235 on-site students at the higher level, 1.3% more. In distance education, the number of enrolments also increased in both the Intermediate Level, with a rise of 9.9%, to 27,484 students, and in the Higher Level, with an increase of 19.4%, to 59,934 students. These figures represent an increase of nearly 20% in the number of students in the last five years of Vocational Training. According to the Ministry's statistics, the increase in the number of students in Higher Levels (+18.6%) and the number enrolled in distance learning (+66.4%) stand out.

The presence of students of foreign origin is another relevant factor for analysing the profile of students enrolled in these courses. Thus, since the 2007-2008 academic year, the number of non-national students has doubled and, according to official figures, has risen from 35,272 to 63,213 students in 2017-2018,

divided into Basic (17.4%), Intermediate (46.2%) and Higher (36.4%). In terms of the origin of the student body, Africa (30.5%), the European Union (29%) and South America (25%) stand out, distributed unevenly throughout Spain.

Below is a table (table 1) showing data on enrolment at different educational levels between local students and students of immigrant origin in the Spanish education system. It shows the unprecedented increase in the number of students who choose to enrol in vocational training studies, reducing the difference with respect to other more popularly recognised studies such as the Baccalaureate.

Table 1. Enrolment trends between native and immigrant students in VET

Degrees	2009-10	2014-15	2018-19	2019-20
Level 1 VET*	-	39.867	73.810	76.440
Native students	-	32.691	63.757	65.640
Immigrant students	-	7.176	10.053	10.800
Level 2 VET*	271.990	333.541	322.736	336.374
Native students	-	301.987	293.525	305.084
Immigrant students	-	31.554	29.211	31.290
Level 3 VET*	245.354	319.315	353.235	370.159
Native students	232.179	301.450	328.202	340.390
Immigrant students	13.175	17.865	25.033	29.769
Higher Qualification Programmes	12.344	25.421	-	-
Native students	-	21.218	-	-

Immigrant students		4.203	-	-
Other VET Training Programmes	-	10.164	12.830	13.650
Native students	-	6.834	9.626	9.828
Immigrant students	-	3.330	3.204	3.822
ESO	1.792.789	1.840.748	1.975.403	2.012.829
Native students	1.575.595	1.660.775	1.800.453	1.823.849
Immigrant students	217.194	179.973	174.950	188.980
Baccalaureate**	609.072	638.515	631.227	640.327
Native students	570.411	591.948	588.253	596.362
Immigrant students	38.661	46.567	42.974	43.965

Source: Adapted from MEFP (2020)

\* According to RD 1147/2011 and RD 127/2014: Level 1 (FPB) is ISCED 3.5.3, Level 2 (CFGM) is ISCED 3B and Level 3 (CFGs) is ISCED 5B

\*\* Includes foreign students who are enrolled in face-to-face and distance education

## FINAL REFLECTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Our research analysis on VET and immigration in Spain has allowed us to offer a general perspective on some of the issues that are of most concern to our society. It is necessary to draw a picture of the VET system in Spain, which can serve as a comparison with other models in Europe.

Despite the existence of literature on VET in Spain, we consider that it is still scarce, especially, that which related this educational area with the phenomenon of migration. Among the most recent reports published are the following by Cedefop (Sancha & Gutiérrez, 2016; Servicio Público de Empleo Estatal,



2016; Cantero & Sancha, 2014) but also other volumes such as the one by Marhuenda-Fluixá (2019). Among the former are one on the history of vocational training (Martínez, 2002), some on its political evolution (De Asís 2003; Luzón & Torres, 2013) or VET professionals (Ferrández et al. 2000), as well as a couple of overviews on achievements and challenges (Homs, 2009; Marhuenda-Fluixá, 2012). However, VET in Spain has not received sufficient attention from academics, and this is a reflection of the lack of interest it has suffered in terms of policy formulation.

Among the reasons why research on VET is scarce, Echevarría-Samanes and Martínez-Clares (2021) point out to the following: (a) It is a relatively young area of research; (b) In most cases, research is confined to specific occupations in specific countries; (c) There is no obvious classification of VET research at present; and (d) The amount of data and information on it is scarce and limiting. By contrast, VET will cease to be considered as a second choice to the academic pathway (Domingo, 2018; Lorente, 2015) and will be consolidated as a real and increasingly important training and employment option for the future (Cedefop, 2020).

This trend, however, has changed considerably over the last 25 years. Despite progress on VET, changes are still needed. According to Riga Conclusions (2015), the main challenges of Spanish VET were the improvement of its attractiveness and accessibility; and there has been a very relevant improvement in both regards (Martínez-Morales & Marhuenda-Fluixá, 2020). VET tends to make itself visible to society and transform itself into a smart choice. With regard to previous literature on the subject, it is worth highlighting the following: it is scarce given the particularity of the object of study; it is subject to the educational policies of each country; it responds to the individual

and collective needs of the participating students; it is highly conditioned by the labour market.

The authors of this chapter conceive students of immigrant origin in VET subjects with greater vulnerability than local students. We agree with Essomba, Tarrés and Franco-Guillén (2016) that education policy and the organisation of the education system should be modulating factors in the relationship between migration and education. We also consider that national education policies have played a fundamental role in promoting educational equity for students of foreign origin in our country. These motives are supported by the *European Commission's Europe 2020 Strategies*, whose motto is to advocate for inclusion in all educational spaces. It is therefore desirable that measures and programmes for the inclusion of immigrant students are solid and have a positive effect. Summarising, it could be suggested that students enrolled in VET programmes with immigrant background in Spain show characteristics linked to their academic background and engagement with education that make them more vulnerable than native-born students.

Finally, it should be noted that studies such as this one highlights the need of more research on cultural and ethnic minority groups in the national education systems, particularly, in the VET area. At the same time, this makes it possible to visibilize the difficulties and different challenges migrant origin and local students. Our intention is to continue to review the subject and to be able to go into more detail on the role of VET in the “integration” or segregation of students with a migrant background. The aim will be to answer the main question of our research, namely whether it is the main post-compulsory success pathway for these students.

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## **Creating lawful opportunities for adult refugee labour market mobility**

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**Abstract:** Creating labour mobility opportunities allowing refugees to move lawfully from first asylum countries to receiving countries, based on their skills / qualifications and recipient labour market needs, is a policy idea that deserves to be explored and tested. Drawing on a Cedefop's project, the objective of this paper is twofold. Firstly, to make strategic considerations on the scope, the approach and elements to be considered for its practical implementation. Secondly, to provide empirical evidence based on the findings of testing the idea in practice in an intra-EU context (labour mobility of refugees from Greece to Portugal). We discuss the expectations of the Portuguese employers and the type of skills they are looking for and the support they expect and could provide. Finally, we reflect on the skills of the refugees profiled and conclude with considerations on whether or not this policy idea is feasible and under what conditions.

**Keywords:** labour mobility, labour market integration, adult refugees.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The UN Refugee Organisation, UNHCR, reports the numbers of people forcibly displaced from their homes increased yet again to 82 million globally. A significant number of those displaced (25 million) sought protection outside their country of origin as refugees. The majority of these refugees (86%) are hosted by developing countries (UNHCR, 2021, p2), while only a fraction (less than 500,000 in 2020) moves to countries of the European Union (EASO, 2021).

Traditionally there are three durable solutions for refugees that are discussed at the international level: the return to the country of origin if the situation there allows; local integration in the first country of asylum; or resettlement. However, in reality these offer solutions only for a very small number of refugees as resettlement places hit an all time low in 2020, with only 22,770 people being resettled in that year, which accounts for only 1.6% of those with refugee status in need of resettlement. Compared to the resettlement needs of about 1.2 million refugees in 2017 and 2018 the latest estimates by the UNHCR suggest 1.47 million resettlement needs for 2022 (UNHCR, 2021).

The UN run process of resettlement is based exclusively on criteria of vulnerability, while relocation could potentially also be organised on other criteria than vulnerability such as employment, education. etc. Currently, there is a renewed interest in additional solutions that would enable the legal mobility for refugees which is informed by a variety of considerations, including concerns to improve access and provide legal and safe pathways to protection (ECRE, 2017) as well as to improve responsibility sharing mechanisms (Betts et al., 2017). An important strand of debate at the international level has focused on solutions to protection that are either based on / or connected to education and employment. The potential of such “complementary” (to the traditional durable solutions) has been recently recognised in the final draft of the UNHCR Global Compact on Refugees (GCR). The UN GCR encourages pursuing ‘*labour mobility opportunities for refugees, including through the identification of refugees with skills that are needed in third countries*’ (UN, 2018). These opportunities may well expand the scope of durable solutions for refugees beyond

those targeted by resettlement, humanitarian admission or family reunification programmes.

The EU-wide pendant to global-level resettlement was ‘relocation’. Relocation became the instrument of the day in the context of the high influx of asylum seekers and migrants in 2015 and 2016. The EU relocation process from 2015 to 2017 was based on two Council Decisions (Council Decision (EU) 2015/1523 of 14 September 2015 and Council Decision (EU) 2015/1601 of 22 September 2015). Currently, a special agreement with relocating countries at the EU external borders (e.g. Greece or Italy), such as the bilateral agreements (e.g. between Greece and Portugal), or a commitment to ad hoc relocation in the general framework of the Dublin Regulation are some possible options for national authorities to step in and show intra-EU solidarity.

At the EU level, European Commission, with its New Pact on Migration and Asylum (2020) foresees a policy option to open up pathways for refugees to safely and legally reach the EU (other than through resettlement), and additionally caters for the intra-EU relocation of applicants and beneficiaries of international protection to support those Member States who are at the forefront and promote the integration efforts.

The purpose of this paper is to summarize Cedefop’s work on exploring the idea of skill-based solutions to protection opening up labour mobility of adult refugees by providing some strategic considerations on the scope, the approach and elements to be considered for its practical implementation. Based on the strategic considerations, our work also tested how this type of solutions could work in the context of intra-EU mobility of refugees (i.e. skill-based relocation of refugees between Greece and Portugal). The ultimate aim of our work was to test the fea-

sibility of such solutions with the employers and refugees and whether and under what conditions they could work in view of gathering evidence to make things happen.

In the following section we summarise our strategic considerations in an intra-EU labour mobility context. These are grouped under two main pillars, namely the migratory and labour market pillars. We also emphasize the importance of the existence or the creation of networks of the actors that work with the potential beneficiaries in the host country (on skills identification and integration support); and with employers and local economic communities in a potential destination country for the operationalization of such a pathway. The paper continues with the empirical part where we share our insights from the field phase of the project where we tested the feasibility of the solution in an intra-EU mobility context (skills-based relocation between Greece and Italy). Finally, we summarize the lessons learnt from the field work and propose some conclusive considerations on the way forward.

## **SKILLS-BASED SOLUTIONS TO PROTECTION FOR ADULT REFUGEES**

The recent interest in expanding the number of solutions for legal mobility for refugees connected with education and employment opens the way, at least theoretically, to skills based solutions to protection. These solutions would open labour mobility opportunities for refugees, allowing them to legally move across countries based on their skills and attain self-sufficiency, while receiving societies will also benefit by filling specific current or future labour market gaps (Collett et al., 2016).

The central element of skills-based solutions to refugees' protection needs is matching refugees' skills and qualifications and labour market needs in a potential receiving country that offers adult refugees a real prospect of employment with a clear route to self-reliance and thus offering a sustainable solution to refugees' protection needs. In the international context, skills-based solutions to protection would offer an additional and complementary solution to resettlement for refugees to legally move from third countries to the EU. In an intra-EU context, such solutions could give a boost to relocation as a show of intra-EU solidarity. Currently, most existing complementary pathways pertain to either student scholarship programmes (see European Resettlement Network and Schmidt, 2017) or community-based sponsorship programmes (European Commission, et al., 2018). The development of these type of solutions need to be based on the principle of additionality and avoid what van Ballegooij et al. (2018) signalled as a risk in relation to complementary pathways namely that "*sponsored places are integrated within the general government resettlement targets [...] instead of creating additional protection capacity*" (van Ballegooij et al., 2018, p. 57).

While refugee labour mobility receives increasing interest in various fora, only little practical experience exists on the opportunities and challenges of related skills-based solutions either for refugees to join the EU labour market based on their skills and qualifications (i.e. through skill-based complementary pathways) or to benefit of intra-EU relocation based on skills and labour market needs (i.e. skills-based relocation). This despite the fact that "historically, the European Union has relied upon migrants from outside its borders to meet a variety of labour

market needs, some of which are related to the bloc's ageing population" (p.2), Hogarth (2021) argues.

A skills-based approach to refugees' international mobility, allowing for refugees' labour mobility, is often considered a paradox that contradicts the usual binary understanding of voluntary migration as opposed to forced migration (i.e. flight). One consequence of this is that employers and local economic communities are hardly involved in migration policy making, even when skills gaps and shortages in the labour market are largely recognised.

Up until now (August 2021), skills-based solutions to protection for adult refugees to legally join the EU or to move from one EU country to another have never been developed and tested in the EU context. The central element of skills-based solutions to refugees' protection needs is matching refugees' skills and qualifications in a first asylum country with the labour market needs in a potential receiving country in view of employment in the latter country. These solutions would offer adult refugees a real prospect of employment with a clear route to self-reliance and thus offering a sustainable solution to refugees' protection needs.

## **STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS**

In the absence of prior evidence, we are exploring the idea of a skills-based solution to protection of adult refugees allowing them to move legally and safely from a first asylum country to another country based on their skills and qualifications by raising the following research question which is central to our inquiry: *What needs to be taken into account at a strategic level*



*for a skill-based solution to work in practice?* We have therefore, explored the idea of skill-based solutions to protection by making strategic considerations on the scope, the approach and elements to be considered for its practical implementation. As a first step, our work aimed at creating a framework that would allow and support the implementation of the idea into practice as a short pilot in a second phase. The elaboration of the framework was based on extensive desk research on complementary pathways and labour market integration of beneficiaries of international protection in EU countries. It also examined initiatives already under experiment, with complementary pathways and/or skills-based distribution of refugees.

Additionally, the desk research was complemented by 13 interviews with experts from different backgrounds (national authorities, EU and international organisations and academia, namely: Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT), European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), Swedish Migration Agency, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), International Organization for Migration (IOM), Migration Policy Institute Europe, Comunità di Sant'Egidio (Italy), Stockholm University, European Commission's Directorate-General on Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME), Talent Beyond Boundaries (USA), and the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC).

Based on the desk research and the interviews, a framework was drafted. The framework combines skills and labour market considerations with a migratory path, and is structured along two pillars: the migratory pillar and the labour market one. While these two pillars focus mainly on technical considerations, it is important to mention that the feasibility of such

solutions is largely dependent on the existence of a political support, especially in the receiving country. In the absence of the green light by the relevant authorities in the EU member states, skill-based solutions cannot be envisaged in the short-term period, even though employers' interest may be there. The next two sections summarise the strategic considerations on skills-based solutions in an intra-EU labour mobility context.

## **THE MIGRATORY PILLAR**

Under this component, strategies aiming at applying skills-based solutions in an intra-EU labour mobility context in practice need to consider:

- the type of beneficiaries that could realistically benefit of a skills-based solutions and how to reach and engage with them,
- the legal admission channel that would allow the actual transfer from one country to another,
- the status of the beneficiaries in the receiving country,
- and the (financial and non-financial) support upon arrival.

For intra-EU labour market mobility, refugees whose applications can be considered as obviously justified and those who have been already granted refugee status are suitable potential beneficiaries of skills-based solutions to protection. However, the former group poses a challenge in relation to finding a balance between the needs for quick relocation from the first country of asylum to relieve the pressure on the national asylum system, and the time and context needed to conduct some form

of skill assessment that would allow selection and matching of potential beneficiaries with available labour market opportunities in a receiving country.

When it comes to the legal admission channel and the status of the beneficiaries in the receiving country, Member States do have some discretion. A receiving country may make use of humanitarian or non-humanitarian channels; it may issue *laissez passer* documents or humanitarian visas, and in that way beneficiaries keep their rights as beneficiaries of international protection (including protection against *refoulement*); or it could make use of employment permits to support legal entry of the beneficiaries of skill-based solutions, and thus accept them as economic migrants in which case, beneficiaries would lose their status of beneficiaries of international protection and the associated rights. The status of beneficiaries in the receiving country is, however, quite complex and plays a crucial role in determining the feasibility of a skill-based solution to protection and the buy-in from the beneficiaries. First, a skills-based solution to protection that provides a long-term perspective in the receiving country (refugee status) is widely considered as a necessary condition by employers and beneficiaries themselves, compared to temporary and short-term (subsidiary protection) and insecure status (applicants for international protection). Second, the migratory change from a protection channel to a legal migration channel, where the legal right of stay in the receiving country is conditioned by the reason of entry and stay in the country (i.e. employment), may involve the rights of beneficiaries being more limited compared to their previous legal migration status (i.e. in the sending country). In the second case, should the reason for the legal stay end (e.g. loss of employment) the person should,

in principle, leave the country, while at the same time having no realistic options to return the country of origin (non-refoulement), creating possible limbo situations. For this reason, beneficiaries need safety nets protecting against refoulement and policies of 'no return' in certain countries of first asylum (in certain sending countries).

## **THE LABOUR MARKET PILLAR**

The role of employers is often overlooked in migration and integration strategies. Most of the plans for migrants and especially beneficiaries of international protection are based on hosting and integration programmes which focus on urgent primary needs, such as housing and language classes. While these are obviously extremely important dimensions, overlooking employability impacts the long-term integration process of beneficiaries of international protection and their capacity of becoming self-reliant.

As highlighted above, the design of effective skills-based solutions to protection needs to start from the the employers (skill-demand approach) rather than the availability of skills (skill-supply approach). The starting point for admission would therefore be specific labour market needs, and even concrete job offers in a receiving country to be matched with the skill profiles and interests of potential beneficiaries (participatory matching). This means that reaching out employers and local economic communities is crucial to identify potential job offers or at least employers willing to participate in the initiative of relocation

Obviously, gathering systematic and reliable information on the supply side is also essential for effective matching process.

However, a demand-led approach is more likely to offer adult refugees a genuine prospect of employment and a clear route to self-reliance – in terms of employment opportunity as well as place of residence. People selected would have the possibility to move lawfully from a first asylum country (sending country) to another host country (receiving country), mainly due to their potential to fill labour demand gaps clearly linked to real employment opportunities that are hard to fill by the local labour force.

Under the labour market pillar, there are also drawn a number of obstacles that need to be considered. Employment in regulated professions and jobs is unlikely to be considered for the purpose of a skills-based solution to protection, as access to such professions and related education programs may present entry barriers not easy to address in the short-term. Barriers that may be addressed only once the beneficiaries are integrated into the labour market and acquire the education basis that allows them to pursue their studies or/and get the credentials to access the regulated professions. More generally, beneficiaries are highly unlikely to be work-ready, not least because of the lack of knowledge of the receiving country language. In addition, access to and participation in, the labour market for any type of eligible group is hindered by a variety of factors, such as the relatively low(er) education level, the likely inability to present the documentation for their qualification titles, or differences in the recognition of the qualifications awards and their value, differences in study approaches in country of origin and so forth.

## **NETWORKS**

As highlighted above, skills-based solutions cannot realistically be envisaged in the absence of political will and support. Engaging local and national authorities in the whole process is therefore crucial. Not less important is the role of all those actors and stakeholders that work with the potential beneficiaries in a host country (on skills identification and integration support) and with employers and local communities in a potential destination country. Their role is essential to create cross-border networks linking potential beneficiaries, employers and authorities, to support beneficiaries all the way through the process and until they become self-sustainable, as well as to support employers engagement and monitor progress effectively .

## **SKILLS-BASED SOLUTIONS TO PROTECTION FOR ADULT REFUGEES: THE CASE OF GREECE AND PORTUGAL**

In a second step and based on the strategic considerations outlined in the framework, the project aimed at testing the solutions in practice in an intra-EU labour mobility context. With this phase, the project aimed at answering the following questions:

On the migratory side: Is there any EU Member State that manifests interest in such solutions as receiving country? Can such solutions be anchored to any existing legal admission channel?

On the labour market side: Is there any interest among employers in employing refugees living in another EU MS? What are their needs and expectations? Are refugees interested in moving to another Member State? What skills do they bring and are they readily available?

The testing phase took place as a step by step and entailed exclusively field work: consultation with immigration authorities, co-operation with NGOs working with refugees, direct work with refugees (reaching out, profiling, drafting CVs, support to job interviews), direct work with employers (reaching out, identifying needs and expectations, selection of profiles, provision of CVs, facilitating interviews with refugees, etc.).

## **SETTING UP THE TESTING PHASE: THE MIGRATORY ASPECTS AND NETWORKS**

As indicated under the strategic consideration section above, to kick off any skills based solution to refugee protection in an intra-EU mobility context, it is necessary to identify at least one EU country that could politically and practically engage in the testing phase. Portugal, through two Government institutions High Commission for Migration (ACM) and the Immigration and Border Police Service (SEF), showed its interest. Second, we identified the legal admission channel and implicitly the “sending” country. Portugal had an already established bilateral agreement with Greece since March 2019 foreseeing the transfer of overall up to 1.000 beneficiaries, including persons with refugee status and/or subsidiary protection, and asylum applicants. The identified legal admission channel provided the ground to decide on:

- The type of beneficiaries to address: people with international protection status and no employment in Greece.
- Status and support in Portugal: beneficiaries would maintain their status in Portugal and would benefit of all sup-

port as all the other beneficiaries of the bilateral agreement, including housing and financial and non-financial support;

- How the beneficiaries would actually be transferred from Greece to Portugal: the agreement foresaw financial means for the transfer of the beneficiaries through the support of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) of the United Nations.

As assumed under the strategic considerations, the political buy-in and the identification of legal admission channel proved crucial in taking the project forward. Following the green light to make use of the bilateral agreement from the Portuguese side a similar arrangement was sought with Greece via the Greek Asylum Service.

Under the strategic considerations, we also underlined the importance of the supporting networks, connecting the two countries:

- experts from the Portuguese High Commission for Migration who ensured the liaison with the Greek NGO working with refugees (see below), the Portuguese employers and authorities.
- a Greek NGO, Solidarity Now (SN), providing employment and career advice services to migrant and refugee populations in Greece carried out the work related to the potential beneficiaries (reaching out, informing, skill profiling, preparing the CVs, assisting during selection process, etc.).



At the the institutional level, the networking also benefitted from the support of Cedefop and of the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) which supported our work in implementing the project. On this basis, the project could move into full implementation and into the labour market dimension in the following steps as indicated in the table below:

Table 1: The sequence of the steps during the testing phase

Step	Description	Result / outcome
Step 1	Create the pool of interested employers	Database with information on the companies interested to recruit refugees
Step 2	Create the pool of interested refugees	Short list of interested refugees with their contact details
Step 3	Create an anonymized database with some basic profiling information, such as skills, languages and work experience of the interested potential beneficiaries	Talent pool with the skills profiles of the refugees
Step 4	Share the anonymized database with employers and invite them to express interest in certain profiles and ask for CVs of specific candidates	Skills demand is expressed from the employers and specific refugees are chosen as candidates
Step 5	Send the CVs to employers who invite potential candidates directly to a number of interviews for specific job openings	Selection Interviews are held: Usually two or three interviews are held as a part of the selection procedure before a job offer is made.

On the labour demand side (Step 1), 93 enterprises coming from a variety of sectors in Portugal were contacted. In total, 32 employers (including large and multinational companies) agreed to virtual meetings to have a better understanding of the project. The meetings were important not only to explain the project, but also to raise awareness about the skills and talents of refugees in general and to clarify basic information regarding the legal status of beneficiaries of international protection and their rights. Most of the employers had no prior experience in hiring refugees and lacked basic information on migration, and in particular that recognised beneficiaries of IP are allowed to work.

Solidarity Now selected 67 profiles of beneficiaries of international protection in Greece (Step 2) with skills that matched the demand side of the employers in Portugal. Candidates had to 1) have the right profile; 2) be willing to move to Portugal for employment and 3) get through the selection process of the Portuguese employers and access a job offer. Solidarity Now assisted the potential candidates through the whole process (Steps 3 to 5).

During the process, some companies withdraw mainly because their sector has been hit hard by the Covid-19 pandemic, such as the firms coming from the restaurants sector; or because of the need of very specific set of skills and fluency in both English and Portuguese, such as a pharmaceutical companies. Other companies accepted an initial meeting but were reluctant to fully commit with the project on the ground of the lack of Portuguese language knowledge – that can be fundamental for some positions, especially for low skilled ones – and the length of the transfer process which could take up to two months once a job offered was made. Currently, (August 2021)

the process of selection is still on-going and the successful applicants are expected to arrive in Portugal in autumn. If succeed, though of small scale, this will be the first experience of this kind in the EU.

## EMPLOYERS' NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS

### - THE CASE OF PORTUGAL

A main initial question to employers was about the kind of profiles and/or skills in demand. Most companies found it difficult to clearly express their needs. Thus, having prepared in advance a profile database with main information on refugees' skills and personal attributes to share with employers turned out to be crucial. Based on general information about the educational background, language skills and other competences gave employers an initial idea and identify cvs of potential interest.

Some companies did give information about skills in demand. These are summarized in the table below (Table 1):

Table 1. Overview of education of the preselected 67 profiles of beneficiaries of international protection

Category	Profiles in demand	Labour market demand description
Low-skilled workers	Workers mainly for civil construction.	Labour market demand is high for bricklayers, brick-layer helpers and machine operators with at least intermediate knowledge of Portuguese.

Medium-skilled workers	People not necessarily with formal education, but fluent in one or two languages are the most common profile for medium-skilled workers.	Some employers, such as Altran, have openings for customer service support in which the main requirements are knowledge of English or French and soft skills, such as diligence and motivation. Other common positions are more administrative or operational and are related to sales, visiting with clients, dealing with suppliers, etc. In this case, knowledge of Portuguese is essential.
High-skilled workers	Mostly engineers and information technology specialists.	However, some companies, such as Siemens and BNP Paribas, have more diverse positions to offer for which the main requirement is having higher education regardless of the area of studies. For these positions, advanced knowledge of English is mandatory while Portuguese knowledge is not essential.

Surprisingly enough, the challenge of recognition of skills was rarely raised. However, the lack of documentation such as degree and certificates evidently can impact employers readiness to participate. Mainly for high-skilled workers, companies would only hire candidates who can provide documentation or references proving experience or training as a mandatory

requirement – e.g. Bachelor's degree in Computer Science. This could be an obstacle for refugees due to the lack of documentation in many cases.

There were cases when lack of qualification or experience did not seem as a problem whenever in-house training could be provided. Generally speaking, employers seemed more interested in behavioral competences and soft skills, such as motivation, diligence, and high levels of attendance (not being tardy and missing work frequently). Some employers were able to provide vocational training in highly demanded skills, such as courses on agriculture machine operation or sterilization of surgical instruments. The main concern of employers was to know what sort of integration activities would be provided to refugees once they arrive in Portugal, such as Portuguese classes, cultural orientation and psychosocial support. Employers seem more concerned with the type of support the new employee/refugee will receive in the first months of arrival, such as housing and language training.

## **IDENTIFICATION AND SKILLS PROFILING OF REFUGEES – THE CASE OF GREECE**

The sample of profiles collected by Solidarity Now was based on the criteria set by the employers in Portugal (such as language skills, higher education) and on the interest of the potential beneficiaries in pursuing job opportunities in Portugal. In terms of the demographics of the group, the pre-selection covered 48 male and 19 female coming from 20 different countries of origin including Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq and Iran. Roughly one-third (35% of men and 37% of women) had tertiary educa-

tion. About 50% of men and 37% of women had upper secondary or post-secondary education. The remaining 15% of men and 26% of women had lower secondary or primary education. Most of them had a knowledge of English, although at different levels of proficiency (Figure 1).

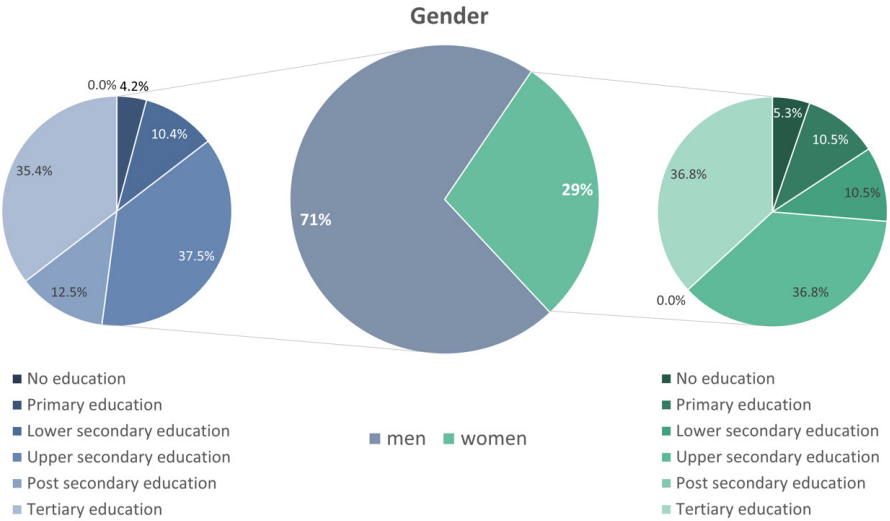


Figure 2. Overview of education of the preselected 67 profiles of beneficiaries of international protection

It is important to note that this group already held a working experience in a wide variety occupations acquired before arriving in Greece, which, categorised according to the European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO) classification, are presented below (Table 2).

Table 2. Overview of the occupation categories (ESCO codes) represented in the group of potential beneficiaries

ESCO Category	Category description	People in the group
ESCO 2	Professionals encompassed graphic designer, marketing assistant, interpreters or construction engineers or different teaching professionals	26
ESCO 3	Technicians and associate professionals like care service or commercial representatives	5
ESCO 4	Clerical support workers such as hotel receptionists, tour guides, secretaries or customers service representatives	4
ESCO 5	Services and sales workers held professions like housekeepers, waiters cleaners or sales workers	20
ESCO 6	Skilled agriculture, forestry and fishery workers mainly farmers	1
ESCO 7	Craft and related trades workers encompassed professions like bakers, carpenters or tailors	5
ESCO 9	Elementary occupations like gardening, factory workers and cook assistants	5
N/A	Information not available	1
Sum	Total number of applicants	67

As noted by Solidarity Now, the focus on criteria such as language proficiency and educational level as formulated by the employers as initial filters severely restricted the opportunities for potential candidates people with the enthusiasm, determina-

tion, willingness and adaptability that would have been highly motivated to move to Portugal. Similarly, some highly skilled profiles, which lacked the required languages, lost their chances of being assessed by the employers.

## **LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE EMPIRICAL FINDINGS**

Lessons learnt during the empirical phase of Cedefop's project with policy implications for replication in the future. The experience gained from Author's pilot project indicate a number of ways in which progress can be made to expand skills-based relocation in Europe:

- Bilateral agreements between countries at the EU external borders and other EU Member States can allow for skill-based solutions to be put into place and normally indicate an openness of the authorities to engage in such kind of solutions;
- Irrespective of their motives, either for reasons of corporate social responsibility or because they simply struggle in many instances to satisfy their labour needs with the available domestic labour force, the private sector is open for hiring refugees.
- As employers may not usually have much engagement in migration or asylum policies, they need support, information, often basic, and regular communication to uphold interest in looking into and hiring talent among beneficiaries of international protection (IP). They need to be



pro-actively approached and be offered a point of access to information on migration and to migration authorities.

- Access to the refugees' skills is not an easy task. Tallent polls or other central databases with refugee's skills are not easily available or centralised as their identification takes place by various organisations (particularly NGOs) who support refugees' integration into the local labour market, which indicates that skills assessment is done quite late and only after the refugees arrive in the EU.
- Refugees have valuable skills and are interested in moving to another EU country in view of employment, as long as they will be guaranteed that their status and protection.
- Unsurprisingly, knowledge of the language of the country of destination proved to be a major obstacle in engaging employers and hindering opportunities for potential beneficiaries that would otherwise have had the soft and/or technical skills to meet employers expectations.
- The challenge of recognition of skills was rarely raised by employees; while the lack of documentation such as degree and certificates is an important issue in particular in the case of higher qualifications.

The points above show that skill-based solutions offering labour mobility for refugees in an intra-EU context could work in practice since there is interest on both employers and the refugees sides. However, as assumed in the strategic considerations, employers need to be proactively involved, while refugees' skills need to be identified earlier after arrival in the EU and made more visible and accessible (e.g. inputted in a database).

## **CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER ACTION**

Skills based solutions to protection bear logic and could work if they could find their way into State's approaches to asylum policies. In the intra-EU mobility context, bilateral agreements on relocation of beneficiaries of international protection could foresee such solutions. They would meet a threefold purpose: allow beneficiaries of international protection to make use of their skills and qualifications; respond to the limited capacities of major countries of asylum to integrate them and, importantly, offer them opportunities that would match their skills; and allow employers in EU Member States to fill skills shortages through a humanitarian approach to a global problem. Our empirical work has indicated that the need of having networks of stakeholders working in the field together with the existence of legal pathways as legal basis are equally important. Both need to co-evolve as necessary preconditions in order to make the migration and the labour market components of the skills-based solutions work.

In conclusion, in order for skills based solutions to protection to work they would need three fundamental changes in perspective: 1) overcoming the traditional divide between humanitarian and non-humanitarian mobility purposes; 2) acknowledging that refugees –vulnerable or not – have skills that may be of value to receiving countries and their labour market needs and thus carrying out skill identification as early as possible in the asylum-procedures; and 3) seeing employers as valuable partners in refugees' solutions for protection.

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# **Inclusion for all in VET? A comparative overview of policies and state of research about migration, integration and inclusion in Germany, Austria and Switzerland**

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## **Abstract:**

**a) Purpose:** Migration and Inclusion are highly interconnected emergent issues in most European countries, addressing learners' diversity. International conventions, such as the declaration of inclusion by the Agenda 2030 (UNESCO) request the availability of high-quality VET for all individuals, regardless of personal attributes such as ethnical background or special needs, and with special respect to the worldwide refugees. In contrast, immigrants and learners with special needs are still risk groups of discrimination and lacking equal access to VET in most countries. National policies, measures and research activities are quite various, independent and not interconnected, although international comparative research has a long tradition in VET. The paper connects to this gap and delivers a comparative comprehensive overview of the educational policies connected with migration and inclusion in Germany, Austria and Switzerland to identify similarities/differences in dealing with migration and inclusion. Results are to be used to identify success factors and to address research gaps for a further common VET policy and research with respect to these issues.

**b) Approach:** Categories of the analytical comparison are the understanding of integration/inclusion, structures and formats to address immigrants and learners with special needs on institutional level in VET, state of research in both areas on the micro-, macro- and meso-levels, as well as indicators of success in dealing with migration and inclusion in the three countries.

**c) Findings:** The comparative analysis demonstrates the use of terminology as a dynamic and different process in every country, with consequences for categories of allocation to VET and

training structures/formats. The high significance of dual training in the three countries and the strong market orientation in the transition from school to work are evident. The combination of language support, vocational orientation, flexible and barrier free forms of training (e.g. first place then train) as well as support services alongside training are shown to be beneficial in all countries. Discriminatory and disadvantageous processes within the VET system are responded by increased mobility (change of training formats, post-qualification, individual access rights) and flexibility (partial qualification, different educational qualifications, training duration).

**d) Key message:** Based on the results the authors suggest a stronger international comparative analysis focusing the wider interpretation of inclusion by using the term and perspective of diversity and diversity management. The underlying intersectionality might help to overcome stereotypes and deficit-orientation towards the extremely diverse target groups.

**Keywords:** Comparative Analysis, Interconnection between Migration, Inclusion and Diversity, Germany, Austria, Switzerland

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Besides the megatrends of digitalisation and globalisation, migration, integration und inclusion are currently major impact factors for all VET systems in Europe and beyond. The role of VET for a successful integration of migrants (Petrís, 2018) has been emphasised as a common challenge of European countries since the beginning of the European integration process

(Koch, 1991). Migration and integration are nevertheless relatively new topics in comparative vocational education and training research. In the field of inclusion a similar international and comparative research is still rare. (Köpfer et al., 2021).

Since the 1990s, relevant issues in comparative vocational education and training research have been “specific national or supranational problems in educationally relevant social fields of reference”, including specifics of institutional structures of vocational education and training programs (Deissinger & Frommberger, 2010, p. 343). The tasks of comparative vocational education and training research are national structures as well as transnational topics such as qualifications and modularisation. This paper connects to this research background as it follows two research questions:

- Which structures, formats and measures for implementing concepts of integration and inclusion are established in the three countries of Germany, Austria and Switzerland?
- Which factors of success or requirements of development can be derived from the country comparative analysis?

To this purpose, the article aims at a systematic comparison with the goal of identifying specific features of German-speaking countries (Deissinger & Frommberger, 2010). It follows a long-standing tradition of close educational cooperation between Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, which is based on the “multilayered cultural and linguistic commonalities of the three countries” (Kultusministerkonferenz, 2017). In 2017, the so-called D-A-CH countries (Germany, Austria and Switzerland) decided to continue this cooperation, especially in view



of current social developments at the national and international level. On the agenda are the presence of German as a language, vocational training and teacher training.

Based on the typical structure in such international comparative research the article addresses the macro, meso and micro level (Pilz, 2017). Results are presented country-specific first and analysed comparatively, afterwards. The subsequent discussion emphasize desiderata for research and practice, while connecting the results with the perspective of diversity (management) to overcome existing barriers in integration and inclusion in the future.

## **2 THEORY AND METHODS**

### **2.1 THEORY: MIGRATION, INTEGRATION AND INCLUSION AS DETERMINANTS IN VET**

As inclusion and integration are controversially discussed analytical categories in social and educational sciences, they need to be defined in the context of migration first.

#### **Migration**

In the three compared countries, the phenomenon of migration is currently determined by the concept of “migration background”. In contrast to former analytical comparisons between natives and foreigners, focusing on citizenship only, it embeds in-migrants as well as persons born within the country but with migration experiences in their families. Nevertheless, the term migration background itself is used in plurivalent variation even

in national and international educational studies. For example, the international comparative educational study PISA refers to one's home country, the family language and parents' different socio-cultural imprints or migration experiences (OECD, 2019). Within the European Union there are various divergent terms of definition (Agentur der Europäischen Union für Grundrechte [FRA], 2010) with broad consequences for the number of groups and persons registered in national educational statistics under this term (Settelmeyer & Erbe, 2010). In parallel, there is a high confusion about the statistical integration of refugees and their diverse political, legislative and educational status, based on the regulations of the Geneva Refugee Convention 1951.

## Integration

Since the 1960s the sociological concept of integration is frequently connected with migration in Western Europe and the German language area as a vision of embedding migrants into an “unscathed whole” (Schinkel, 2018) majority society. Han (2016) and Fincke (2009) document the broad range of existing definitions of the term integration, demonstrating the complexity of integration as an individual, structural, social and societal process at the same time (Damelang, 2011; Esser, 2001). Additionally, the concept of integration has a changeable nature, reflecting social or political understandings of the relationship between majority and minority groups within society, their rights and obligations, for example with respect to the self-determination of migrants within the integration process. Current migration studies emphasise discriminating con-

straints of former concepts of integration, dealing with migrants from a national state perspective as outsiders, while claiming their assimilation in order to become a full member of society (Schinkel, 2018; Rytter, 2018). Instead of a national state process of negotiation, integration must be seen from a global perspective. In front of this background, migration is understood as social mobility of individuals, seeking for broader possibilities of inclusion and less exclusion for their families within the global society (Geier, 2020, 125).

As equal chances of access to and participation in vocational education and work are crucial for a successful integration (Granato et al., 2011), VET research usually addresses migration and integration from the individual and institutional perspective as well as part of the labor market policy. Scientific discussion about central steps towards an successful integration in VET is also controversial, demonstrating an ambiguous inter-correlation between the idea of integration and its sometimes discriminating consequences. While promoting equal participation in educational settings, the concept of integration can be used as mechanism of separation and exclusion by addressing minority learners in categories, such as “risk-groups” (Hormel, 2015) that need to be assimilated towards traditional educational norms and structures, by supporting them outside of the existing regular educational system (Boos-Nünning & Granato, 2010). According to that, a successful integration is characterised by equal success and high rates of participation of persons with migration background within the existing VET system (without critical reflection of the system itself).

In contrast to this traditional concept of integration, there is an increasing number of researchers in educational sciences,

social sciences and labor market research, that bridge the gap within the heterogeneous society with its diverse groups of migrants, by addressing the heterogeneity with regard to labor market and VET system itself (Fincke, 2009; Geier, 2020; Georgi, 2015; Mecheril, 2016). This new perspective includes an critical analysis of the vision of integration or the corresponding role of educational institutions within real integration and equal chances (Granato, 2009; Scherr et al., 2015; Rytter, 2019). Additionally, chances of migration or potentials of migrants are emphasised (Damelang, 2011; Kimmelman, 2010; Settlemeyer, 2011; Storm, 2011).

As the Salamanca declaration for “Inclusive Education” (UNESCO, 1994) was translated into German using the frame “integration”, today the term integration is also used for concepts addressing learners with special needs. Since the ratification of the Convention of the United Nations on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (United Nations, 2006) in all German-speaking countries, there is a trend to direct the national discussions towards the international practice of applying the term inclusion in educational settings.

## Inclusion

In contrast to integration, there is only a short history of research in VET with respect to inclusion (Köpfer et al., 2020). Research activities focus on measures for labor market, vocational apprenticeships or schools to enable all learners to participate in the regular systems (Biermann, 2005; Pool Maag, 2016). Scientific theory development of inclusive education on all educational levels can be characterised as controversial in the German lan-

guage countries (Cramer & Harant, 2014), in North America and within the European countries (Nilholm & Göransson, 2017). Especially the broad use of the term inclusion in research and practice, without a clear common conceptional understanding is strongly criticised. “The most important conclusion (...) concerns the necessity to be clearer in research about what is meant by inclusion both more generally but also in specific parts of papers” (Nilholm & Göransson, 2017, 447).

Scientific discussions in the German language area are of a controversial nature with respect to definition, purpose and objectives connected with inclusion in educational settings (Cramer & Harant, 2014; Felder, 2014; Grosche, 2015; Kastl, 2012; Mejeß & Powell, 2018, Lindmeier & Lütje-Klose, 2015; Meseth, 2021). Specific areas of conflict are:

- Disciplinary interpretations in different educational sub-disciplines (e.g. in sociology, psychology, special needs education)
- Ambiguous relations between the internationally recognised understanding of inclusion as a human right and the national educational policy
- Conflictive connections between normative principles of inclusion, such as appreciation and belonging on the one side and the achievement principle on the other side
- Different concepts of target groups in educational disciplines (special needs education, intercultural education, social pedagogy), focusing all learners or specific vulnerable groups only (special needs, migration background, disability).

Despite of different disciplinary and theoretical approaches towards integration and inclusion, educational justice (equal participation on education and work, reduction of inequality) is a common point of reference in educational, theoretical and ethical discussion (Fritzsche et al., 2021; Kunze & Sauter, 2019). Especially in VET and the context of migration and inclusion there is an increasing call for a more diversity-sensitive pedagogy/didactics (Bylinski & Rützel, 2016; Kimmelman, 2013), that does not focus singular dimensions of diversity (such as migration background or special needs), but the complex heterogeneity of learners, represented by the intersectionality of different diversity factors learners can share or differ in (Crenshaw, 2018). Inclusion appears as an interdisciplinary approach and specific view of educational processes as well as their qualitative development in the context of diversity. This article is based on this understanding of inclusion.

The UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development incorporates 17 global targets and a common educational agenda for highly developed countries (including Germany, Austria and Switzerland) as a request for more inclusive, equal and qualitative educational systems for all learners over the entire lifespan (Deutsche Unesco-Kommission e.V., 2017).

Diversity and diversity management demonstrate various connections between migration, integration and inclusion for vocational schools, organisations and companies. Nevertheless, the terms and corresponding measures still exist separately on national and international levels. At the same time, international comparative perspectives, addressing complex interconnections between inclusive education and theoretical or empirical approaches, are missing (Köpfer et al., 2021).

Therefore, the additional benefit of the article are best-practice examples at the intersection between policy and practice, with respect to national and local differences in economic structure, learning opportunities and educational objectives in three countries (Ebner & Nikolai, 2010; Pilz & Junmin Li, 2020).

## 2.2 METHODS

In order to answer the research questions the authors pursued the objective of a comparative analysis of VET policy and research in the three examined countries in order to identify similarities and differences connected to definitions and procedures with regard to migration, integration and inclusion.

Categories of comparison are the understanding of integration and inclusion, structures and formats to address immigrants and learners with special needs on all institutional levels in VET, state of national research in both areas, as well as indicators of success in dealing with migration and inclusion in the three countries.

Against the background of the historical development of Germany, Austria and Switzerland, facts and figures about the the examined countries have been collected descriptively on the macro, meso and micro level (Pilz, 2017):

- **macro level:** international and national reports/education reports; country-specific legal and educational policies
- **macro and meso level:** official catalogues of national educational measures; training curricula in teacher education and training
- **macro, meso and micro level:** Empirical results and evaluation studies; literature reviews

The selection of literature and data was sampled with respect to actuality and national/international relevance of the documents. Data analysis was embedded into communicative validation of the four researchers.

To analyse commonalities and differences within the D-A-CH countries, but also to integrate results into the European VET discussion, the development of VET systems in the three examined countries had to be taken into account: Dual vocational training in German-speaking countries and parallel higher education have long been held in high esteem, but were also criticized in recent decades. OECD studies point out the low permeability from dual vocational training to higher education (OECD, 2020). The persistent educational disadvantage of children and young people from households with low socioeconomic status and a migration background is also seen as critical. Reading literacy is still influenced by migration status, especially in Germany and Austria, less in Switzerland (OECD, 2021). The OECD comparisons should be viewed critically, as they mainly criticise deficits in academisation in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. In this context, too little attention is paid to the “vocationally educated” system of these three countries (Deissinger, 2018).

The educational systems in German-speaking countries have common origins in pre-industrial times; while the general school system aims at educated citizen, dual vocational education targets young people toward a profession. Vocational action competence was already the guiding idea of vocational education in the craft-based vocational training of German-speaking countries, which was extended by dual partner school at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Baethge,



2007). The term vocational education is embedded in German-speaking tradition and semantics (Deissinger & Frommberger, 2010). In German-language pedagogy, education and training are connoted differently, and in international literature, the term “German Concept of Bildung” (Horlacher, 2017) is used in this context. On the one hand, cross-national standards are set for compulsory education (OECD) and, on the other hand, vocational standards vary widely across countries (Deissinger & Frommberger, 2010).

The following results description refers to this background, by reflecting national definitions of integration and inclusion as well as correlating structures/formats/measures and research results for the three examined countries separately, trying to carve out shades of relevant differences and success factors in their interpretation of common international guidelines.

### **3 RESULTS**

#### **3.1 GERMANY**

##### **Definition of terms**

In Germany, migration and inclusion are discussed separately from each other. In the German context, migration is linked to the concept of integration and thus also to integration policy and research (Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung, 2016). After ratifying the UN CRPD, Germany adopted the mandate of inclusion with a narrow understanding and initiated corresponding reforms of the vocational training system with regard to persons with disabilities. The essential clarification of theoretical concepts illustrates the conflict between a narrow and a broad understanding of inclusion (Bundesministerium

für Arbeit und Soziales, 2016; Deutsche Gesellschaft für Erziehungswissenschaften, 2017; Deutsche Unesco-Kommission e.V., 2014; Euler, 2016; Euler & Severing, 2014).

## **STRUCTURES, FORMATS AND MEASURES FOR IMPLEMENTING INTEGRATION AND INCLUSION**

According to Berufsbildungsgesetz (BBiG), the German vocational apprenticeship system comprises of four segments: vocational training preparation, vocational training, professional development and vocational retraining. The system offers a large number of vocational apprenticeship programmes, implemented in cooperation with training companies, vocational schools, and external and inter-company educational institutions. Apprenticeships attract an extremely wide diversity of learners, who find their place in a similarly diverse collection of programmes, including pre-apprenticeship orientation, accompanied transition from school to apprenticeship (transition system) and differentiated apprenticeships (Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung, 2020; Niedermair, 2017).

Despite Germany's long history as a country of immigration, the systematic consideration of migrants in the vocational training system has only been taking place since the 2000s (Granato et al., 2011). Central legal milestones were the National Integration Plan 2007, the National Action Plan on Integration 2012, the New Integration Act 2016 and the Act on Toleration in Training and Employment in 2019. The three key measures of language, education and social network stand at the center of the newly created regulations and include in particular:

- Integrated language support services in job-related German, both before and during the apprenticeship
- Reduced entry requirement to vocational orientation and preparation for the German labor market
- Legally secure status of exceptional leave to remain during apprenticeship, even if an asylum application was rejected
- Support through training assistance measures, apprentice assistants and vocational preparation measures

Today, despite these positive developments, a migration background (even in the second generation) is still a risk factor for disadvantage and discrimination in all areas of vocational education (Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung, 2020, p. 165; BMBF, 2021, 92 ff.).

Young people who do not not directly secure an apprenticeship contract will enter the well-developed transition system (Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung, 2018). Learners with disabilities and disadvantages who fail their school-leaving qualifications are disproportionately overrepresented in the transition system (Thielen, 2019). When inclusion is practised in general education, the chances of direct entry into initial training is improved. Many young people with disadvantages and disabilities later start their vocational training after intermediate solutions. Areas of inclusive VET includes adaptations of framework conditions, individual support, professionalisation of stakeholders, intraschool and interschool network building (Bylinski, 2016; Langner, 2015; Zoyke, 2016). Euler and Severing (2014) demand that the cultural and structural conditions in companies and vocational schools be further developed and the didactic concepts for “inclusive schooling and train-

ing and an individualized learning process design” be changed (Euler & Severing, 2014, 127). Measures for designing inclusive vocational education are:

- Legislative measures for people with disabilities and young people with special needs: Adapted training with additional support (Bylinski & Vollmer, 2015).
- Qualification of instructors and teachers. Company instructors must earn additional qualifications for educating people with disabilities. The professionalisation of educational personnel and the promotion of a positive inclusive attitude are considered integral parts of qualification efforts (Bach, 2018; Zoyke, 2016).
- Collaborations in multiprofessional partnerships take note of school-based teams, as well as in-company and other places of learning (Bojanowski & Eckert, 2012; Buchmann & Bylinski, 2013; Weiser, 2016).

## **NATIONAL STATE OF RESEARCH ON MIGRATION, INTEGRATION AND INCLUSION IN VET**

Currently, VET research considers migration and integration as a cross-cutting issue and in particular provides descriptive descriptions of transition processes (Boos-Nünning, 2011; Granato et al., 2011). Longitudinal studies show disadvantages in terms of apprenticeship contract terminations, which affect more young people with a migration background and in 30% of cases learners in apprenticeship occupations with a low level of qualification (BMBF, 2019). The qualification of VET staff in dealing with learners with a migration background is curric-

ularly anchored under the broad concept of diversity, but has so far not received much attention despite concrete standards for the education and training of professionals (Kimmelman, 2010). However, its relevance as well as possibilities for professionalisation are increasingly becoming a research topic in the context of learners' second language acquisition (Kimmelman, 2018; Kimmelman & Peitz, 2018; Siemon et al., 2016). Since 2015, the topic of flight and refugees are widely discussed, with a focus on targeted vocational orientation (Calmbach & Edwards, 2019), access opportunities in training and employment (Dionisius & Illiger, 2019), the identification and recognition of competencies of refugees (Fischer et al., 2019), the relevance of integrated second language support (Weber, 2018), success factors of vocational training as well as special problem situations of the target group (Gei & Niemann, 2019; Strelow, 2019; Vogel & Scheiermann, 2019). Especially, the combination of language support, vocational orientation, flexible forms of training design, and accompanying support during training (e.g. through mentoring) emerged as important aspects across studies (Ebbinghaus & Gei, 2017).

At the beginning of migration and integration research the focus was primarily on the deficits and thus necessary adaptation requirements of individual target groups (Boos-Nünning & Granato, 2010). Current research approaches are increasingly concerned with the transformation of vocational training organisations within the diversity of people with a migration and refugee background of very different socio-cultural origins are acknowledged. Sociological research findings that have critically examined the construct of "cultural difference" since the 1990s are important here (Schittenhelm & Granato, 2003). On the

research level, this highlights an increasing importance of the broad idea of inclusion in terms of equal opportunities for all learners, also in questions of integration of learners with a migration background (Frehe-Halliwell & Kremer, 2018).

With a view to the narrow understanding of inclusion, research is taking place at the macro level on legal framework conditions with comparative perspectives. The Education Report duns more offerings in the regular education sector (Baethge, 2016). Comparative research confirms that the school system in Germany tends to be more segregated (regular and special education) and identifies a longer period spent in transition systems (Biermann, 2021; Hupka-Brunner et al., 2011). At the meso level, with regard to the actors and school/training structures, it is apparent that further professionalisation of educational personnel (teachers, instructors and social pedagogues) as well as modularised and more flexible forms of apprenticeships are required (Bach et al., 2018; Buchmann & Bylinski, 2013; Bylinski, 2020; Enggruber, 2019; Galiläer, 2011). Micro level research findings refer to the general education sector and thus point to a research deficit of inclusive vocational education in this regard. The separation of school systems, which leads to a “developmental lag” in terms of inclusive didactics and teaching (Merz-Atalik, 2014; Powell et al., 2021), is critical. The previous research results point to the high degree of complexity of inclusive vocational education. Further empirical research with qualitative and quantitative approaches is needed to understand the stakeholders and the specific structures of vocational education.

A look at both constructs also shows that successful integration and inclusion are multifactorial, and that the diversity of actors and structures does not allow for monocausal expla-

nations. Germany's federal structure allows for region-specific design of successful models in different occupational fields. For transferability, contextual factors such as the structure of occupational fields, curricular, state structures and professionalisation of stakeholders need further analysis. Successful vocational education under the aspect of migration and inclusion considers always domain-specific along the occupational fields.

### 3.2 AUSTRIA

#### DEFINITION OF TERMS

In Austria, the term integration largely refers to sociopolitical measures induced by migration, whereby both people with a migration background and the majority population are addressed as target groups (The Expert Council for Integration, 2020). The limited academic discussion (Faßmann, 2006), which specifies the concept of integration in the context of migration, goes in the same direction. A further reference level of integration was established in connection with the social participation of people with disabilities. An impetus for this came in 2008 with the ratification of the UN CRPD (BGBl. 155, 2008)<sup>5</sup> and was expanded towards an inclusive understanding (Avramidis et al., 2000; Sander, 2004). In accordance with the narrow concept of inclusion, the category of special educational needs is used to a large extent in Austrian research (George & Schwab, 2019; Svecnik et al., 2017).

5 CRPD and the Optional Protocol to the Convention  
<https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/eli/bgbl/III/2008/155/20081023> [5.5.2021]

## STRUCTURES, FORMATS AND MEASURES FOR IMPLEMENTING INTEGRATION AND INCLUSION

Based on the UN CRPD and the National Action Plan on Disability 2012-2020, binding guidelines for the nationwide implementation of inclusive model regions were enshrined in law in 2012. Measures were taken in some educational regions to support general compulsory schools in eliminating educational barriers and providing educational equity across the entire range of possible diversity, from talent to linguistic-cultural differences to various forms of impairment in the areas of disability, language and gender.

In Austria, 68.6% of students at the upper secondary level attend either a school for intermediate or higher vocational education (Berufsbildende mittlere und höhere Schule [BMHS]) or complete vocational training in the dual system (Statistik Austria, 2020). Austria thus holds one of the highest values worldwide. Lassnigg (2012) refers to the “dualistic structure” characterised by effective apprenticeship training in the dual system and a strong full-time school sector with BMHS. A special feature stands out here, as in most other countries only one of these sectors is strongly developed (Dorninger & Gramlinger, 2019). High-performance vocational training systems are efficient instruments for integrating all learners into the labor market, laying foundations for further learning and personal growth (OECD, 2020). However, losers seem to be young people with a migration background; in 2019, they were more than twice as often neither in education nor employment compared to youth without a migration background (ibw, 2020).

At the general social level, a set of measures for the integration of refugees was adopted in 2016. The focus was on the



areas of language and education, work and career, the rule of law and values, health and social affairs, intercultural dialog, and others. As a measure to implement inclusion in the vocational school system, and certainly focusing on a broad understanding of inclusion, the apprenticeship extension (§ 8b [1] Berufsausbildungsgesetz BAG) or partial qualification (§ 8b [2] BAG) was introduced in the dual system in 2003. These structures are supported by apprenticeship coaching and vocational training assistance. Since 2008, young people who are unable to find an in-company apprenticeship position have been guaranteed a training position in an inter-company training facility (§ 30 BAG) that allows them to finish their training.

State qualification plans are intended to reduce the risk of long-term unemployment among young people at risk (NEETs). The “AusBildung bis 18” initiative, effective from the 2017/18 school year, ensures a training guarantee until the age of 18 (Baumegger et al., 2019). Under the umbrella brand NEBA (Netzwerk berufliche Assistenz), six services (e. g. job coaching, work assistance) of vocational assistance are currently combined.

In general, the Austrian VET system has a high degree of permeability, a high degree of specialisation in terms of sectors, and the possibility to obtain qualifications at different ISCED levels.<sup>6</sup>

6 ISCED = UNESCO's International Standard Classification of Education. It classifies school types and school systems and is also suitable for indicating the level of education in international comparison.

## NATIONAL STATE OF RESEARCH ON MIGRATION, INTEGRATION AND INCLUSION IN VET

Migration research and the related contextualised integration research exist in Austria along many institutional disciplines (social sciences, law, cultural studies, etc.), but they mostly represent a rather marginalised research area. In many cases, like research on people with disabilities, it is predominantly carried out by non-university research institutes. (Brandstetter et al., 2009; Sievers, 2012). However, this does not necessarily mean externally controlled contract research; a large number of self-defined projects are financed by third-party funds from European and national research funds (Faßmann, 2009).

The Court of Audit report (Rechnungshof Österreich, 2019) recommends drawing conclusions from the “Inclusive Model Regions” project about the individual measures and specifying the inclusion approach in the education system. Another criticism relates to the guideline for the development of inclusive model regions, which was limited to compulsory general education schools and did not address vocational schools and higher general education schools; there was no inclusive strategy that encompassed all levels of education.

Empirical analyses of the extended apprenticeship period § 8b [1] BAG or the partial qualification § 8b [2] BAG (Dörflinger et al., 2009; Dornmayr & Nowak, 2017; Heckl et al., 2005, 2008) on the training success and employment careers of apprenticeship graduates showed that vocational training in these circumstances shows positive effects in terms of improved labor market integration. Both the short- and long-term labor market integration of graduates is considerably more favorable

than that of those who terminate their training prematurely. But also within the graduates of vocational training according to § 8b BAG (extension of apprenticeship or partial qualification) there are striking differences in terms of whether the training took place in a company or in an inter-company training facility. Those who completed their vocational training in accordance with section 8b of the Vocational Training Act in a company show significantly better integration in the labor market even five years after the end of their training.

In a case analysis, König et. al (2012) showed that the opportunities and limits that people with intellectual disabilities are faced with when accessing the labor market are particularly shaped by social and deficit-oriented prejudices that act as social barriers. In a nationwide survey of providers of labor market policy support measures, Fasching and Koenig (2010) conclude that the creation of equal opportunities for vocational integration for all people with a disability, and thus for the consistent implementation of the UN Convention in Austria, is necessary. Recent research findings (Fasching & Fülöp, 2017) on the transition system from school to work state that preventive strategies, such as compulsory education until the age of 18, improve the participation chances of people at risk of exclusion. Other research works position themselves along the lines of pedagogical-psychological research and address the importance of interpersonal relationships in the context of counseling (Fasching et al., 2019) and (value) attitudes of vocational educators (Reinke & Heinrichs, 2019) as well as their attitudes and self-efficacy beliefs (Miesera & Moser, 2020).

The group of second-generation migrants represents a special risk group, whose unemployment rates are higher than those

of the first generation, which in turn are higher than those of the natives (Huber, 2010). The question that arises from this is whether the higher unemployment rates of the second generation are a consequence of their poor educational opportunities in Austria.

VET is strongly involved in the overall selection dynamics of the Austrian education system, which affect equality of opportunity (Lassnigg, 2012). On the one hand, the VET system itself has a strong selective effect, but on the other hand it has a balancing effect through the provision of high educational qualifications at secondary level 2 as well as the openness of apprenticeship training.

### **3.3 SWITZERLAND**

#### **DEFINITION OF TERMS**

Switzerland has not ratified the Optional Protocol to the UN CRPD, why inclusion as an individual right is not enforceable. This contrasts with Germany and Austria. Since the translation of the Salamanca Declaration (1994) into German, integration has been the common term for migration-related and disability-related inclusive processes in education and society.

Since the adoption of the CRPD by the Federal Assembly in 2014, inclusion has dominated the academic and educational discourse and increasingly also the practical debates. The reference to specific addressees in the context of inclusion is still ambiguous due to the short time since the ratification of the CRPD. This also applies to the institutional anchoring of the concept. A strategy for ensuring inclusion at all levels of the Swiss education system and for funding is still lacking (Inclusion Handicap,

2017; Mejeh & Powell, 2018). VET research increasingly relies on a broad understanding of inclusion (Barabasch et al., 2016; Pool Maag, 2016; Scharnhorst & Kammermann, 2020). Challenges for young adults' participation in education due to migration or impairment are addressed as a cross-cutting issue with a diversity-related understanding (intersectional perspective).

## STRUCTURES, FORMATS AND MEASURES FOR IMPLEMENTING INTEGRATION AND INCLUSION

Around one third of the Swiss population was born abroad. Due to its linguistic and cultural diversity, Switzerland is a “transcultural society” (Barabasch et al., 2016, p. 4) with one of the highest employment rates of immigrants (77%) compared to OECD and EU countries (OECD and European Union, 2015). VET is a common responsibility of the Confederation, the cantons and labor organisations. It follows the principle of no graduation without connection. Around two-thirds of young people complete a two-, three- or four-year dual VET programme in accordance with the Vocational and Professional Education and Training Act ratified 2004 with a federally recognised qualification (EBA or EFZ). A quarter of learners attend general education programmes (high school, vocational and specialised baccalaureate schools) and around eight per cent attend additional or transitional training programmes (BFS, 2021).

The VET system offers clearly defined educational programmes in 240 occupations. It is horizontally and vertically accessible and makes it possible to enter VET in different ways, to make use of supplementary education or to attend further VET programmes in the course of one's educational biography.

The two-year VET programme (EBA) is offered in 60 occupations and is chosen by ten per cent of the apprentices. They are mainly practically gifted learners with lower school performance, and above average young people with a migration background or special educational needs. The training takes into account individual learning needs and support in three areas: 1) Extension or shortening of the training time. 2) Differentiated learning opportunities and adapted didactics. 3) Individual counselling (Fachkundige individuelle Begleitung, FiB) in case of endangered educational success.

In addition to the CRPD of the UN, inclusion in VET is supported since 2004 by the Disability Equality Act, the social insurance (Invalidenversicherung, IV) and the prohibition of discrimination in the constitution (1999, Art. 8 para. 2). 5.3 per cent of learners between 15 and 24 years receive a contribution from the disability insurance (IV) (BFS, 2018). Young people with severe health impairments usually complete an IV-apprenticeship or a practical training programme (PrA) according to INSOS. The training programmes are individualised and the final examination is adapted to the individual skills (Pool Maag, 2021). The PrA enables around ten per cent of apprentices to continue on to the EBA (Hofmann & Schellenberg, 2019). People with intellectual disabilities have the fewest opportunities for participation in VET. Supporting their entry into initial vocational training, certification and recognition of non-formally acquired vocational competences and the Individual Competence Certificate (Individueller Kompetenznachweis, IKN) will be important in the future (BSV, 2017).

Integration through education and work is a guideline in dealing with migration in Switzerland. Since 2011, the State

Secretariat for Migration (SEM) has been promoting the vocational qualification of recognised refugees and temporarily admitted persons with confirming results. Four challenges are identified: 1) Information on vocational and supplementary education and training for adults. 2) Identification of skills and potential. 3) Acquisition of a national language. 4) Access to the labor market (Spadarotto, 2019). Cantonal integration programmes (KIP), which combine a integration needs assessment with case management and supported employment alongside professional integration made good integration experiences with late-immigrated young people (Barabasch et al., 2016). In 2018, the SEM launched the pilot project INVOL (one-year pre-apprenticeship for integration) to foster the labour market integration of recognised refugees and provisionally admitted persons. The aim is to build up basic competences for entry into a certifying VET programme (e.g. national language, basic school competences, norms and values, cross-disciplinary competences, in-company work experience). The analysis from the perspective of institutional actors shows that although INVOL promotes connectivity to VET, it provides insufficient support for mastering VET. The stay in training of these young people requires additionally needs-oriented "training support" (Stiftung Futuri, 2020; Verein KUMA, 2018). There is still no regulated access to basic vocational training for Sans-Papier young people throughout Switzerland (Netzwerk Kinderrechte Schweiz, 2014).

## **NATIONAL RESEARCH ON MIGRATION, INTEGRATION AND INCLUSION IN VET**

Nevertheless the UN confirms that Switzerland has a high quality education system, gender, social, health and cultural disad-

vantages can be identified (Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, 2018). The migration movements of recent years have created additional challenges related to the lower labor force participation of recognised refugees and provisionally admitted persons (Liebig et al., 2012).

At the macro level of the education system various studies on the transition from school to work show that educational opportunities in Switzerland are unequally distributed and forms of institutional discrimination persist (Hupka-Brunner et al., 2011; Imdorf, 2007; Landert & Eberli, 2015; Meyer, 2018; Moser & Keller, 2013; Scharnhorst & Kammermann, 2020). Family conditions such as social and academic background are a strong predictor of academic and professional success (Kost, 2019; Tomasik et al., 2018). While high-achieving learners are selected for occupations with high prestige by the segregated general education system, low-achieving learners and young people with special needs or a migration background end up in low-threshold, theory-relieved occupations or in the transition system (e.g. vocational preparation year, motivation semester, internships). Entry in VET is delayed, especially for learners from special classes and special schools (Hofmann & Häfeli, 2013). Young people with a migration background are less likely to complete certificated education at upper secondary level and are more likely to attend separate education programmes in inclusive settings or in special schools (Haenni Hoti, 2015; SKBF, Schweizerische Koordinationsstelle für Bildungsforschung, 2018). Longitudinal studies confirm these disadvantages also regarding apprenticeship contract terminations (Neuenschwander, 2010; Schmid et al., 2016; Schmid & Stalder, 2008). The permeable and flexible VET system partly absorbs these negative selection and economic driven effects (Hoeckel et al., 2009).



At the meso level of institutions and professional support systems, there are different evidence-based approaches on how to support disadvantaged young learners (refugees, learners with special needs and/or migration background). Proven approaches include 1) Low-threshold training formats such as the IV-apprenticeship, the PrA or EBA (Hofmann & Häfeli, 2013; Scharnhorst & Kammermann, 2020) and the pre-apprenticeship programme. 2) Fostering the career entry through specific apprenticeship matching with subsequent training support (Pool Maag & Jäger, 2021). 3) Supported Education (Hofmann & Schaub, 2015; Pool Maag & Jäger, 2016). 4) Disadvantage compensation (Schellenberg et al., 2017) and 5) the transition system (e.g. vocational preparation year).

At the micro level of training and teaching, the findings point to challenges in dealing with the extensive heterogeneity of inclusive learning groups, especially in low-threshold education (Berger, 2018; Pfister Giaque & Flamigni, 2011). There are increasing requirements for professionalisation in inclusive education and didactics (Barabasch et al., 2016; Engelage, 2019; Sappa & Boldrini, 2017) in order to expand pedagogical proficiency in vocational schools and training companies (Buholzer & Joller-Graf, 2012; Pool Maag & Jäger, 2016; Schellenberg et al., 2020).

#### **4 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

The main results of the comparative analysis are summarized in figure 1 and are described subsequently. The comparison demonstrates various commonalities, and differences, especially with respect to the terminology and understanding of the central terms.

	D	A	CH
Terminology migration, integration, inclusion	Migration = Integration Special Needs Education = Inclusion		Migration & Special Needs Education = Integration
	Development of a broad understanding of diversity and inclusion		
Participation in formal VET	Addressee-specific	Categorically independent	Categorically independent
VET structures and formats	Institutionalised, supporting accompanying and preparing training		
Success factors in VET	Dualistics Permeability of the systems Labor market orientation in the transition system Language support Vocational orientation Flexible and barrier-free forms of training and support		
Challenges	Profession-specific adaptations Training and qualification of teachers for diversity-oriented learning environments Research of the measures on micro and meso level		

Figure 1: Main results of the comparative analysis (own figure)

#### 4.1 THE UNDERSTANDING OF MIGRATION, INTEGRATION AND INCLUSION

The use of terminology is a dynamic process and countries use the terms in different ways. The UNCRPD has influenced the understanding across all three countries and led to the fact that inclusion was initially applied to disabled people following a narrow understanding. The development trends towards a broad understanding that respects diversity and takes this broader understanding into account in educational processes. While integration continues to be used, both in migration issues and integration of people with special needs. In Germany, access to formal VET is strongly regulated in terms of addressees, whereas in Switzerland and Austria it is independent of categorical classifications.

#### 4.2 STRUCTURES AND FORMATS TO ADDRESS IMMIGRANTS AND LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS ON ALL INSTITUTIONAL LEVELS IN VET

The country-specific understanding of the concepts of integration and inclusion defines both the categories of allocation to VET and the training structures and formats. What they have in common is a high number of different institutionalised programmes, training-support measures and the transition system, which differ in access conditions. In the context of migration, comparable training-support measures were established in all countries and already existing and proven support concepts from special needs education were used (e.g. Supported Education), which indicates comparable support needs.

### 4.3 STATE OF NATIONAL RESEARCH IN BOTH AREAS

There are findings at macro, meso and micro level in all countries. The high significance of dual training in the three countries and the strong market orientation in the transition from school to work are evident. This leads to a high vocational integration rate in the market and low youth unemployment. It is conducive if the training already takes place in the first labor market. Adapted training programmes show high effectiveness in relation to migration and special needs. In Switzerland and Germany, it is predominantly young people with a migration background, special needs or poor school performance, who are in the transition system. In Austria, learners who aim for an apprenticeship in the dual system attend an integrative vocational preparation year (Polytechnische Schule). They receive a second chance to integrate themselves the labor market. While results at the macro level are available and discussed extensively, there are few cross-country comparative analyses available for the meso and micro levels. Questions on the professionalisation of educational professions for dealing with migration and special needs in are still open. Further research on teaching in the context of heterogeneity and inclusion is recommended. Compared to the general school system, little research has been done on issues of disadvantage and discrimination of young people in VET.

### 4.4 INDICATORS OF SUCCESS IN DEALING WITH MIGRATION AND INCLUSION IN THE THREE COUNTRIES

The combination of language support, vocational orientation, flexible and barrierfree forms of training (e.g. first place then train) as well as support services alongside training are bene-

ficial in all countries. Responses to discriminatory and disadvantageous processes within the VET system include increased mobility (change of training formats, post-qualification, individual access rights) and flexibility (partial qualification, different educational qualifications, training duration). Challenges related to addressing migration and inclusion within the VET system should be met with region-specific differentiation, occupation-specific adaptations, and specific qualifications of professionals for inclusive education.

## 5 DISCUSSION

The term inclusion, following the preceding descriptions, in reality largely refers to special educational measures or needs for support, whereas the term integration is mainly used in connection with flight, migration and multilingualism. The integration and inclusion measures described in this article are largely deficit-oriented and classify people into categories, which in turn produce the notion of homogeneous groups.

At the macro level, the highly differentiated nature of the VET system in itself supports the consideration of various aspects of diversity. There are no educational dead ends, but basically permeable structures that enable learners to develop individual paths. In order to break up the deficit-orientation of the measures, inclusive structures would have to be established in the control systems with the involvement of all actors (school and company), including demand-oriented, training-accompanying support measures and providing the learners sufficient development and learning time.

At the meso level, separating institutions can still be found in vocational education. In the course of further inclusive, diversi-

ty-focused developments in vocational training institutions, it will be inevitable to expose their role to critical discourse. In the three countries examined, diversity is gradually being applied as a cross-sectional principle on several levels of the teacher training curricula. In addition, in Germany and Austria, training courses with a focus on diversity and inclusion are offered specifically for vocational training. The effectiveness of these teacher training measures for actually dealing with diversity in vocational training represent important research desiderata for the future.

At the micro level, the design of learning arrangements is an important focus of action. For vocational training, this means that within the framework of internally differentiated teaching, all individual differences as well as existing commonalities are taken into account. This requires, on the part of the (training) educational staff, to take diversity in attitudes and perceptions of the learners into account. Competence-oriented teaching in vocational training makes it necessary to mobilise all individual and community resources. To this end, an inclusive school and class climate must be ensured accordingly.

The concept of intersectionality deals with the central question of when which categories, in which form and under which specific conditions become important for the design of the educational programmes. These are to be negotiated on an ongoing basis.

In the current discussion, however, there is criticism in the direction of homogenisation in the educational system (Lassnigg, 2020) and conceptualisations of the term heterogeneity (Budde, 2012) as well as measures for heterogeneity orientation (Albrecht et al., 2014; Westhoff & Ernst, 2016) that positively accentuates the difference and thus the individuality of the addressees of educational offers. A pedagogically rel-

evant theorem of heterogeneity conceived in this sense enables multifaceted views of heterogeneity: of interpersonal and inter-collective diversities, of intrapersonal and intracollective multilayeredness, of unpredictable changeability over time, and of indeterminacy (Prengel, 2018). A term that takes up this complex heterogeneity in its opportunities and challenges in equal measure is diversity. Diversity is seen as normal, not as a problematic exception in order to continue to maintain supposed homogeneity (Mecheril, 2016).

In economic discourse, the term “diverse” is equated with “Diversity” (Bendl et al., 2012) and thus contextualises the terms difference and inequality. Vocational education and training is strongly influenced by economic criteria, which means that “Diversity” also serves to make the economic meaning of differences in people identifiable and usable for organisations. The aim of diversity management is to establish a new, common order that meets all needs as far as possible and, in particular, counteracts exclusion, whereby the perception and evaluation of inequalities are important. Consequently, the pedagogical challenge is not to identify a specific diversity characteristic that can develop into a stigma, but to first ask about the social contexts, structures and processes and only then about how factors such as ethnicity, race, culture or disability play a role.

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# **The Concept of Social Exclusion and Its Ideological and Theoretical Roots: Towards an Alternative Discourse of Exclusion and Inclusion<sup>7</sup>**

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**Abstract:** The aim of this conceptual paper is to dwell into the ideological and theoretical roots of the concept social exclusion. In vocational education, the concept is often constructed as a vehicle for social inclusion and it is often taken for granted and rarely defined. In addition, we will introduce other concepts related to social exclusion such as concepts of difference, social division, and differential social exclusion. We will also offer some critical observations about the concept such as it ignores the everyday transnational embeddedness and practices of migrants and will discuss the concepts of transnational relations and the structure of opportunity. In concluding remarks, we offer some ideas about the role of VET in relation to social exclusion and inclusion.

**Keywords:** migrants; refugees; social exclusion; social inclusion

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The concept social exclusion is used and discussed in different fields. In the field of education, discussion touches vocational education, adult and special education and labour market measures targeting migrants and refugees. Various institutions of socialisation, particularly educational institutions, and measures play crucial roles in social inclusion, or exclusion, of immigrants such as offering language immersion programmes, validation practices and complementary vocational trainings. Furthermore, vocational institutions are the primary sites where the educational and professional experiences of foreign-born immigrants are negotiated and recognised (or misrecognised), and thus are said to function as arenas for social inclusion or exclu-

sion of migrants and refugees. Hence, the relationship between VET provisions and the inclusion of immigrants in the labour market and society have received little research attention not only in Sweden but also internationally. A group of Swedish researchers also drew this conclusion basing their argument on an in-depth literature review (see Rosvall et al., 2019).

The concepts of exclusion and inclusion, however, are often taken for granted. Therefore, it is important for actors in the vocational field to understand concepts and particularly their ideological and theoretical roots. Hence, the aim of this conceptual essay is to examine the ideas (both ideological and theoretical) that underpin the concept of social exclusion. This is a tall order no doubt, but our aim is to present a broad picture of how the notion is conceptualised, and from the onset we would like to stress that we will not delve into a deep contextual specificity of how the notion is used in different context. In this paper, we have chosen major texts that have focused on the concept. These texts are composed of EU reports, and research texts that examine the concept. These different texts provided us with a general picture of how these two concepts are discoursed. We do not claim to provide an exhaustive mapping of the theoretical underpinnings of Swedish or international research in the area, simply to identify major theoretical perspectives, and depart from the key texts that discuss the concepts. Finally, the focus of the paper is an analysis of the concept of social exclusion. Our goal is to provide the reader with an understanding of the concept's background and identify an alternative formulation of the conceptualization and its implications to vocational education.

According to Amartya Sen (2000) one can trace the roots of concept of social exclusion to Aristotle, but the modern use of



the concept began in 1974 in France by René Lenoir. Aasland and Flotten (2000) stressed that the concept was used in France to denote groups of people that are in the margins of the French society. However, the concept was expanded to include different categories of groups such as school dropouts, unemployed youths and immigrants (Aasland & Flotten, 2000, p. 1027). The concept was adopted by the European Union (EU) in 1994 (Murard, 2002), and it emerged on the EU poverty programme from 1975 to 1994. It was during these debates that the focus on poverty was disconnected to the idea of social exclusion.

Poverty was at the heart of the Council decisions that launched the first and second programmes... The third programme, in contrast, was concerned with the 'integration' of the 'least privileged' ... By the time the programme was actually launched, 'social exclusion' became the fashionable terminology. It was debatable how far these shifts reflect any more than the hostility of some governments to the language of poverty, and the enthusiasm of others to use the language of social exclusion' (Room, 1995, p. 3).

According to Schierup (2003), in the EU the concept defines the excluded (the poor) as persons whose material, cultural, and social resources restrict their participation in or exclude them from a minimum level of involvement in their respective communities and societies. The EU understanding of the excluded, according to Schierup (2003), was established in the work of the Observatory on National Policies to Combat Social Exclusion, whose work is based on Marshall's notion of social citizenship. According to Marshall, citizenship refers to the standing given

to full members of a community. Individuals or groups that are accorded citizenship status are equal with respect to the rights and duties that come with citizenship. Marshall delineates citizenship into three parts: civil, political, and social.

However, the work of the Observatory and its adoption of the Marshallian concept of citizenship was criticised because it did not pay attention to the social position of immigrants. This failure was corrected in the 1990s. The EU commissioned comparative studies on racism and discrimination and the situation of immigrants in the irregular labour market (Schierup, 2003). Nevertheless, the dilemma facing the EU and its social programme, according to Schierup (2003), contradicted the general trend within the EU, particularly the adoption of a neoliberal economic orientation as reflected in the stringent convergence norms for inclusion in the common single currency—the Euro. Thus, the social dimension, or directives, according to Schierup (2003), was and still is an attempt to counter the image of the EU as primarily an economic project and union. Although the EU played a critical role in spreading the concept by making the idea a criterion for the funding of social projects (Murard, 2002; Schierup, 2003). However, when the concept was first introduced in the United Kingdom in the 80s, the conservative government did not think that income poverty was a major problem, the focus shifted from the idea of social cohesion to individualism (Hills et al., 2002). However, when the labour party ascended to power the meaning of the concept shifted to reflect or aligned to the EU conceptualization of the concept.

As evident in the above short introduction, the concept of social exclusion has changed over time from a marginalized position of an individual in the community to lack of material, social

and cultural resources in the society and thus restricting one's full participation into society. In relation to vocational education, one can claim that being able to enter vocational education and labour market an individual needs material, social and cultural resources. For example, an immigrant needs to have knowledge about the vocational education system and the labour market in the new country and her or his credentials need to be recognized, otherwise the individual might be excluded from vocational education and from the labour market. In addition, one needs to remember that there are different ideological underpinnings, and the notion can be examined from different theoretical point of departure.

After the introduction section, we present the ideological roots of the notion social exclusion. Then we move to examine the contextual specificity of academic discourse about the concept. Thereafter, we take into consideration other concepts related to social exclusion such as concepts of difference, social division, and differential social exclusion. Finally, we state some critical observations about the concept such as it ignores the everyday transnational embeddedness and practices of migrants and discuss the concepts of transnational relations and the structure of opportunity. In concluding remarks, we offer some ideas about the role of VET in relation to social exclusion and inclusion.

## **2 THE IDEOLOGICAL ROOTS OF THE CONCEPT SOCIAL EXCLUSION**

It is apparent to anyone reading the literature on the topic that the notion of social exclusion means different things to different authors and that the meaning of the concept has changed

overtime (Harrysson & O'Brien, 2007). According to Schierup (2003) the term resonates well with two leading political traditions: the social democratic tradition and its concern with equal opportunity and poverty, and the social Catholic/Christian democratic emphasis on social ties and community. In other words, both political groups can lay claim to the idea of social exclusion. Thus, according to Bryne (2001) among others, it was easy for the EU to adopt the notion since it was not a controversial idea to the two major political blocks within the EU.

In the United States, the concept has become a central part of the intellectual arsenal of the American New Right in redefining the role of the state and, more importantly, in rolling back the welfare regime or welfare state. Murray (1990), a neo-conservative ideologue, attributes the 'current' nature and genesis of the underclass or the excluded 'underclass' to the welfare system. The welfare system, he argues, promotes a culture of dependency. This perception of the role of welfare regimes in the United States is similar to that in the United Kingdom. According to Bryne (2001), this view of social welfare in the United States and the United Kingdom is a consequence of the dominance of liberalism in these two countries. Both construct the social order in the economy, politics, etc., as a "network of voluntary exchanges of individuals with their own interest. The emphasis in this thinking is founded on the idea that individuals have choices" (ibid, p.17). Bryne (2001) points out that in post-industrial capitalism, classical liberalism, founded on the doctrine of possessive individualism has had a remarkable renaissance. Similarly, MacKay (1998) notes that "counter-revolutionary economics" (i.e., anti-Keynesian developments since the 1970s) regard unemployment as a choice.

In Sweden, during roughly the same period, the idea of the third way was adopted and was used to renew the welfare state because of the changing economic and labour market conditions that emerged because of economic globalisation and the post-Fordist labour market. Proponents of the third way departed from this stance, stressing that the realm of work and an increased individualism requires a reform of the welfare state. For instance, Giddens argues that “(t)he welfare state developed in an era where neither the risks to be covered, nor the groups most in need, are the same as they are now.” (2001, p 11). Hence, in Sweden, the notion of solidarity was toned down in Sweden by the social democratic government to privilege individual responsibility. Private solutions are advocated by all social democracies in Europe, in different welfare systems. In other words, market solutions are still perceived as efficient and cost-effective way to improve welfare service quality.

Furthermore, in this context, it must be noted that the de-commodification of labour still has strong support among social democrats and conservative political parties in Sweden, which has a well-functioning and stable state bureaucracy that is independent, and which includes representative organisations that work for the interests of the major social group. Tomasson (1969, p. 775) notes:

Sweden provides an early example of the process of “de-ideologization” that occurred in the other stable European democracies only after the Second World War. By the middle 1930s the traditional ideologies of conservatism, liberalism, and socialism had become highly attenuated in Sweden and were replaced by a far-reaching consensus politics that accepted the

democratic principle, the necessity of collaboration and compromise, and a predominantly empirical approach to issues. Substantively, there was general acceptance by all parties of the essentials of the modern social-service state. At this time the differences among the major political orientations in Sweden lay essentially in that they place emphasis on different viewpoints, that each party with particular energy stresses certain of the less actively presented demands of the other parties.

In a sense, the de-ideologisation of the Swedish political parties, one might argue, leads political parties, including the social democrats, to campaign on issues (rather than ideological principles) and to position themselves to the right, left, or centre in different issues in relation to popular sentiments. Parties have thus become issue-focused, even when this contradicts their ideological ideals in Sweden. Nowhere is this positioning more dynamic than in the areas of immigration, integration, and the social inclusion of immigrants. It seems that the social democratic party in Sweden as well as social democratic parties in other Nordic countries have diverged from their core principles of solidarity and multiculturalism with regard to integration. This is reflected in Swedish social democratic party integration politics, which is in line with Third Way political agenda. The welfare system is perceived to be an investment in people to minimise or to prevent the solidification of an intergenerational reproduction of poverty. The focus of the Swedish third way is on investments in people that enable them to function in current and future labour market economies. A typical example is the “Swedish Knowledge Upgrading” (Kunskapslyftet in Swedish), and the various programmes targeting segregated

areas. Forsander (2004, p. 218), asserts that the social democratic integration measure promotes an assimilationist ideology. At the core of this assimilationist project is that it is through decent work that makes it possible for individual to become a full citizen. In other words, employability, economic integration, and individual responsibility seem to be the core goals of the Swedish social democratic party third way political agenda.

At the heart of these debates is how citizenship, freedom, and the relationship between the individual and society (rights) is constructed. In the 1990s, for instance, the dominant discourse on citizenship and its usage, according to Bryne (2001), was individualistic to its core. This individualistic shift emphasises the rights and responsibilities of individuals and plays down the idea of interdependency and collective action. Communitarism has attempted to resolve the problem of neo-conservatism, particularly its overemphasis on the rights of individuals, by imposing a community-based moral order and set of civic responsibilities; however, without taking into account the differentiated character of social relations (*ibid*).

The communitaristic position is a particularistic as it emphasises collective values, norms, and dialogue at the expense of the individual—that is, the individual is subordinated to the collective moral order to pursue a common good (Eriksson, 2002). However, common good and value consensus may, in the name of moral order, silence the voices and experiences of subordinated groups and minorities. This is particularly so in societies characterised by diversity where marginalised groups and individuals lack the material resources and power to participate in social discourse, as is the case in many immigrant communities in Western Europe. In addition, the ascendancy of neo-classical

economic thinking to a position of dominance in the 1980s and 1990s signalled a return to re-marketisation and re-individualisation and, more importantly, a return to the disciplinary state. It must be stressed that disciplinary states have been a critical element in the third-way political agenda of a social democracy that targets marginalised groups in Sweden. It is important to stress “new Labour”, and this is evident in the Social Democratic Party in Sweden that programmes or reforms etc., is no longer based on ideology but is characterized by pragmatism—what works. It is a combination of “what’s popular’ and ‘what’s easy’ rather than ‘what work” (Power & Witty, 1999, p. 541) as noted earlier.

### **3 THE CONTEXTUAL SPECIFICITY OF ACADEMIC DISCOURSES ABOUT SOCIAL EXCLUSION**

Murard (2002) points out that despite the common use of social exclusion in various discursive fields; it is not a concept that is rooted in the social sciences. The notion is the subject of critical scrutiny among social scientists. For instance, Castel (1995) uses the concept of disaffiliation rather than social exclusion, while Bryne (2001) similarly notes, “(t)here is nothing new about the idea of an ‘underclass’” (p. 20), pointing out that different terms have been used at different times. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the term was used to refer to people who had been left behind. He suggests that this as an important dimension of all versions of social exclusion, recognising that:

The associated idea of a cycle of deprivation in which disadvantage is transmitted from generation to generation has been



expressed in both genetic and cultural terms, although the idea of an underclass can be expressed without reference to either. The term's recent appearance comes from debates in the USA, which to a considerable degree are simply a continuation of the debate about "the culture of poverty" which began in the aftermath of the Moynihan 1965 report (*ibid*, p. 20).

In the age of immigration, one can argue that a "new" aspect of this phenomenon is the ethnic characteristic of social exclusion in major cities in western European countries. But this is not a new phenomenon either; the marginalised other—the "new poor" at the heart of Europe—are the historically oppressed masses of the South, the ex-colonial racialised subjects who have migrated to Europe in search of a better life, for example, refugees from political, social, and economic disorder. Schierup (2003, p. 6) points out that in the European Union the ethnic and "racial" dimension of social exclusion has become a major subject, which could be compared with what (referring to Myrdal) he calls the "Negro problem" in the United States:

"At the same time Europe's so called 'immigrants problem' is, like the US so-called 'Negro problem' of the 40s, increasingly taking the shape of not simply a 'problem' but a genuine dilemma" (*ibid*, p.10).

Thus, the different ways in which social exclusion is conceived in different countries is contingent on the cross-fertilisation of intellectual traditions and social thinking that constructs a unique understanding of the concept specific to each country. For instance, according to Chamberlayne and Rustin (1999),

the notion of social exclusion is historically alien to the British intellectual tradition and is a consequence of the historical hegemony of philosophical empiricism and individualism, which stresses property, self-help, and market achievement. However, this does not mean that the dominance of individualism was or is total in Britain. Chamberlayne and Rustin (*ibid*) point out that the British intellectual tradition has had its periodic reactions against the dominance of individualism. They add that the sociological landscape in British academic life in the 1970s was influenced by a variety of continental theoretical traditions. “Different variants of theoretical Marxism, phenomenology, structuralist and post structuralist ideas jostled for influence, hybridizing both with British traditions and with each other as they did so” (*ibid*, p.16). The post-structuralist shift in British sociological thinking vis-à-vis social exclusion led to an emphasis on the “politics of difference” and a focus on the “other” and “otherness” (Gilroy, 1987; Brah, 1992, to name a few). In the Swedish intellectual landscape, the situation is similar to the British with a strong dose of feminism and whiteness and postcolonial studies jostling to dominate the research on migration, integration, and social exclusion. In Sweden, we are seeing a pushback in post-structural/ post-colonial and anti-racist perspectives. But these post-structuralism/post colonialism, whiteness and intersectional studies have not necessarily led to emphasising the experiences of marginalised groups (see also Chamberlayne & Rustin, 1999).

Unlike in the United Kingdom, in Germany the idea of social exclusion has a strong affinity with social cohesion, integration, and solidarity. A Weberian perspective on the process of closure and status difference (Chamberlayne & Rustin, 1999)

influences much of the German research in the field. No doubt, there are varieties of perspectives in Germany, but according to them, two sociological perspectives dominate German sociological research on exclusion. In the German context, for instance, the action perspective was fused with neo-functionalism in the work of Habermas and Luhmann. Habermas focuses on the difference of life world and systems, while Luhmann's perspective is an of the functionalist strand of differentiation theory based on Durkheim's social division of labour and Parsons' differentiation of the social system (Schirmer & Michailakis, 2015) Luhmann assumes a functional differentiation of modern society. Hence as Schirmer& Michailakis writes (2015, p. 9).

The concept of inclusion is the link between human beings and society in Luhmann's theory. In line with the starting point of communication theory, inclusion means that human beings are held relevant in communication ... they are considered as communicative addresses, as persons, as bearers of roles, as accountable actors ... The way persons are made relevant (and irrelevant) to communication depends on the structure of society.

In this context, it is important to point out that there are those, who question the designation of Habermas as a neo functionalist (for this discussion see Harvey and Reed (1991). Hence, the notion inclusion/exclusion, according to the neo-functionalist perspective, perceive the excluded people in relation to their roles in different societal systems (Schirmer & Michailakis, 2015, p. 9). In addition, Schirmer and Michailakis point out problematic exclusion when people are made irrelevant by various social systems (ibid, p. 13).

According to Chamberlyne and Rustin (1999) in Germany, notions such as individualisation, temporalisation, and extension of social structure together with a focus on biographical approach, which stressed the perspectives of the actors, led to the micro-sociological shift in the study and analysis of the nature of social inequality. Summarising the state of research in this field in Germany, they stress that social exclusion is conceptualised as not enduring but transitory and reversible and is related to some aspects of a person's social life. Voges (2003, p. 9) similarly points out that:

The fact that there has been a certain poverty rate from the early 60s does not mean that the same people are affected during the whole period of time and that a lower class of society is constantly affected by poverty. Some people may escape poverty while others find themselves in that situation, thus replacing them.

Consequently, this position means social exclusion is reversible and policy and political action has to take into consideration the experiences, points of views, and strategies of the actors- the excluded.

The sociological emphasis in Germany on life history and its focus on examining social milieus and lifestyles has been criticised. This development, according to critics, tones down the economic dimension of social exclusion in favour of a cultural analysis (Chamberlyne & Rustin, 1999). In their critique of the concept of social exclusion, Edwards et al. (2001), raise a fundamental question in relation to the twin notions of social inclusion and social exclusion. They argue, and we concur, that the

notion of inclusion takes for granted and constructs the notions of social cohesion and integration as positive. Furthermore, they argue the focus on inclusion does not question the value social cohesion and integration. Where does this leave the notion of diversity? Does social integration require homogeneity of cultures, values and beliefs? These are interesting questions, and increasingly in the political debate and rhetoric in Sweden and in other European countries. We can see a tendency towards desire for a cultural homogeneity, and at worse ethno-nationalism.

#### **4 CONCEPTS OF DIFFERENCE, SOCIAL DIVISION, AND DIFFERENTIAL SOCIAL EXCLUSION**

Brah (1992) and Anthias (2001) have in different ways developed conceptual analytical tools to make sense of the differential inclusion of marginalised ethnic communities. In her work *Difference, diversity, and differentiation*, Brah (1992) identifies some conceptual categories that she stresses can be used to theorise the notion of difference and to develop political strategies for social justice. Anthias, on the other hand, has developed analytical constructs to analyse and examine the differential inclusion and exclusion of immigrant communities by developing the theory of stratification. Brah, in developing her analytical tools, stresses that:

... the concept of difference is associated with different meanings in different discourses. But how are we to understand difference? ... I would like to suggest four ways in which difference may be conceptualised and addressed: difference as expe-

rience, difference as social relation, difference as subjectivity and difference as identity (1992, p. 140).

*Difference as identity* is a central issue in the discourse of diversity in multicultural societies. Identity can no doubt be defined in various ways, depending on the perspective one adopts. However, identity is conceptualised as the product of intertwining threads. For instance, there are the threads of ethnicity, gender, age, sexuality, and so on. Thus, from this point of departure, it is meaningless to talk of identity in fixed terms; it must be viewed as fluid and multiple. This does not, however, mean that this understanding of identity rejects or denies difference. No doubt people differ in many ways; the issue in this context is rather that certain differences are attributed special status. Brah (1992, p. 143) similarly points out that

(o)ur struggle over meaning are also our struggle over different modes of being: different identities. Identity is never a fixed core. On the other hand, changing identities do assume specific, concrete patterns, as in a kaleidoscope, against particular sets of historical and social circumstances. Our cultural identities are simultaneously our culture in process, but they acquire specific meanings in a given context. Social phenomena such as racism seek to fix and naturalize “difference” and create impervious boundaries between groups.

She further states:

The modalities of difference inscribed within the particularities of our personal and collective historical, cultural and political experience- our ethnicities can interrogate and challenge

the strangulating imagination of racism but the task is a complex one, for ethnicities are liable to be appropriated by racism as signifiers of permanent boundaries (ibid, p. 143).

She goes on to suggest that the ethnicity of a particular class, such as the Englishness of a specific group, can be constructed as Britishness via racism, thus subordinating or inferiorising other ethnicities, such as Scots, Welsh, etc. However, she stresses that white/European ethnicities are differentially subordinated compared to non-European ethnicities. Thus, this conceptualisation of difference is a double-edged sword: on the one hand, it makes invisible different types or forms of inequality such as gender, and on the other, it can, depending on the specificity of the context, legitimise class or caste differences in the name of unity of an otherwise heterogeneous collectivity. Brah thus poses the following question: "How can we use ethnicities that do not reinforce inequalities?" (ibid., p. 143). She argues that the project is complex and requires that we take concrete actions at the economic, cultural, and political levels to undermine power relations that underlie these inequalities.

Anthias (2001) approaches differently the problem of social exclusion of ethnic groups in diverse societies. Although she acknowledges the advantages of the concept of social exclusion, she rejects the notion and proposes instead *social division*. She presents a strong argument for revisiting the theory of stratification and redrawing its boundaries to incorporate the notion of social division. She argues that this would enable a better understanding of how ethnicity and gender are relevant to determining the social positioning of immigrant communities which influences an individual's class position.

Despite highlighting the advantages of the terms social exclusion and social inclusion, Anthias notes several problems with the former. First, the term tends to focus on and identify persons as the excluded. In other words, it focuses on those at the lowest position of the social hierarchy and, consequently. She adds, “(i)n much of Europe exclusion has been related to lack of social integration or anomie, utilizing a Durkheimian problematic relating to the conditions for social cohesion, and often being another term for poverty and its effect” (ibid, p. 838).

Second, the use of the concept stigmatizes the excluded and which she stresses leads to produce a disqualified identity. Third, it is difficult to delimit the subject matter of research on social exclusion, since the processes and mechanisms can be located in different social arenas, which affects different categories in different ways, depending on whether they are treated in terms of gender, ethnicity, race, or class, and since these are relational and multidimensional. According to Anthias:

... institutional processes and mechanisms such as civil and social rights; economic such as restructuring of the labour; cultural such as cultural practices and different norms/lifestyles, xenophobia, stigmatization, racism; spatial such as urban development and housing markets; those linked to social capital such as exclusion from social networks that are socially valued i.e., of the right sort. These dimensions interact and reinforce each other (ibid, p 839).

Fourth, if one examines the concept in term of outcomes Anthias argues, then it is essential to explain the distinction in terms of social relations, persons, and the formation of social categories and identities. On top of that, she points out:



There is a problem in identifying from where the outcomes are derived, particularly this is important in their correction, with direct policy implications; for example, if minority groups are excluded what are the racist, gendered and economic aspects that produce these; if poverty is the outcome then how are the variety of process relating to organized exclusionary mechanisms, race and class to be evaluated (*ibid*, p. 8).

Fifth and finally, what is problematic, she further argues, is treating inclusion as the exact opposite of exclusion. In other words, there are several forms of inclusion that are not necessarily good and may be disempowering or assimilating, for instance, and some forms of economic and labour market inclusion are good examples of a disempowering inclusion of the “other”. Because of the above difficulties with the concept, she proposes a reformulation of social exclusion that is not absolute but dynamic and contextual. Such a reformulation would focus on the resources an individual can mobilise, including the networks in which they are embedded (their social capital). However, Anthias argues, “it is preferable to reformulate this around social division because this problematic goes beyond differentiated exclusion and inclusion. It is also able to address stratification processes and outcomes i.e., those of hierarchical social relations” (*ibid* p. 840). She further points out that social division relates to and involves the maintenance of boundaries and, if we understand her correctly, that this involves the following principles: relationality/dichotomy, naturalisation, and collective attribution. Relationality constructs difference and identity as bipolar and oppositional—for instance, the categorical formation of man/woman or black/white constructs difference and identity

in terms of the outsider and insider—while naturalisation perceives the bipolar categorisation as fixed and generic and, more importantly, naturalises social outcomes. She writes:

For example, both gender difference and ethnic difference appear in social discourse and understandings as though they are “natural” or unchangeable and fixed... Collective attribution in the social discourse homogenizes difference... The categories race, ethnicity, class also homogenize. The individuals within may be treated as though they are all the same and sensitivity to difference, contradiction, diversity and multiplicity may be absent (ibid, p. 844).

Thus, Anthias emphasises that social division can be perceived as a classificatory schema based on certain criteria but that this should not be construed to mean that individuals always belong together and that individuals can be viewed or typified as belonging to a specific categorical formation. In other words, individuals can associate themselves with others based on different criteria; for instance, language, occupation, or hair colour, which transcends ethnicity. Class, ethnicity, and gender are thus modes of classifying people, and they denote the way in which population classification categories are produced and organised. Anthias points out that these categorical formations are implicated in the construction of special types of social relations, which delineate different forms or degrees of closure. These according to her can range from different types of closures where groups protect their resources to exploitation which is a form of subordinated inclusion or denying access to the resources of the exploiting groups.

When it comes to outcomes/relations of social division, Anthias emphasises differential hierarchisation, which is basically the way social divisions account for the positionality of groups and individuals in the social order. This may involve the allocation of a specific social role to a particular group (caste or class). In creating the other or otherness, the excluded are often constructed as a deviation from the norm. In her analysis she highlights the importance of differentiating social practices from social outcomes and stresses that social divisions of race/ethnicity, gender, and class relate to outcomes on the economic and symbolic level. Class, significantly, is not simply a system of economic resource allocation; it also involves symbolic dimensions, such as patterns of consumption, competencies, and, more importantly, valuation of individuals and groups of people.

The symbolic value attached to these involves allocating individuals and groupings of individuals to particular places in the social order of things in a hierarchical fashion. This involves unequal resource allocations as well as differential social values to types of human persons, which at times acts to pathologise (ibid, p. 852).

This unequal resource allocation is a result of power relations, which produce material effects even where no explicit intentions of racism or sexism are evident.

Thus, the notions of exclusion and inclusion, as evident in the brief discussion above, are problematic and it is apparent that their use is specific and contingent on the ideological and intellectual traditions of different countries. This is, for instance, evident in the discussion by Brah and Anthias, who both in dif-

ferent ways emphasise that the notion of exclusion is implicated in the categorical formation of foreign-born persons or groups and the meaning allocated to difference in terms of capacity, function, and position—what Anthias calls the pecking order of role and place in a social context. In other words, ethnicity/race and gendering processes are relevant in determining the social positions of immigrant communities, which in turn influence the class position of individuals. Thus, these practices and inclusionary measures, instead of including foreign-born immigrants, work to shape a specific type of immigrant subject who has internalised and is at peace with their subordination or at least knows their position in the pecking order.

As we stated earlier, institutions of socialisation, particularly educational institutions, and measures, are implicated in this process. The institutions and interventions we examine here are the primary sites where the educational and professional experiences of foreign-born immigrants are negotiated and recognised (or misrecognised) and thus exert a strong influence on the education, careers, and social positions of foreign-born immigrants.

## **5 THE ROLE OF TRANSNATIONAL RELATIONS AND THE STRUCTURE OF OPPORTUNITY**

In the above description of the ideological and theoretical underpinnings of social exclusion, there is a striking notion of exclusion and inclusion, which is not questioned or is taken for granted. How migration and integration are conceptualised? First, migration is considered to be people moving from point A to live in point B forever. The second assumption is it ignores the everyday transnational embeddedness and practices of migrants

and refugees. The third assumption is that a migrant's structure of opportunity is limited to the host country. For instance, migrants are expected to integrate into the social structures of Swedish society which may ignore their transnational embeddedness—a point we will come back to later.

These assumptions structure of opportunity is to the host society, while the social reality and practice of migrants transcend boundaries of host societies. This can be concluded by examining migrants' everyday interaction and practices. In addition, we would like to stress that this way of imagining the problem of inclusion is narrow and limits seeing the real structure of opportunity in which migrants are embedded and how this can mutually benefit both migrants and dominant population. Therefore, we also need a radical rethinking of the policy and practice of social inclusion and integration.

Migrants' imaginations are shaped and formed by their embeddedness in transnational networks. We use the notion of imagination as a social practice that mediates not only what is possible, but also shapes the reasoning, strategies, and actions of the individual embedded in the transnational space (Appadurai, 1996). In addition, this imagining is facilitated and intensified by recent technological developments such as the Internet, electronic media, and mobile phones, which are no longer the privilege of a specific class nor monopolised by a national media outlet. Because of the sheer multiplicity of their forms (cinema, television, computers, and telephones) and because of the rapid way in which they move through our daily routines, electronic media provides resources for self-imagining as an everyday social project (Appadurai, 1996, p. 4). Appadurai further points out that electronic mediation and mass migration

mark the world of the present not as technically new forces but ones that seem to impel (and sometimes compel) the work of imagination (Appadurai 1996, p. 4). Furthermore, films, media, documentaries, the Internet also mediate economic globalisation and specifically its consequences in terms of opportunities and inequality, for example. The dissemination of images of what is possible elsewhere has made inequalities more tangible for potential migrants. This can motivate individuals to act and even encourage people to immigrate (*ibid*).

Horst (2006), examining the transnational sociality of Somalis, similarly stresses that due to their exposure to diverse sources of information and accounts of success, people are increasingly aware of and reflect on their lives through the prism of others who have immigrated. Hence, she emphasises that the logic and practice(s) of immigration and what is possible to achieve are constructed in the transnational spaces in which individuals are embedded.

Thus, the everyday lives, strategies, and choices that, for instance, Somali Swedes make about whether to stay in Sweden or to re-immigrate to the United Kingdom are constructed and influenced by social relations that cut across multiple nation states. However, transnational relations, and particularly the moral imperative to support or provide services for members of the extended family is not a one-way street. Those who are left behind also reciprocate by providing significant welfare services for the extended family in the form of care for elderly relatives, for example. Nonetheless, these services can create tensions within the extended family, particularly in relation to prioritising the welfare of extended family members (Zimmermann & Zetter, 2011). That is, when transnational households make

decisions about who should be prioritised for financial support or assistance in the homeland or whose emigration should be supported. Nonetheless, it is important to emphasise that having a transnational network does not mean that individuals can access the structure of opportunities in different nation states, while exclusion from the structure of opportunity in one space might spark re-immigration or circular immigration driven by the search for opportunities; and the network can provide its members with necessary support in this process.

Exclusion from local networks in the host society does not mean that the individual's structure of opportunity is automatically limited or that the individual is doomed to fail. Failure (or exclusion) is the inability of the individual to utilise their imagination and social resources in their transnational networks to widen their structure of opportunity. Osman (2012), referring to Appadurai, points out that the lives of immigrants and their descendants in the transnational spaces they inhabit are characterised by constructing their histories, sense of belonging to ethnic or national 'projects'. However, it also fuels individual members' imagination of what is possible, particularly in terms of socio-economic mobility. The activation of these transnational relationships transcends national relationships and is contingent on the person's ability to mobilise the resources (Osman, 2012). This activation depends on the social and economic positions of different families in the transnational network. Hence, expanding the notion of integration or inclusion to include the transitional. We would like to stress that the transitional embeddedness widens an individual migrant's space (s) of inclusion. The implication of this expansion, we like to argue, can mean that exclusion in one space/place does not mean exclusion in another space/place.

## 6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter has focused on the ideological and theoretical roots of the concept of social exclusion and its relationship to migration. We started by describing the ideological roots of the term and showed how the concept reflects the ideological doctrines of the major political parties in the EU. In addition, there is a rich variety of its uses in academic discourses, stressing that they were contextual and vary according to scientific field and country, for example. We noted how Anthias (2001) suggests the concept of differential social exclusion, highlighting this notion's dynamic and changing character and concluded with a reflection on the notion of transnational, pointing out how migrants are embedded not only in the social structures of their host country but also in transnational networks. This perspective questions the notion of social exclusion as being purely about exclusion in the host country.

We noted that educational institutions and intervention practices are the primary sites where the educational and professional experiences of foreign-born immigrants are negotiated, recognised, or misrecognised and have significant implications for the education, careers, and social positions of foreign-born immigrants. VET and institutional practices targeting refugees do not take into account the transnational embeddedness of refugees and migrants. For instance, the role of vocational education and training in Sweden is to provide refugees and migrants with opportunities for language and vocational training in the form of compensatory and complementary training and education while offering access to the language and logic of the vocation and the vocational community itself in the practicum aspect of the complementary programmes.



In Scandinavian countries, education and training is regarded as a springboard for social mobility. However, the status and education acquired in previous countries are not recognised and immigrants must start their educational pathway or job on a lower rung than their previous experience and education should allow them. Therefore, it is important that VET providers, VET teachers, and other actors in the field are aware of social exclusion and the practices that encourage it. Transnational relations may also open up new opportunities for vocational schools to support migrants' learning in the new educational environment. For researchers in the vocational field, this reflection of various concepts connected to migration offers new conceptual and theoretical opportunities to study and focus on relevant issues concerning integration and inclusion of migrants via vocational education and training.

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## **Workplace learning during the pandemic: challenges for inclusion for VET professionals**

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**Abstract:** A supportive workplace environment that can provide conditions for learning is an environment of trust and security, which acts as community by promoting opportunities for cooperation and mutual assistance, while at the same time encourages individual thought and initiative (Illeris, 2011). Recent developments in distance and online education and changes in the workplace due to the pandemic have greatly affected the way by which learning at work is achieved and the abovementioned learning conditions are now questionable. Through a systematic review of articles recently published, the paper examines how institutions, enterprises, HR professionals and VET trainers are responding to this challenge and how they support workers who are less likely to be involved in learning activities. The paper highlights key issues: the increasing use of distance education and learners' accessibility, the need to update diversity and inclusion policies in the workplace, the inclusive role of leadership in organizations, and the use of

learning methods which foster active participation and interaction among diverse people.

**Keywords:** Workplace learning, diversity and inclusion, VET professionals

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Vocational Education and Training (VET) programmes according to a recent EU Council Recommendation should be:

Inclusive and accessible for vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities, low-qualified/ skilled persons, minorities, people with migrant background and people with fewer opportunities because of their geographical location and/or their social-economically disadvantaged situation; ... are accessible through digital learning platforms, supported by tools, devices and internet connection, in particular for vulnerable groups and people in rural or remote areas; Targeted measures promote gender balance in traditionally 'male' or 'female' professions and address gender related and other types of stereotypes together; (EU Council, 2020, p. 7).

Rapid developments in the field of distance education during the last years together with the general disruption caused due to the COVID-19 pandemic have affected the rules of the game and the whole framework which was brilliantly presented above by the Council Recommendation needs to be redefined. It is a common secret that both VET professionals and learners were not prepared for the sudden digital transition and although

equal access to distance learning is important for all, marginalized and vulnerable participants (migrants, elderly, people living in poverty, among others) are more likely to be further excluded from distance learning procedures (Cedefop, 2020).

On the other hand, it would be simplistic to attribute the changes and the subsequent concern only to the impact of the pandemic. Rather it seems that COVID-19 has acted as an accelerator for developments that were expected to appear in the next years in education sector. Hence, despite changes in distance education and training, bias, stereotypes and discriminations continue to exist in the workplace and the need for a holistic diversity and inclusion approach is apparent. The issues above will be discussed in this study, which aims to provide answers to the ways workplace learning and inclusion, as main terms and concepts, are related and mutually supported.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Workplace learning and inclusion**

When it comes to the discussion of learning in work context two terms, apart from VET, appear: work-based learning and workplace learning. At EU level work-based learning is mostly used when refers to one (or combination) of three common models used in various European countries: 1) apprenticeships, 2) on-the-job training and 3) learning which is integrated in a school-based program through on-site labs, simulations, project assignments, workshops or similar tasks (European Commission, 2013). On the other hand, workplace learning seems to make use of a more diverse set of practices, including the above-mentioned plus job shadowing, that is short periods of time in which trainees ‘shadow’ a worker to learn about job position’s

essentials, service learning, usually provided voluntarily in non-profit organizations, and informal learning, such as coaching or mentoring (OECD, 2010). For the purposes of this study, the concepts of work-based learning and workplace learning, despite their minor differences, are considered to refer to the same goal, that is to connect theoretical knowledge with skills needed for workers to demonstrate at certain work contexts.

Workplace learning emerged during the last years, despite the vital importance of formal training, as a response to the increasing need for other forms of learning to receive the attention they deserve when addressing technological, societal, demographic, environmental megatrends (Cedefop, 2021). The extent to which these trends and changes can be addressed depends on a certain degree to the capacity of institutions and organizations to design and adopt diversity and inclusion policies, to achieve organizational goals by making the most of their total human resources population. The request is obvious, and it seems that there is a remarkable portion of organizations that claim they provide Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging (DEI&B) education to their employees, according to a recent research report from the Association for Talent Development (Gerard, 2021).

With this situation presented above, it is clear that organizations must re-consider their practices and policies against discriminations and enrich them with a strong learning dimension. For an inclusive workplace environment:

inclusion needs to be recognized as an explicit policy goal in skills and lifelong learning policies, strategies and frameworks, taking into account the diverse physical and non-physical barriers that lead to discrimination and exclusion. ... policy

responses need to expand to support people through a wider variety of options, such as inclusive training environments and programmes; flexible learning options, including information and communications technology, mobile and blended learning... (ILO, 2021, p. 93).

### Learning in the workplace during the pandemic

The impact of COVID-19 was evident in every aspect of human activity since the beginning of the pandemic and learning in the workplace was not excluded from this condition. A recent study from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) revealed an important decrease of workers' learning opportunities during the pandemic, as a result of continuous shutdowns and cuts in expenses. In particular, non-formal learning activities reported a 18% decrease, while the percentage of decrease reached 25% in case of informal learning. In the same paper, inequities caused due to the digital transition of learning during the last years were also reported together with the need to ensure that distance education and training will adopt a more inclusive way (OECD, 2021).

Similar findings are presented in another report of the European Training Foundation (ETF) in 27 different education systems in Europe, Eastern Mediterranean and Central Asia, including compulsory public education and also vocational and work-based learning contexts. The emergent lock down of schools and the sudden decrease of learning in the workplace showed that countries who had little or no previous experience and expertise in distance education entered this challenging pathway with disadvantage. The report, additionally, concludes that there are still



‘considerable challenges with respect to inclusion, pedagogy, connectivity, engagement and quality’ (ETF, 2020, p. 3), a view which is also highlighted in another study that indicates:

The coronavirus pandemic disrupted the education and training of an entire generation of vocational education and training (VET) learners. Those already at risk – from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, migrants and from ethnic minorities, learners with disabilities and special education needs – often find themselves out of school (Cedefop, 2020, p. 1).

The transition to digital education and training and the effort to establish inclusion policies in the workplace have caused the interest of institutional organizations dealing with vocational training and education. Findings from a survey in 1,289 organizations across Europe and United Kingdom reveal that 45% of those responded reported a focus of their training strategy on supporting individual workers, while almost one in three companies adjusted their strategy to achieve higher training participation among employees (Van Loo et al., 2021). To achieve high levels of training participation requires teachers and trainers being supported and trained to confront the situation effectively, adapt to alternative training methods, keep trainees engaged and motivated, especially in distance learning, while at the same time they need to manage personal stress and anxiety when they find themselves balancing professional and personal status (ILO & World Bank, 2021).

No doubt that new circumstances have increased the pressures on all stakeholders, including governments, educational institutions and workplaces, to further invest in distance and online learning according to an ILO report. Investment is

expected to affect positively the upscaling of skills development, as well as teachers' and trainers' further development and their training in the use of digital technologies and innovative learning methods (ILO, 2021). However, there is certain degree of skepticism regarding the efficiency of this transition when it comes to vocational training and learning which aims mastering practical skills -on the job related- and soft skills, which are considered to be easier developed by more traditional – in person training methods (Neal & Commonwealth of Learning, 2020). No matter what the challenges are, workplace learning during the pandemic has acquired a new, not necessary different, but without doubt complementary, meaning: 'Jobs do not only shape learning: learning also shapes jobs' a Cedefop (2021, p. 4) report says, since employees widen their knowledge and their ability to work in a learning-conducive work environment.

## METHODS

### Aim and design

This study aims to shed some more light on the ways recent developments and trends -including the extensive use of distance learning and the consequences occurred after the pandemic of COVID-19- have affected workplace learning. The research questions were the following:

1. How is the concept of inclusion in the context of workplace learning understood in recent years?
2. What is the direction of choices, strategies, decisions, and policies taken by stakeholders in this field (including institutions, leaders and managers, HRs, curriculum designers, and trainers)?

This study is a comprehensive review of journal articles published between 2020 and October 2021 with a selected sample of work described in the paper. The abovementioned period was chosen to include a) most recent data considering developments in the field and b) all possible research work which was influenced or conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. The review protocol used in this study was inspired and guided by The Joanna Briggs Institute appraisal checklist for qualitative research (Aromataris & Munn, 2020) with an emphasis given, though not exclusively, to issues of congruity between research methodology and objectives, research ethics and conclusions drawn from data interpretation and analysis.

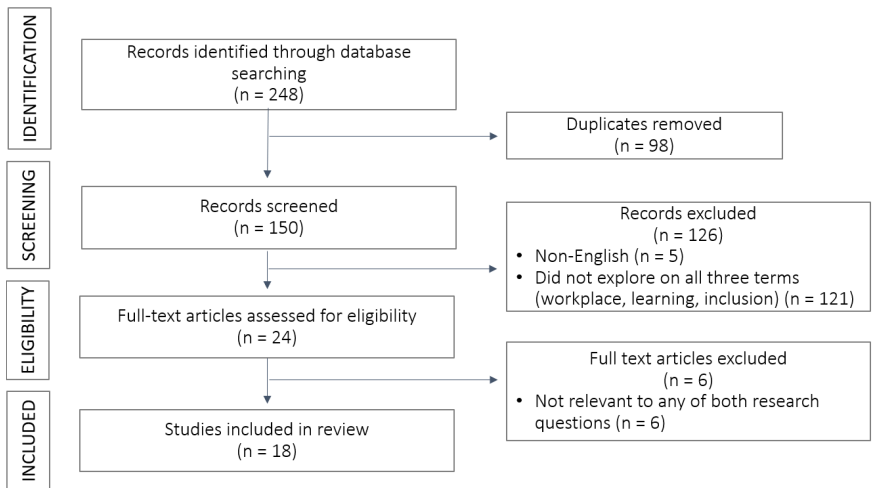


Figure 1. PRISMA flow chart

## Search method and outcome

EBSCO Discovery Service<sup>8</sup>, an all-inclusive -as it is called- search engine that makes in-depth research, which is integrated at Stockholm University Library, was used to identify articles addressing inclusion in workplace learning. Descriptors used were *workplace* and *learning* and *inclusion*. All database searches were conducted on October 17, 2021 and resulted in 373 articles which include all available forms, such as academic journals, books, eBooks, periodical and reports. The high number of findings together with the need for a more scientific approach and research analysis led to the decision to narrow the records, keeping however the initial intention and the aim of this study, as it was defined by the research questions.

The study followed PRISMA<sup>9</sup> (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines for conducting a systematic review, a strategic choice which resulted to the following inclusion criteria: a) only peer reviewed articles from academic journals b) articles written in English, c) articles published between 2020 and 2021, so as to focus exclusively on recent trends and developments. The exclusion criteria were a) articles irrelevant to the topic of interest or not including all three descriptors in their abstracts, b) articles written in other languages, c) non peer reviewed articles, d) conference papers or other types of research work.

A total of 248 articles were identified through database searching, with 98 duplicates being removed subsequently. During the

8 See more at <https://www.ebsco.com>.

9 More information is available at <http://www.prisma-statement.org>.

screening stage 5 articles were found to be in other than English language, while other 121 were excluded since they did not explore on all three descriptors mentioned above. The remaining 24 full-text articles were then assessed for eligibility, a procedure which led to the exclusion of other 6 articles which were not found to be relevant to the scope and the research questions of this study. The number of articles to review was thus further reduced to 18.

The search outcome procedure is summarized in Figure 1. Data from the selected articles were extracted into a spreadsheet and findings were categorized as guided by the research questions to formulate themes.

## RESULTS

### Study characteristics and quality of selected articles

The included articles derive from various scientific fields all over academia including as expected domains, such as Distance Education, Workplace Learning, Adult and Continuing Education, Equality, Diversion, and Inclusion. Selected articles utilized variable literature review types and research methodology, including qualitative, quantitative and mixed-methods studies. Although some articles did not provide sufficient information about certain elements of research methodology or the exact context of research, however they showed consistency in presenting data in relation with research questions and thus led to a non-exclusion decision during the assessment of methodological quality. Table 1 summarises the aim of research, scientist domains, research methodology and context of research where applicable of included articles.

Table 1. Overview of selected articles

	Author(s) and year	Aim/s	Journal/Scientific domain	Research methodology	Context of research
1	Lowenthal et al. (2020)	Describe how online educators and work- place learning profes- sionals can support all learners	Quarterly Review of Distance Education	Literature Review	Not defined
2	Cumberland et al. (2021)	Raise awareness to- wards the creation of a more inclusive workplace by listening and learning from employees	Journal of Workplace Learning	Descriptive quali- tative design	US health care organization
3	Carlson & Dobson (2020)	Propose the use of inclusive art and design pedagogy to address challenges of tech- nologically enhanced isolation.	International Journal of Art & Design Education	Literature Review	Not defined
4	Olorunjuwon et al. (2020)	Evaluate effective- ness of the graduate development program that was aimed at the recruitment and pro- fessional development of black engineering graduates through the workplace learning method.	Higher Education, Skills and Work- Based Learning	Qualitative / semi-structured interviews	South Africa / black engineer- ing graduates
5	Workman- Stark (2020)	Emphasize the role of leaders in overcoming inclusion barriers in workplace.	Development and Learning in Organiza- tions: An Internation- al Journal	Case study	Not defined
6	Bohonos & Sisco (2021)	Examine anti-racist initiatives in the work- place and culturally responsive leadership approaches.	New Directions for Adult & Continuing Education	Literature Review	Not defined
7	Johnston & Fox (2020)	Highlight the use of simulation, as a learning and teaching strategy that may be effective in teaching about work- place violence	Journal of Nursing Education	Literature Review	Not defined

8	Sheppard-Jones et al. (2021)	Examine the importance of universal design (UD) as a way to respond to a diverse workforce.	Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation	Literature Review	US economy
9	Meeuwissen et al. (2021)	Describe team learning and leader inclusiveness behaviors in effective team collaboration.	Teaching and Learning in Medicine	Case study (observations, interviews and secondary data analysis)	Undergraduate medical course at Maastricht University, the Netherlands.
10	Moore et al. (2020)	Describe how self-determination theory can be related to higher education and workplace inclusion.	Journal of Microbiology & Biology Education	Literature Review	US / women and ethnic minorities
11	Kwon (2021)	Proposes a Deliberately Developmental Organization (DDO) culture for a promising organizational inclusive context.	Human Resource Development Quarterly	Qualitative / interviews	US / people with disabilities
12	Van den Brink (2020)	Advance our knowledge on organizational change toward diversity by combining concepts from diversity studies and organizational learning.	Equality, Diversity & Inclusion: An International Journal	Longitudinal case study	Financial service organization in the Netherlands
13	García et al. (2021)	Address challenges African American and Latinx students continue to face challenges in urban planning programs	Journal of the American Planning Association	Literature Review / Interviews	African American and Latinx students
14	Sutton & Montgomery (2021)	Emphasize the lack of diversity in surgical career pathways which in turn impacts the cultural competence of the learning and working environment	The American Surgeon	Literature Review	Surgery career
15	Wheelahan & Moodie (2021)	Expresses concern over the increasing use of micro-credentials / micro-learning in workplace	Higher Education	Literature Review	Global

16	Pedro et al. (2020)	Analyze scientific evidence to support age management practices toward older workers.	Brazilian Journal of Occupational Medicine	Literature Review	Workers aged 45 years or older
17	Candeias et al. (2021)	Examine how stress and burnout affect teachers working in inclusive schools	Health Psychology Report	Survey / questionnaires	Teachers in public education schools in Portugal
18	Hess et al. (2020)	Describe racism, bias within American medicine community, and emphasize the role of medical educators	Academic Medicine	Case study	US Medical School

## Main findings of the articles

Across the included articles, various approaches were identified to pose the issues under research and discuss the challenges expressed. Some of the articles selected in this review focus on concerns regarding a given situation, while the authors of other articles make recommendations for future research and / or even for policy makers. In any case, findings and / or recommendations from the selected journal articles relevant to the scope of this study and the research questions are summarized in Table 2. In the next stage of this study, the issues that emerged from the data analysis are examined through a more systematic and comparative approach.



Table 2. Summary of findings from the selected reviews relevant to research questions.

Author(s) and year	Summary of findings and conclusions / recommendations
1 Lowenthal et al. (2020)	Accessibility is a crucial issue in online education. Online educators and workplace learning professionals should be thinking beyond compliance and instead thinking about how they can support all learners.
2 Cumberland et al. (2021)	Enabling employees in a US health-care organization to authentically express their voices provides an opportunity for all to learn from each other and for organizational leaders to inform their diversity and inclusion practices.
3 Carlson & Dobson (2020)	The emergence of technologically infused learners creates challenges for educators to combat technologically enhanced isolation. The use of inclusive art and design pedagogy is proposed to foster collaborative learner-centered approaches and develop empathy.
4 Olorunjuwon et al. (2020)	Adopting coaching and mentoring approaches, as part of a general workplace learning strategy, provides an effective mechanism for the inclusion and professional development of black engineering graduates. Corporate managers could benefit from such outcomes in order to create a policy framework regarding corporate social investment, diversity and inclusion management at the workplaces.
5 Workman-Stark (2020)	Organizational leaders set an example of how individuals, teams and the organization as a whole can overcome cultural barriers by being engaged in open dialogue about the practice of inclusion in workplace and exposing their own relevant experiences in the past.
6 Bohonos & Sisco (2021)	Mentoring programs -among other leading strategies- together with culturally responsive leadership approaches, as a response against racially motivated in the workplace. Suggestions for HRD programs to reform curriculum to prepare graduates to be drivers of organizational social justice.
7 Johnston & Fox (2020)	The use of simulation, as a learning and teaching strategy during nursing students' clinical practice may increase their ability to respond to violence, abuse, and harassment in the workplace.
8 Sheppard-Jones et al. (2021)	The article describes the changes in the experience of disability during the pandemic of COVID-19 and suggests to re-examine the use of universal design UD for learning practices, while promoting inclusivity and improving productivity in the <b>workplace</b> .
9 Meeuwissen et al. (2021)	Team learning and leader inclusiveness are crucial behavior elements in group of works, where there is need to encourage diversity and preserve individual differences. Verbal and non-verbal interactions between the team leader and team members, such as explicating, inviting, reflecting, or participating actively and speaking up behavior demonstrated engagement and feelings of inclusion in groups.

10	Moore et al. (2020)	The paper recognizes the need for increasing the diversity of students in USA -in particular women and ethnic minorities- in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) careers by fostering inclusive learning environments and proposes Self-Determination Theory, as a theoretical framework which relates to inclusion in higher education environments and the workplace.
11	Kwon (2021)	This study expands the knowledge of disability identity in the workplace by highlighting that a Deliberately Developmental Organization (DDO) culture which promotes employees' continuous learning and growth, provides a promising organizational context for inclusion
12	Van den Brink (2020)	This study employs a social practice approach to organizational learning in a financial service organization in the Netherlands and shows how the lack of collective memory to "store" individual learning in the organization has proven to be a major problem in the management of diversity.
13	García et al. (2021)	A study, conducted by the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP) Planners of Color Interest Group reveals that most students report an overall supportive and positive climate for diversity within their programs, however there are differences between African American, Latinx, and White students' experiences of bias and discrimination. Mentorship, the creation of counter-spaces, and faculty/staff training on racial microaggressions, could foster more inclusive learning environments in urban planning institutions.
14	Sutton & Montgomery (2021)	The paper suggests that the lack of diversity in surgical career pathways impacts among others the cultural competence of the learning and working environment and the ability of an organization to achieve equity in the workplace.
15	Wheelahan & Moodie (2021)	This paper expresses concern over the increasing use of micro-credentials, which is short competency-based industry-aligned units of learning, which are not expected to present new opportunities for social inclusion and access to education, rather they accelerate the transfer of the costs of employment preparation, induction, and progression from governments and employers to individuals.
16	Pedro et al. (2020)	An integrative review on age management practices, which refer to the development and implementation of workplace strategies to support and improve the health and productivity of workers aged 45 years or older, addressed knowledge transfer, training and lifelong learning among other age management practices.
17	Candeias et al. (2021)	The study examines how stress and burnout affect teachers working in inclusive schools and reveals that previous professional training is related to higher resilience to stress and more independence, while non-specialist teachers are most exposed to burnout and stress, suggesting thus, the crucial value of training to improve an inclusive school workplace.
18	Hess et al. (2020)	Racism and bias in the learning and work environment of medical school can be mitigated through a formal change management process that leads to change that is institutionally transformational and individually transformative. Medical educators can embrace a change process to eliminate racism and bias that is lifelong, peoplecentered, incremental, and nonlinear.

Despite the origin of different backgrounds from articles included in this review, findings were categorised and synthesized into themes, five of which gathered interest: a) online education -emergence of technology and issues of accessibility-, b) need to increase diversity and reduce bias in the workplace, c) learning methods, d) leadership, and e) diversity and inclusion practices in work.

### **Theme 1: Online education**

There is a general concern expressed in various studies regarding the emergence of technology in learning and the impact on curriculum design for online educators and workplace trainers (Carlson & Dobson, 2020; Lowenthal et al., 2020; Wheelahan & Moodie, 2021). The extended use of online education, especially during the pandemic, resulted in many cases to accessibility issues to both people with or without disabilities to actively participate and engage (Sheppard-Jones et al., 2021). In addition, as the study of Wheelahan & Moodie (2021) indicates, there is a general concern of the increasing use of short learning units, offered mainly online, which act as micro-learning credentials used to serve the needs of labor market for certain competence development and making more difficult the vision for social inclusion and access to education.

### **Theme 2: Increase diversity / reduce bias in the workplace**

This theme was proved to be one of the most common in various articles from those included in this study. There is recognition among researchers from different fields that there is need

to reduce bias and stereotypes in the workplace and make use of inclusive practices to increase diversity and support all learners (Lowenthal et al., 2020; García et al., 2021; Sutton & Montgomery, 2021; Hess et al., 2020; Johnston & Fox, 2020; Wheelahan & Moodie, 2021; Pedro et al., 2020).

In particular, Sheppard-Jones et al. (2021) claim that it is the employers' responsibility to create a workplace that is universally designed and facilitate learning access to all employees, while Van den Brink (2020) advocates for the increase of diversity incentives in the workplace. On the other hand, Workman-Stark (2020) argues that barriers to inclusion and organizational learning relate to issues of culture within organizations. In other cases, voices are expressed over the need to promote diversity in workplace for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) graduates (Moore et al., 2020). Finally, the article of Kwon (2021) stresses the importance of reducing bias and negative stereotypes related to people with disabilities.

### Theme 3: Learning methods

Workplace learning includes, as already mentioned in the background of this study, several types, forms and methods. Coaching and mentoring programs are considered as an important learning method that engages learners, increases the quality of relationships among people in the workplace and reduces bias phenomena (Olorunjuwon et al., 2020; Bohonos & Sisco, 2021)

The value of knowledge transfer through the establishment of a life long learning culture and constant training is also recognised in two at least studies from articles included in this review (Pedro et al., 2020; Candeias et al., 2021).

Team learning is a crucial dimension of inclusive workplace practices which is mentioned in three at least studies (Meeuwissen et al., 2021; Hess et al., 2020; Moore et al., 2020), while other articles selected for this review propose the use of different methods, such as inclusive art and design pedagogy (Carlson & Dobson, 2020) or the use of universal design for learning practices (Sheppard-Jones et al., 2021) to foster a more learner-centered and inclusive approach. Moreover, Johnston & Fox (2020) remind that simulation, as a learning and teaching strategy, contributes to all learners' involvement and analysis of other perspectives and Lowenthal et al. (2020) support the creation of assessable and inclusive online learning experiences by all possible technical means for all learners.

Finally, from the viewpoint of Adult Education, it is recognized that active learning strategies and techniques promote not only individual critical thinking, but also opportunities for people in groups to interact with others and thus, explore different perspectives, confront their own assumptions and eventually learn from each other (Moore et al., 2020).

#### **Theme 4: Leadership**

Leaders and managers in organizations, no matter hierarchical level, seem to play an important role within the framework of research in this study. Managers are considered as persons responsible to work effectively with diverse groups, create favourable conditions for employees' well-being, health and safety (Pedro et al., 2020) and serve as collaborative leaders who assist teams to achieve organizational goals (Sutton & Montgomery, 2021). When it comes to inclusion in workplace, leaders are expected

to set themselves as an example and facilitate equally practices such as learning from mistakes and learning from each other (Workman-Stark, 2020), a prerequisite to create a climate for transformational change (Hess et al., 2020).

Additionally, the article of Kwon (2021) highlights leaders' eagerness to abort traditional leadership methods based on power and instead cultivate strategies which foster co-inquiring with employees for continuous mutual learning. The above are strongly associated with a culturally responsive leadership approach, as described by Bohonos & Sisco (2021), which promotes inclusiveness in organizational context (Meeuwissen et al., 2021) and creates opportunities and space for authentic and open dialogue for all (Cumberland et al., 2021).

#### **Theme 5: Diversity and inclusion practices**

Dealing with workplace learning through an inclusive approach requires more actions to be considered at an institutional level. Seven articles from those included in this study stress out the importance of a top-down process, which is anticipated to legalize all efforts who will be initiated by educators, trainers, learning professionals and will be supported by managers and leadership. First of all, there is a clear request to update diversity and inclusion practices, so as to enhance all necessary information regarding an increasing diverse workforce (Cumberland et al., 2021; Olorunjuwon et al., 2020). In the same way, Van den Brink (2020) argues that the knowledge of the possibilities and difficulties of diversity and inclusion initiatives needs to relate to a learning perspective, so as to have a stable impact at organizational level.

Updating diversity and inclusion policies and practices in the workplace will be achieved, thus practitioners will feel more confident to confront racial inequities, Bohonos & Sisco (2021) claim, if academia responds to calls and include relevant policies during the development of human resource development programs. García et al. (2021) view positively this prospect and declare that it is universities' duty to teach students about inclusive practices and assist them to learn how to engage with historically marginalized communities.

Two more articles included in this review make a step further and suggest theoretical frameworks to relate inclusive practices in the workplace. Moore et al., (2020) propose Self-Determination Theory, while Kwon (2021) imply that a Deliberately Developmental Organization culture which promotes employees' continuous learning and growth may offer a satisfactory response to this challenge.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

At the end of this study, some key conclusions emerge, which may offer opportunities for further reflection and research in an interesting and promising field. First, it is worth noting that an inclusive workplace which promotes diversity and fosters learning by all means to all possible recipients is a crucial issue for different sciences and research domains. A careful overview of the articles selected in this study, reveals applications and relations of topics under research to Higher Education (Olorunjuwon et al., 2020; Wheelahan & Moodie, 2021), to Workplace Learning and Human Resource Development (Kwon, 2021; Workman-Stark, 2020; Cumberland et al., 2021),

to Distance / Adult / Continuing Education (Lowenthal et al., 2020; Bohonos & Sisco; 2021) and to Health Sector (Johnston & Fox, 2020; Moore et al., 2020; Sutton & Montgomery, 2021; Hess et al., 2020; Pedro et al., 2020).

However, apart from the expected, at least to a certain extent, spread of interest in different scientific fields, a surprise of this study came from the fact that distance education and training, as a concern or given assumption, was apparent at only four out of the 18 articles included in this research (Carlson & Dobson, 2020; Lowenthal et al., 2020; Wheelahan & Moodie, 2021; Sheppard-Jones et al., 2021). This fact contradicts a previous assumption, which was to some extent reinforced by the literature review at the beginning of this paper, that the current trends and developments that occurred during the pandemic would have greatly influenced the research texts and relevant studies. Although this fact can be explained at least in terms of the duration of the studies included in this research, as most of them had started before the beginning of 2020, that is the period which COVID-19 was officially recognized as a pandemic, however remains under discussion -and a future research expectation- why distance and online education did not seem to attract major attention in most of the studies selected in this review.

On the contrary, it is crucial to underline that the issue of diversity and inclusion in workplace learning seems to concern everyone eventually . Discrimination, bias, stereotypes and subsequent behaviors, such as abuse, can be found in every aspect of working life and affect digital illiterate or with limited accessibility people (Carlson & Dobson, 2020), black people (Olorunjuwon et al., 2020; Bohonos & Sisco, 2021), women or ethnic minorities (Moore et al., 2020), people with disabilities (Kwon, 2021), aged people (Pedro et al., 2020) or even particu-



lar professionals and occupations (Hess et al., 2020; Sutton & Montgomery, 2021; Meeuwissen et al., 2021).

It is therefore not surprising that many of the authors of the articles and reviews included in this study were concerned about the need to update inclusion and diversity practices in the workplace (Cumberland et al., 2021; Olorunjuwon et al., 2020; Van den Brink, 2020; García et al., 2021; Bohonos & Sisco, 2021; Kwon, 2021; Moore et al., 2020). Updating, however, diversity and inclusion policies within organizations is a matter that needs to be re-considered, re-defined, re-designed and finally imposed through a top-down and a transversal process which will include all links in the chain, from States, institutions and universities, to organizations, trade unions, and HR departments.

Another finding worth mentioning in this study is the recognition of the importance learning methods have in VET and workplace context. It is clear from the review of articles that when we refer to workplace learning, traditional in-classroom teaching methods are not the case. Instead, alternative, complementary learning methods which reinforce trainees' ability to think critically and become more responsible, such as participation in coaching and mentoring pairs (Olorunjuwon et al., 2020; Bohonos & Sisco, 2021) or learn from each other by simply interacting in groups of work (Meeuwissen et al., 2021; Hess et al., 2020; Moore et al., 2020) are nowadays a necessity in workplace learning. The latter is an issue that needs to be further explored, as remote work and the lack of physical are barriers to be considered, especially with people who are not familiar with new technologies.

Finally, learning in the workplace, as indicated in many articles selected for this review (e.g. Pedro et al., 2020; Work-

man-Stark, 2020; Meeuwissen et al., 2021; Cumberland et al., 2021), is not independent of everything that happens in the workplace. Learners are employees at the same time and it is also responsibility of leaders, and not only of trainers / learning professionals, to cultivate a climate of trust, mutual understanding, to create opportunities for open dialogue and interaction, adopting, thus, a culturally responsive leadership approach.

Concluding, this study aspired to apply a systematic approach for consideration of learning and inclusion in workplace. While the particular demanding role of VET trainers and learning professionals was highlighted, as did that of leaders, it seems that there are plenty of opportunities for aspiring researchers who would like to study more aspects. Lessons learnt from the pandemic, the increasing use of distance / online education and training, and the need to be constantly alert of discriminations in workplace offer a few such opportunities.

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## **Section II**

### **Learning and instruction for integration**





In this section, consisting of seven (7) chapters, the focus is on vocational learning and teaching both from students' and teachers' perspectives. Furthermore, authors in this section bring forward how meaningful activeness is in vocational learning processes.

The section starts with Erika E. Gericke's chapter "*Inclusion practices in vocational colleges in Germany and England – insights into an Ethnographic Comparative Study on Different VET Cultures in Motor Vehicle Classes in England and Germany*". Through qualitative study lesson observations and guided interviews, Erika's study aims to present inclusive teaching practices in classes and courses for prospective car mechanics in Germany and England.

The chapter by Stina Hållsten, Maria Eklund Heinonen & Hedda Söderlundh "*Individualization in vocational training for immigrants: developing professionalism and language through feedback*" deals with vocational adjusted language courses in Swedish for adult immigrants. The results demonstrate that feedback is a functional, educational tool for individualization, providing learning opportunities for both language acquisition as well as professional knowledge.

Tatjana Bru Blixen & Ellen Beate Hellne-Halvorsen examine in their chapter “*All teachers are language teachers*” *How teachers in Vocational Education and Training Programs experience and reflect on complementary literacy practices and didactic strategies in multicultural classrooms*” how teachers can gain the necessary expertise and guide their multilingual students when encountering complex vocational texts. The findings highlight implications for prospective vocational teachers’ awareness of students’ literacy challenges and teachers’ need for literacy competencies.

The large number of young refugees in Europe during 2015–2016 drew attention to the role of VET in the integration of refugees in Denmark, Christian Helms Jørgensen notes. In his chapter he reviews research on the capability of apprenticeships to include disadvantaged youth, and particularly research on ethnic minority students in apprenticeships alongside with analyses of key policy documents and interviews with key stakeholders in vocational schools.

Katarzyna Kärkkäinen & Mirja Tarnanen examine how teachers and adult migrant students view integration in the context of Finnish vocational education. Their study finds that integration can be promoted by supporting participation and a subjective feeling of belonging.

Petros Gougoulakis & Katarina Lagercrantz All examine in their chapter *Newly arrived immigrants’ endeavours to establish themselves on the Swedish labour market* the Swedish for vocations program (Sfx). The many interviews analysed show that the newly arrived immigrants, who settle in Sweden for various reasons, want to quickly establish a life in society, do well for themselves and become self-sufficient.

The last chapter in this section by Adrian Rexgren titled “*Latin-American Migrants’ Transformative Learning and their Multicultural Education Experience through a Vocational Education Lenses in Stockholm*” focuses on multicultural VET education. The results show that the education programmes the interviewees completed accentuate a multicultural angle in some dimensions and fail to do so in others.

## **Inclusion practices in vocational colleges in Germany and England – insights into an Ethnographic Comparative Study on Different VET Cultures in Motor Vehicle Classes in England and Germany.**

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### **Abstract**

**Purpose:** Against the background of the scarce German and English discourses on inclusive vocational education and training (VET), this paper aims to present inclusive teaching practices in classes/ courses for prospective car mechatronics in Germany and England.

**Approach:** The data presented here comes from an ethnographic comparative study on different VET cultures in motor vehicle classes in England and Germany. In the context of this qualitative study lesson observations and guided interviews have been conducted. The data has been analysed using the grounded theory methodology.

**Findings:** The findings are structured with the help of an analytical framework, which is based on the author's understanding

of VET culture and additionally draws upon the three dimensions of Booth' & Ainscow's (2002) Index of Inclusion. There are inclusion-relevant structural conditions, such as Germany's learning venue cooperation due to the dual system or England's Single Equalities Act, which come to the fore. Then German and English interviewed teachers share performance and motivation/behaviour as two heterogeneity dimensions, which they use when they look at their students. However, both teacher groups have also additional heterogeneity dimensions they apply. On the cultural level, i.e. attitude towards inclusion, again German and English teachers share one basic attitude, namely to get also the poor performing students successfully through their course, but both groups of teachers have also distinct attitudes towards inclusion. Regarding inclusion practices the observed and interviewed German vocational school teachers include low and high performing students through special techniques of class discussion and they include unmotivated students by showing the practical relevance of the theoretical input and provide worksheets for late starters. The English FE college teachers use different grades of explanation to include low, middle and high performing students in the class discussion and have in general a strong individual orientation, when teaching their students.

**Conclusion:** The inclusion practices are in both countries mainly in a verbal manner, namely through class discussion. The German case shows a strong link to the training company, respectively (future) workplace and the English case shows a strong individual orientation. The empirical findings of both countries can be linked to the respective national academic discourse. For Germany, the market-shaped inclusion into dual vocational training can be verified, but the empirical data sheds

also light onto a non-discussed topic, namely late starters. For England, the topic of ware-housed students as well as the consequences of the Single Equality Act for the structural set-up and the VET actors' attitude gets confirmed through the presented empirical data.

**Keywords:** VET in schools, vocational teachers, educational practice, comparative analysis, qualitative research

## **OVERVIEW OF THE ACADEMIC DISCOURSE ON INCLUSION IN VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS IN GERMANY AND FURTHER EDUCATION COLLEGES IN ENGLAND**

### **1.1 GERMANY**

In Germany the academic discourse about inclusive education has been established for some time in the context of general education schools, but it is a relatively new discourse in the context of vocational education and training (VET) and transition research (Makarova, 2017; Kremer et al., 2016).

The German academic discourse on inclusion in the context of VET focuses mainly on three questions (Kremer et al 2016):

- What exactly is meant by inclusion?
- Who is it meant to address?
- What then does inclusion mean for immediate practice?

Kremer et al. (2016) note that there is a diffuse understanding of what should be included in the category of inclusion. Accordingly, there are different views on how to deal with the claim

of inclusive VET. Specifically discussed is the issue, whether the keyword ‘inclusion’ focuses on the participation of people with disabilities, according to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – this is the narrow understanding of inclusion. Or whether the term ‘inclusion’ shall be used according to UNESCO’s understanding of inclusion – the broad understanding of inclusion – which views disability relationally as an interaction between people and their respective social environment (Makarova, 2017; Enggruber, 2019). Hence, the broad concept of inclusion encompasses all dimensions of heterogeneity, such as abilities, gender roles, social status, skin colour, first language, religion, sexual orientation and so on (Hinz, 2019). This means, that according to the broad understanding – there is not only the group of disabled young people, who leave general education schools each year with a disability certified as a special educational need, who need to be integrated into the German VET system. But there is also the group of disadvantaged young people, who cannot find an in-company training place due to their poor or missing school-leaving qualifications, their migration background, or their social or regional origin (Enggruber, 2019).

The integration capacity of a VET system must be measured by the extent to which it leads young people to occupational empowerment and participation in working life. In Germany, training (Beruf) is the key, because training provides the vocational skills that enable access to secure gainful employment and thus guarantee independent financing of livelihood and participation in society (Neises, 2019). Looking at the statistics on how different populations groups are integrated into the German VET system and labour market it is rather a grim picture:

- Only 24.1% of Germany's training companies train young people with disabilities (Enggruber & Rützel, 2014).
- More than 50% of the 3.3 million people with disabilities of working age are not integrated (Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2018)
- 14,3% of the 20 to 34-year-olds remained without vocational qualifications in 2016 (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung, 2018, p. 14)
- 52,8% of young mothers aged between 16 and 24 did not participate in any formal education programme (Neises, 2019)
- With 34% was the training contract termination rate of young adults with a migration background 10% higher than those with a German passport (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung, 2018, p. 82)

From a (traditional) German perspective, the ideal way of vocational training is dual training. Dual vocational training is regulated via the training market and it acts not in favour for inclusion. Ulrich and Enggruber point out “The alignment of training performance with the needs of the economy [...] makes the integration performance of the dual vocational education and training system highly susceptible to economic and structural developments” (2014, p. 43 translation by the author). In other words, entries into dual vocational training are controlled via a market-shaped inclusion mechanism (Granato et al. 2018, p. 57).

Regarding the issue of how to implement inclusive vocational education and thus inclusive practices Germany is still in its infancy. Some Länder have enshrined inclusive VET in their



laws. For example, Lower Saxony and North Rhine-Westphalia must be positively highlighted here. In these Länder young people with diagnosed special educational needs are traditionally taught at vocational schools, particularly in vocational preparation courses, which are part of the so-called transition system (Koch 2016). Thus, there is some scientific exchange on structures and need for reform regarding inclusion in the transition system (Heisler 2016). Multi-professional teamwork at vocational schools is an issue (Kremer & Kückmann 2016) as well as specific questions of individual development and design of learning and development processes. As examples for the latter are special didactics for preparatory training courses (Frehe & Kremer 2015) or the topic of diversity in Business/Administration textbooks (Porath & Slopinski 2016).

Current German literature on inclusive VET focuses on a) terminology and definition (cf. Kremer et al. 2016), b) how structures (e.g. training market) hinder inclusive VET (cf. Ulrich & Enggruber 2014, Granato et al. 2018) and c) social, respectively inclusive practices (cf. Frehe & Kremer 2015, Porath & Slopinski 2016).

## 1.2 ENGLAND

In England the academic discourse about inclusion in VET does also discuss, who is to be addressed and focuses on different learning groups as England's Further Education (FE) sector is very diverse. "It welcomes students of all abilities from those working at pre-entry level to students studying degree-level programmes; anyone over the age of 14 can attend college, including adult returners and students who have been excluded

from schools, and there is no official upper age limit” (Peart 2014, p. 2). This quote shows that the English academic discourse has adopted the broad understanding of inclusion. However, a group, who dominates the academic discourse on inclusion is NEETS, which is an acronym for “young people leaving school at 16 with lower attainments, disabilities and special needs, who were ‘not in education, training or employment,’” (Tomlinson, 2021). Further Education and training is viewed as a means to promote social inclusions and economic prosperity by the English government (Brown, 2016). The problem by defining social inclusion through attending college or training schemes is, that these do not necessarily lead to stable employment (Brown, 2016). There has always been the issue of youth being ware-housed in VET programmes, i.e. students were and are locked in training without jobs (Avis et al., 2017, p. 294).

England’s discussion about inclusive education goes back to the ideal of comprehensive education in the UK. That this discussion is a hard-contested one lies in the “deep-rooted conceptions about education which are based on measuring, sorting, selection and rejection” (Armstrong & Barton, 2008, p. 7). It is well-known that public schools have to contest for being called a ‘good school’ or respectively, a ‘failing school’ in England. However, before the UNESCO World Declaration on Education for All was adopted in 1990, the UK was among the countries, which “had already introduced legislation in support of widening participation of disabled children in mainstream education” (Armstrong & Barton, 2008, p. 10), in this case through the Education Act in 1981. It is important to acknowledge that the UK has a broad understanding of inclusive education, namely “Inclusive education is not concerned with one group – dis-

abled children or children who are identified as having learning difficulties – but with everybody. An inclusive school will seek to combat prejudice and marginalisation in whatever forms it takes” (Armstrong & Barton, 2008, p. 10). Thus, all groups, who are at risk of marginalisation in the educational system are addressed, for examples asylum seekers, gypsies, imprisoned youth and so on. In sum, addressed are students from communities which experience social and economic hardship (Armstrong & Barton, 2008).

On the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2010 the Single Equalities Act came into force. Due to this Act FE colleges had to establish an infrastructure, which secured the Act’s aims. These are “Eliminating discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by the Act; Advancing equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant characteristic and persons who do not share it; Fostering good relations between persons who share a relevant characteristic and persons who do not share it” (Hepple, 2010, p. 18). The aforementioned relevant characteristics are the following nine: “disability, gender, reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation” (Peart, 2014, p. 1). The fact that the establishment of such (infra)structures has an impact on the FE college’s actors is shown, for example, in the study by Peart (2014).

Current English literature on inclusive VET focuses on a) so-called NEETS (cf. Tomlinson, 2021) and b) policies and their consequences for existing structures/ institutions and its actors’ social practices (cf. Armstrong & Barton, 2008).

Both academic discourses address issues on a cultural, structural and social practice level.

## **2. THE ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY "VET CULTURES IN A EUROPEAN COMPARISON: SOCIAL PRACTICES IN VOCATIONAL CLASSES/COURSES FOR CAR MECHATRONICS AND BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION IN ENGLAND AND GERMANY"**

This paper draws on empirical data, which have been collected in the ethnographic comparative study "VET cultures in a European comparison: social practices in vocational classes/courses for car mechatronics and business administration in England and Germany". The basic assumption of this study is that not only institutions, policies and so on, but also values and educational traditions influence teaching and learning (McLean, 1990; Georg, 1997; Osborn et al., 2003, Gericke, 2020a). Thus, the study's aim is to reconstruct how values and educational traditions shape and influence learning environments and social practices of teaching and learning in VET.

Using Reckwitz' social practices theory (based on Schatzki 1996 and 2002) social practices are behavioural routines, which are based on the actor's incorporated knowledge and which are connected with objects, which the actor uses (Reckwitz 2003). For this paper the focus is on inclusive practices, which are one 'type' of social practices.

The term 'VET culture' is understood as a physical and at the same time a symbolic frame for the different facets, which influence vocational education and learning processes. This includes but is not limited to communication and negotiation processes, learner and teacher identity but also learning environment and subject culture as well as historical development and VET policy. The term underlying concept consists of three interwo-

ven elements: culture, learning environment and social practices. (Gericke 2020a, Gericke 2020b) It is these three elements that are also reflected in the German and English academic discourse about inclusion in VET.

The study focuses on two research questions:

- What social practices are evident in lessons for students for car mechatronics and business administration in German and English vocational colleges?
- Which and how are national cultural values, education traditions/philosophies reproduced in those social practices?

Both questions address social interactions and thus call for an ethnographic research design. “Ethnography is the study of social interactions, behaviours, and perceptions that occur within groups, teams, organisations, and communities” (Reeves et al. 2008, p.1). As ethnography aims to provide a detailed depiction and holistic insight into people’s views, actions and their living conditions, the preferred ways of data collection are the observation of people (in situ) and interviewing them. Both methods of data collection are used in this study – lesson observations and guided interviews with the same students and VET teachers observed in the lessons. However, observation is the dominant data collection instrument. The lesson observations are not restricted to observations in the classroom, but also include a running along with different FE college teachers (e.g. observations in the staff room). The non-participative lesson observations allow the researcher to see social practices of teaching and learning within specific settings. The guided

interviews enable the researcher to get an insight into motifs for observed social practices and the persons' self-understanding. The combination of these two forms of data collection allows to contextualise the observed values and educational traditions in the person's self-understanding.

The sample consists of German and English VET teachers and students for car mechatronics (maintenance) and business administration. The data is being collected in England and Germany – in each country an economically weak/rural and an economically strong/urban region. So far, the data collection in economically weak/rural areas – in Germany, namely Saxony-Anhalt and in England, Cornwall – has been completed. For this paper data from the German and English car mechatronic classes, namely lesson observations and teacher interviews will be drawn upon. This data comprises 25 observed teaching hours in English classes for car mechatronics (7 lessons VRQ 2 and 18 lessons VRQ 3) and two guided interviews with English vocational teachers for car mechatronics as well as 13 observed teaching hours in German classes for car mechatronics (7 lessons in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 6 lessons in 3<sup>rd</sup> year of training) and three guided interviews with German vocational teachers for car mechatronics. Selection criteria for the interviewed vocational teachers were a) subject reference, i.e. teaching car mechatronics in VQR 2 and/or VQR 3 classes, respectively 2<sup>nd</sup> and/or 3<sup>rd</sup> year of training and b) desire and time to participate in the interview.

The observation protocols (OP) and guided interviews (Int.) are analysed using the grounded theory methodology. For the study's research object an adapted coding paradigm has been developed. Regarding the comparative methodology the procedure was as follows: First, the German and English data were

analysed separately. That is, the German data were compared with each other and the English data were compared with each other. Then the German and English data were compared with each other. Comparing (inclusive) practices of teaching and learning one identifies, explores and explains their similarities and differences across designated units of comparison. The aim is to find out “what is universal in [inclusive practices of teaching and learning] from what is culturally or geographically specific, informing the development of pedagogic theory, and extending the vocabulary and repertoire of pedagogic practice” (Alexander 2009, p. 927).

Ethical considerations were taken into account, such as respect for privacy and confidentiality. All data was anonymised. The presented German data has all been translated by the author.

### **3. THE ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE PRESENTED EMPIRICAL DATA AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF INCLUSION PRACTICES**

The starting point for the analytical framework is the author’s understanding of VET culture and its three elements culture, learning environment (structures), social practices. This general analytical framework must now be concretised with regard to the topic of inclusion. It is interesting to note that the Index of Inclusion (Booth & Ainscow, 2002), which promotes inclusive school development has three comparable dimensions. The first dimension is ‘creating inclusive culture’, which focuses on reflecting and critically questioning attitudes and values that are rooted in the VET system (Wolff 2011, Booth & Ainscow,

2002). The second dimension thematises ‘establishing inclusive structures’, which refers to the organisation of the VET Colleges and to the necessary organisational changes on the way to an inclusive VET College (Wolff, 2011; Booth & Ainscow, 2002). The third dimension ‘developing inclusive practices’ targets changes in didactic concepts and in the design of learning processes regarding inclusion, including the use and development of resources (Wolff, 2011; Booth & Ainscow, 2002).

Taking this into account the analytical framework for interpreting the available data on inclusive practices starts with the focus on the existing FE College structures (structure level) – what are the existing vocational school/ FE college structures, in which vocational/ FE college teachers teach and their students learn? As structures influence the perception of things, there is then the focus on how the existing vocational school/ FE College structures influence which (and how) vocational/ FE teachers perceive heterogeneity in their classes? Both – the existing structures and the perception of heterogeneous class affect vocational/ FE teachers’ attitudes towards inclusion (culture level) and this in turn affects the vocational/FE teachers’ inclusion practices. This line of argument is illustrated with the figure below.



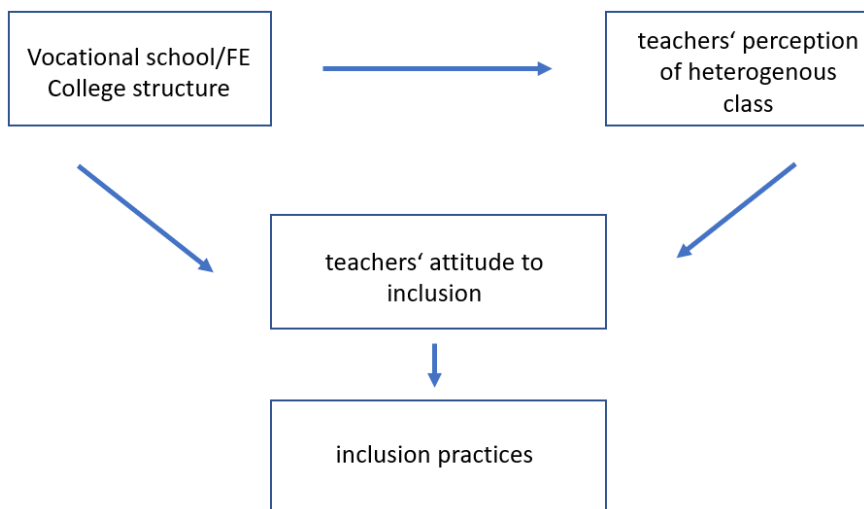


Figure 1 analytical frame for the presented empirical data against the background of inclusion practices

## 4. INCLUSION PRACTICES IN GERMAN AND ENGLISH MOTOR VEHICLE CLASSES

### 4.1 THE GERMAN CASE

The following can be said about the structures – relevant to the topic of inclusion – in the specific vocational school in which the data was collected. The *students are selected by the training companies* as it is usually the case, when students complete dual training. They choose according to *educational qualification* as the following quote shows:

In the first year of the apprenticeship we really have a very wide range, people who really. Yes, the level of education also plays a role, yes. We have everything from grammar school

students to secondary school graduates sitting next to each other in the same class. Yes. There is no fixed entry level for the professions. The company alone decides. (Int. Karell, lines 267-271)

Another selection criterion for offering an apprenticeship to a young person is the *person's motivation for the profession*:

There are many companies that, if they remain strict, do not employ anyone at all because they say "The one we are looking for. Yes, we have three places. There were three who introduced themselves, who want to do it. But from what we've talked to them and explored their motivation, there's not one of them who is suitable from our point of view to really last the three and a half years and get through here at the end." And then they don't train at all. (Int. Karell, lines 402-407)

Sometimes training companies *give low educational achievers a chance*:

Or they really do it this way, via their reserve list, that they say, "Well, then we'll take one of the weaker ones, where we say he might make it, because he's developing a bit." [...]. So, in terms of performance, what we have here has of course deteriorated considerably, I have to say. (Karell, lines 407-411).

The training companies' selection criteria are adopted by the vocational school teachers, when they perceive their classes heterogeneity. They apply the following *three heterogeneity dimensions*:

- *educational qualifications and performance;*
- *motivation, attitude and behaviour;*
- *late starters* due to mainly organisational matters of the training company.

All interviewed German vocational school teachers reported that they check with which *educational qualifications* their students arrive in their classes. They do this to get a first impression of the potential performance of the class.

I look at classes beforehand. I look at every class, at every class [...]. What school-leaving qualifications do they have? What prerequisites do they have? Because it's different in the classes. (Int. Neumann, lines 494-497)

Additionally, they 'divide' their class in low and high achievers as the following quote illustrates:

You could do lessons for the less able, for the more able students (Int. Neubauer, lines 223f.).

Regarding the heterogeneity dimension *motivation, attitude and behaviour* the interviewed German vocational school teachers have to a great part motivated car mechatronic students, who want to learn.

Compared to other classes, they are the most motivated. (Int. Neubauer, lines 622)

And I have to say in general that the young people we deal with in the motor vehicle sector are generally all (..) I'll say

casually reasonable people who are not at school just to have fun somewhere, but who know that there is a goal behind it. (Int. Karrel, lines 147-150)

Students, who behave badly at their training companies – by coming to work late or being mouthy, for example – lose their apprenticeships and thus their vocational school place.

That the company says “No, he’s late three times a week. There’s no point.” (Int. Karrel, line 437f.)

[They] take a look at the attendance lists and see when they come to class. And of course, a training company/we look at that and report it to the training company. That’s the usual procedure. But if they come to work ten minutes late three out of five days, then the company doesn’t tolerate that forever. [...] Then he [the boss] talks to him and the boy either says “Watch out, you can go fuck yourself”, right? (Int. Karrel, lines 450-455).

One group of students is addressed by all interviewed vocational school teachers – *students, who start their apprenticeships two to twelve weeks later* as their training companies do not adjust their start of apprenticeship to the school year.

They have a fixed start date for the apprenticeship [...] But sometimes it is the case that students start in the first year of the apprenticeship until December. [...] That’s half a year of lessons almost gone. September, October, November, December – four months are already gone with lessons. (Int. Neubauer, lines 241 and 245-248)

A typical date is the first of September. In GDR times, the first of September was the start of the apprenticeship. And that still applies to some companies today. Although this year we start on the tenth of August and there are companies that say “No, we’re hiring for the first of September”. That is basically the case. (Int. Arnold, lines 360-363)

The vocational school teachers’ attitude towards including their perceived heterogeneous classes represents the culture level of the analytical framework. Regarding the low and high achievers in their classes all interviewed German vocational school teachers have the *desire to bring even the poor performers through the final examination successfully*.

So, the credo again and again is “We don’t want to teach them anything, but we want to achieve something together, so that they have a performance (.) at the end, that they pass the exams that are due at the end and that decide whether they really (..), i.e. graduate or not, in the end.” (Int. Karrel, lines 69-72)

All interviewed German teachers share *the attitude of being understanding of typical youthful (male) behaviour*. They are aware that the majority of their students are at this age and have consciously chosen this student age when choosing their career as a vocational school teacher.

Yes, what makes a good vocational school teacher above all is that he (...) yes, I would say that he enjoys his profession. Yes. That he likes to work with young people, that he understands

the difficulties that are to be expected in the age structure we have to deal with, 16-20, that he is prepared to deal with them and yes, in the cooperation with the young people, that he is willing to work with them. (Int. Karrel, lines 65-69)

A different picture emerges with regard to *students, who start their apprenticeship* (and thus vocational school) *later due to their training companies' attitude of not adjusting their start of apprenticeship to the school year. None of the FE teachers can muster any understanding for this.*

I have to say. Personally, I have a huge problem with this, because I don't see why. [...] They come into the classroom and want to do everything immediately (1) or not. And the company is of the opinion that "school is nothing anyway. They don't learn anything there. They'll manage." So, in those cases there is no more time. Doing lessons twice is not possible, then we wouldn't need to do lessons in the first place. (Int. Neubauer, lines 240f. and 249-253)

The German vocational school teachers' different attitudes towards the different dimensions of heterogeneity or groups of pupils lead to different inclusion practices. *Low performers are included by frequent quizzing in class discussion and praising for correct answers to simple questions.*

In normal lessons, I would say that the specialists [low achievers] are asked more often. If you notice (.) they have problems with memorising or not/ there are certain things that even a car mechatronics has to know by heart nowadays. These are,

for example, the terminal designations in electrics. [...] And they have to learn them by heart. And if there are a few specialists, well, they'll be called on more often when the subject comes up. (Int. Arnold, lines 318-322 and 324f.)

I give special support to the lower-performing students, they get more attention, and so that they don't drop out, they get praised for things where they haven't really done anything, but they've made an effort. Well, so that they don't lose interest. (Int. Neubauer, lines 226-229).

*High achievers are included by frequent consultations on difficult questions.*

And I try to take the better pupils for more qualified things, so that they notice that too. That they then get to work on more difficult things, that there is a certain differentiation. (Int. Neubauer, lines 229-231)

*To motivate the youthful learners the interviewed and observed German vocational school teachers show the practical relevance of the learning content.* They include practical parts in their lessons and invite their students to share their working experience in class.

This practical approach, that we try to do a lot with practical objects [...]. But you are closer to the practice and the whole thing is of course much clearer. (Int. Karrel, lines 387 and 390f.)

If the whole thing is a bit practical, which the students also enjoy, where they are interested in. And that (..) is something

we always try to do in a somewhat practical way. Because the normal (...) blackboard lessons with chalk and the like get boring after a while. (Int. Arnold, lines 123-126)

So, one point is when students now bring their own contributions to the classroom from their practice. (Int. Neubauer, lines 553f.)

The inclusion practice for students, who start their apprenticeship later, are on a minimum level. Exercise sheets are provided, which get corrected, if students do them. Major class tests are not written before October.

Well, for one thing, the latecomers are obliged to catch up on their own. We also give them the corresponding tasks. This is then also controlled. We also organise ourselves in such a way that the class tests, i.e. where the greatest performance assessment is, are only really written after October, when the latecomers still have time to find their way in. (Arnold, lines 355-359)

The figure below summarises the relevant vocational school's structure regarding inclusion, the vocational school teachers' perception of their heterogeneous motor vehicle classes, their attitude to inclusion and their inclusion practices – for that specific German case.



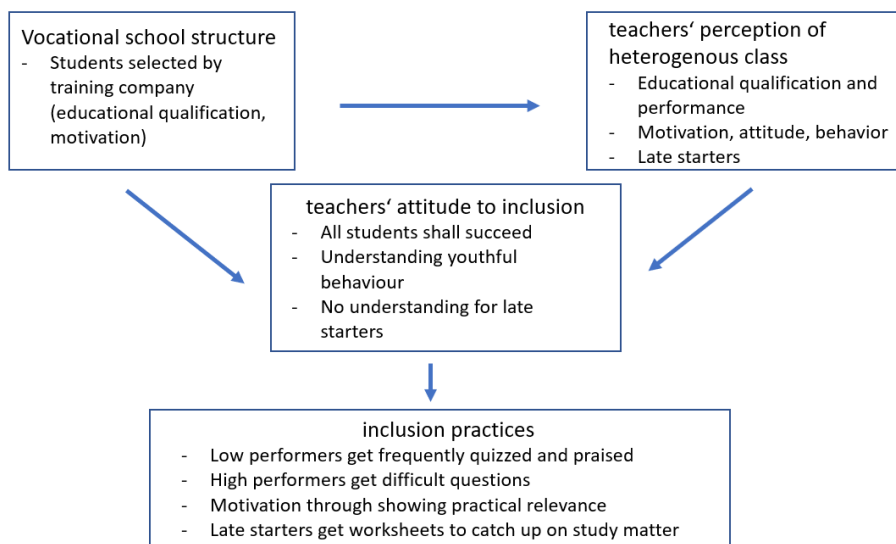


Figure 2 summary of the German case

## 4.2 THE ENGLISH CASE

At the **structural** level the interviewed and observed English FE teachers work for a FE college, which has also an inclusion mission. The specific FE College is – based on the Equality Act 2010 – committed to be an *inclusive college*. The college has added ‘inclusion’ to its strategy and feels responsible to enable learning opportunities also for students, who have protected characteristics. Furthermore, the FE College requires its FE teachers to conduct every two weeks an ‘*entrance interview evening*’, where FE teachers talk about their course to *prospective FE students on an individual basis*. The FE teacher is required to *document the individual learning progress of every student in*

his/ her course. The FE College provides a *flexible course system* in so far that different learning groups (full-time, part-time, school-based, apprenticeship scheme) come together for specific learning contents. For instance, in the Level 3 motor vehicle class there are five groups of learners – full-time students who have progressed from a previous level, full-time students who join the class without previous qualification, apprentices who have progressed from a previous level, apprentices and full-times students, who have to re-sit an exam and thus take the course again (cf. OP Oct 7 2020, line 35, footnote).

The interviewed **English FE college teachers** perceive their student along the following three **heterogeneity** dimensions:

- performance, attitude and the probability to work in a workshop;
- personal circumstances – such as physical disability, mental health issues, family responsibility, migration background – and character traits;
- motivation and behaviour.

Within the heterogeneity dimension performance, the English FE college teachers perceive *three levels in their classes, namely low, middle and top performers*.

And there's a couple who are behind or should I say at that level. [...] and there's people in the middle. [...] And it goes to the top end (Int. Isaac, lines 563, 565f., 570f.)

As the College has given out target figures for *attention*, retention and pass – all 90% – these figures influence the English FE

college teachers' views on their students. Once students are on the course for 42 days, they count for the statistics.

This lad is a nice lad, but he's not interested. When I'm talking all people are looking at me, to see their faces, he's never looking at me. He's always like looking down or looking over there or facing the wall. And if he writes anything it's half-answered. We've got a 42-day rule. That we can get rid off the student up to six weeks, 42 days without any heavy paperwork, but even so we still got paperwork to do, so eh it doesn't affect our statistics. If I left him on the course, he isn't going to pass. So, when it gets to the end of the year, he would be a failure, which would show on the statistic. (Int. Isaac, lines 762-769)

Thus, the interviewed English FE college teachers reported that they need to anticipate, which students will affect the statistics negatively. Students, who fail to attend the course regularly and show a lack of interest will be removed from the course.

Additionally, *the probability to work in a workshop later* is another perspective, which the interviewed English FE college teachers have on their students. This excerpt from the observation protocol reflects Isaac's assessment of his full-time school-based students' likelihood of working in a workshop later in life.

Student A disabled guy, will never work in a workshop. He is on the course for social reasons and gets fully funded. [...]  
Student B [...] is very enthusiastic but he will probably not make it to work in a workshop. A workshop would need 3 to 4 people, who really know their stuff and get on with their job and then they could take him on. [...] Student C [...] is very

good and will work in a garage. [...] Student D is [...] interested in cars. [...] He could work in a garage, but he doesn't want to. (OP Oct 7 2020, lines 27-40)

The second heterogeneity dimension, which the interviewed English FE college teachers use, is their students' *personal circumstances and character traits*. The teachers are very well informed, which is also due to the aforementioned entrance interview evening, which the teachers have to conduct. They know who has which family responsibilities and current private challenges such as mental health issues and drug use. Some students have physical disabilities, such as a walking impediment, partial hearing and sight loss and some suffer from chronic illness such as diabetes. Then there are students with migration background and language issues. Furthermore, they perceive who are the serious and fun-loving students, who has a low self-confidence and needs support:

He is very quiet in the class, [...] student D [...] In class he asks serious questions. (OP Oct 7 2020, p.11, line 11 and p.11 line 38)

And then we've got other students, who are really serious. I've got two adults, they sit over there [...] well in fact they just talk to each other and they're listening (Int. Isaac, lines 455-458)

Trevor tells me about the personal background of the two students. Student 1 is partially sighted and has a hearing impairment. He had several issues in his life, but has sorted them out. He has found a family and a young son. There is also a teenage son in his family, who is his wife's son. Trevor is well-informed about what is going on in his family as the student tells him about it. Trevor likes the student as he is hard-working. Student 2 lives in the same street as Trevor. He

thinks of him as a clever boy, who needs more self-confidence  
(OP Oct 11 2020, p.2 lines 6-11)

The last heterogeneity dimension is *motivation and behaviour*. The English FE college teachers perceive their students' motivation and work attitude, which they bring to class. Additionally, they have an eye for who is stronger orally and who is stronger in writing.

[...] they just talk to each other and they're listening and they're writing and their work is to a fantastic standard  
(Int. Isaac, lines 457f.)

He is very quiet in the class, but his paper work is excellent.  
(OP Oct 7 2020, p. 11 line 35)

Regarding the interviewed and observed **English FE college teachers attitude towards inclusion**, which represents the **cultural level** of the analytical framework, they share the same attitude in respect to *getting all their students – low, middle or high performers – successfully through theirs courses* as the German vocational school teachers. The English FE College 'strengthens' this attitude with its target figures. By the end of the day, if the figures are not met, courses will be closed and FE teachers lose their jobs. However, all interviewed and observed English FE college teachers are of the opinion, that *everybody is free to learn what she or he wants to learn and everybody is welcome*. As "Cornwall College is an inclusive FE college" (OP Oct. 7 2020, p.11 lines 30f.), people from all walks of life are addressed.

Students, who struggle with their motivation are not left behind, but *the English FE college teachers see it as their task to motivate them*.

And it's my job to make sure they're interested and I put it in a way that they can understand. (Int. Isaac, lines 868f.)

According to their attitude, the interviewed and observed **English FE college teachers have social practices of inclusion**. In order to get all students – low, middle and top performers – successfully through their course they *adapt their grade of explanation and encircle the learning object at different levels of difficulty*.

So, there's three classes in this room. And I then (.) if I'm going to be talking about (2) crank shafts I talk about it at a low level, then I start to build it up and then I sort of get the whole picture. So that it begins at low level, these can keep up and then it goes to the middle and everyone's there. And it goes to the top end and that person's there. And then I come back to the beginning again and then I build it and build it and build it. (Int. Isaac, lines 568-572)

*The personal circumstances and character traits of their students are considered by setting them individual tasks and giving them individual feedback.*

Trevor deliberately sets student 1, who has a partial hearing loss, a practical task, where he needs to find an audio fault. (OP Oct 11 2019, p.1, line 18)

If there are issues, which are beyond their competence, they *get help or refer to help*. This was for instance the case, when one English FE college teacher had a suicidal student in his class.

One lad came to me and needed help. He was suicidal. And he had tried to hang himself and his friend's found him. And this lad was a really nice lad. So, when he said that to me, I was going into class with his group and he said 'Could I have a word with you, please?' And he was like 'really'. And I said 'Yeah, what's up, mate?' And he told me. So, I then I had let the class in 'So right, you lot shut up, sit down.' And I took him back to my desk, I sat him there and I said 'You are not move off that chair, even if the building catches fire.' And at that point I then went away and I phoned the eh we have someone here, who is our safeguarding officer and I said 'I've got an emergency and you need to get here.' And within ten minutes she was there and then he was away." In the meantime, while I was sitting he was talking to me and telling me. [...] And he was a nice lad. Eh and so we got him through the course, eh he got help. (Int. Isaac, lines 680-692)

Students, who struggle with their *motivation* are included *by using individual examples*, which fit their interests and their life circumstances. Generally, their students are interested in fast cars and when difficult and challenging topics come up, one teacher for instance always links it with specific cars, which are well-liked by his students.

And then with cars it's very easy to say, if the group is like not really getting enthusiastic I say "Right okay, you've got a car, you want to make it more powerful, what are you going to do?" you know (Int. Isaac, lines 870-872),

The figure below summarises the inclusion-relevant structural conditions of the specific FE college, along which heterogeneity dimensions the FE college teachers look in their motor vehicles classes, their attitude towards inclusion and their inclusion practices carried out.

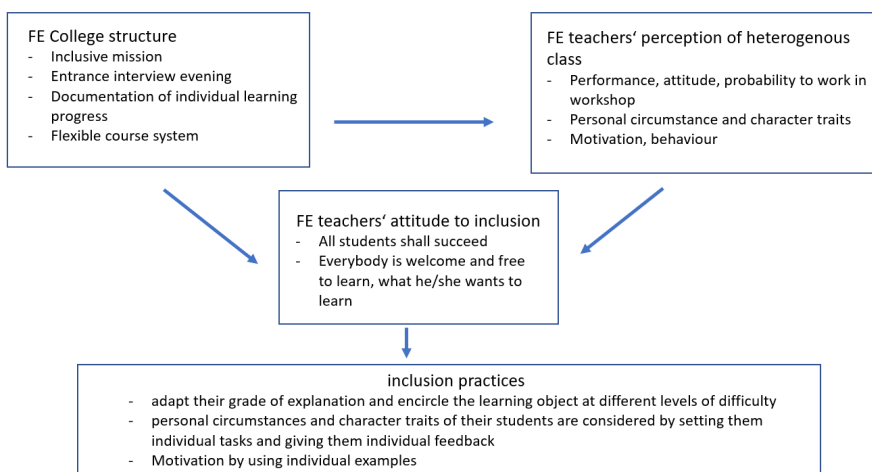


Figure 3 summary of the English case

## 5. DISCUSSION

The first part of the discussion will compare the German and English case with each other. Based on the author's understanding of a VET culture, the comparison is done according to the analytical framework: FE college/ vocational school (inclusive) structures, FE college/ vocational school teachers' perception of heterogenous classes, their attitude towards heterogeneity and their social practices. In the second part, the empirical findings



are linked back to the respective national academic discourse. The penultimate part shows how the findings answer the two research questions. Finally, there is a brief outlook regarding future necessary research.

## REGARDING THE STRUCTURAL CONDITIONS ...

Students who sit in car mechatronics classes in that specific German vocational school, have an apprenticeship. Thus, it is the training companies, who choose and hence set the apprentices (their status in the company)/ students (their status in the vocational school) for the vocational school. The training companies' selection criteria are educational qualification and motivation. In contrast, the specific English FE college car mechatronic classes are not restricted to apprentices, but are also open for school-based learners. Furthermore, the course is structured along thematic blocks (modules), so that different students (apprentices, school-based learners, students who have to re-sit exams) are in one class. The specific FE college requires its FE teachers to conduct one-to-one entrance interview evenings with prospective FE college students on a regular basis and to document the individual learning progress of every student. All three structural aspects show a strong individual orientation. Furthermore, the FE college has a – politically initiated – inclusion mission and invites people from all walks of life to learn at the college. Certainly, different funding schemes (such as for disabled students) play a role here. Additionally, the college has given out target figures for its teachers, namely 90% attention, retention and pass. In order to fulfil these figures an individual approach in teaching might be the most promising one.

## REGARDING THE PERCEPTION OF HETEROGENEITY ...

The interviewed German vocational school teachers adopt the training companies' selection criteria, when they look at their heterogeneous classes. They inform themselves about the educational qualification, which their students have attained so far and additionally sort their students according to performance levels, with low and high performers. Furthermore, they apply the heterogeneity dimensions motivation, attitude and behaviour – which correspond to the training companies' selection criteria. However, there is one heterogeneity dimension, which is caused by some training companies, namely apprentices, who start their apprenticeship later and thus join in to the vocational school class later as the training company sticks to its training start date and does not adjust it to the school year. The interviewed English FE college teachers share two of three heterogeneity dimensions with their German colleagues, namely performance and motivation. The English FE college teachers are slightly more differentiated regarding the performance levels as they perceive three levels – top, middle, low performers. Additionally, part of the heterogeneity dimension performance is attendance, which is important for the target figures and the probability to work in a workshop. The last point is irrelevant for the German colleagues as all their students have an apprenticeship. However, both German and English teachers share motivation and behaviour as a relevant heterogeneity dimension in their classes. In addition, English FE college teachers look at their students' personal circumstances – this is a perspective, which is required, if the teachers take the FE college's inclusion mission and the statement that everybody is welcome serious.

## REGARDING THE CULTURAL LEVEL, I.E. ATTITUDE TOWARDS INCLUSION ...

All of the observed and interviewed German vocational school teachers have the desire to get all their students successfully through the final exam, even the poor performers. They have a positive attitude and are all willing to support their students. They meet their students' typical (male) youthful behaviour with understanding. However, late starters, i.e. students, who join the class weeks later as the apprenticeship started later are not met with any understanding. Just like their German colleagues do the English FE college teachers have the wish that all students – also the low achievers – get successfully through the course. Furthermore, they maintain the attitude that everybody is welcome and they are looking forward to everybody, who wants to learn about car maintenance independent of their background.

## REGARDING THE INCLUSION PRACTICES ...

Low performing German vocational school students get included into lessons as their teachers quiz them frequently on easy questions and get praised for correct answers. High performing German vocational school students get included by addressing difficult questions to them. So, the inclusion practices for both student groups happens within class discussion and is solely on a verbal level. German vocational school teachers include unmotivated students into their lessons by showing the practical relevance of the theoretical learning objects. The practical relevance is shown by visualising theoretical content

with the help of a specific car component and by illustrating theoretical content through practical problems. At times students contribute their own practical examples from their apprenticeship to the class discussion. Late starters get included by providing worksheets, which the German teachers correct. English FE college teachers include the three different performing levels of their students by adapting their grade of explanation to the different levels and encircling the learning object on different levels of difficulty. So, English and German teachers share their inclusion practices for strong and weak performers insofar that the practices are all on a verbal level solely, namely through class discussion. A strong individual approach has been observed as personal circumstances and character traits of the English FE students are considered in individual tasks and individual feedback. The individual tasks get mainly used in the FE college's workshop, thus in a practical learning setting. The one-to-one feedback on these tasks happens in a verbal and written manner. Unmotivated FE students get included into the lessons by using technical examples, which fit the students' individual preferences, in class discussion. This individual inclusion practice is again on a verbal level.

The following figure illustrates the commonalities and differences of the German and English case.

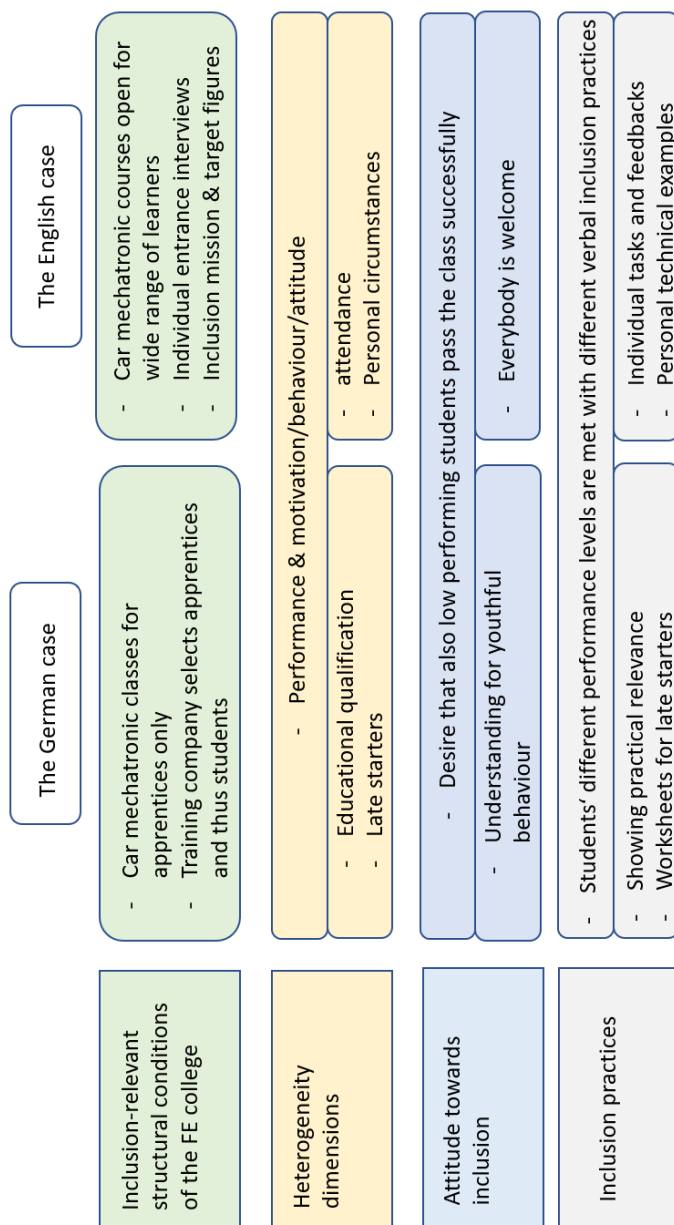


Figure 4 summary of comparing the German and English case

In a nutshell: The inclusion practices are in both countries mainly in a verbal manner, namely through class discussion. The English case shows a strong individual orientation and the German case shows a strong link to the training company, respectively (future) workplace.

How does the empirical data link to the German and English discourse on inclusion in VET? Looking at the German academic discourse on inclusion in vocational schools, it becomes apparent that – regarding the topic of who is to be included – the groups of learners perceived by the vocational school teachers to be included differ partly from the groups discussed in the academic discourse. The inclusion of low (and high) performing students/apprentices is a topic in both ‘places’, at the vocational schools and in the academic discourse. That late starters are a learning group, who needs to be included, has not been addressed by the German academic discourse, but all the more by the interviewed German vocational school teachers. This issue is another indicator that there is room for improvement regarding the learning venue cooperation between training companies and vocational schools. Furthermore, the empirical data supports the academic discourse insofar that the entry into dual vocational training is controlled through a market-shaped inclusion (Granato et al., 2018), in this case the training companies’ selection criteria. However, the little but existing German academic discourse on how to implement inclusive vocational education and thus inclusive practices in vocational schools (Heisler, 2016; Kremer & Kückmann, 2016; Porath & Slopinski, 2016) is not mirrored in the empirical data. The reconstructed inclusion practices are to the most part on a verbal level and in the social form of class discussion.

Looking at the English academic discourse on inclusion in the Further Education sector the empirical data confirms the very diverse learning group. The issue of ‘ware-housed’ students (Avis et al., 2017) can also be detected in the English FE college teachers’ perceptions of students, who will work in workshops and who will not. The FE college teachers’ attitude of welcoming all students, who are willing to learn links to the Single Equality Act, which calls for such an attitude. This finding was also confirmed by the Peart (2014) study. The individual orientation to the students’ personal circumstances and the observed social practices, which mirror the individual approach, support the broad concept of inclusive education, i.e. being concerned with everybody (Armstrong & Barton, 2008).

The paper reconstructed inclusive practices in lessons for students for car mechatronics in German and English vocational colleges. It also uncovered the structural (i.e. FE college structures) and cultural (i.e. attitude) conditions for the reconstructed inclusive practices. This helped to discover, which and how national cultural values, educational traditions/ philosophies are reproduced in inclusive practices. The English inclusive practices of providing individual tasks and feedbacks can be linked to England’s knowledge tradition of humanism (McLean, 1990), where one of the major principles is individualism. The German inclusive practice of showing the practical relevance of the learning content can be linked to Germany’s naturalist knowledge traditions (McLean, 1990) – characterised by a strong work reference. Germany’s strong work reference is also visible in the training companies’ strong role in the dual system, e.g., the training companies’ selection criteria for apprentices. This leads to different heterogeneity dimensions in the German compared to the English class for car mechatronics.

Though the data shows that both countries successfully include students with very different levels of achievement, the data also shows that both countries fail regarding a full inclusion in VET. In the English sample, statistical constraints (target figure of 90% attention, retention and pass) lead to the removals of single students. In the German sample, students who fail in fulfilling the training companies' requirements have to discontinue their training in the vocational schools. Further research is needed, which investigates how VET policies and structures promote or hinder the inclusion of different groups of young people into VET.

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## Individualization in vocational training for immigrants: developing professionalism and language through feedback

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**Abstract:** This chapter addresses vocationally adjusted language courses in Swedish for adult immigrants. We focus on individualisation, which is stipulated in the curriculum and other syllabus documents, and argue that individually adapted feedback could be considered a tool (out of several potential tools) for “doing” individualisation in a pedagogical practice. We discuss different understandings of individualisation in policy documents and research literature, and define individu-

alisation as an educational practice in teaching, carried through in dialogue. In an empirical study, we apply the definition by analysing feedback sequences in video recordings from two vocational courses (designed for outdoor maintenance workers and medical doctors, respectively) using the linguistic method of interaction analysis. We demonstrate (1) how individualisation in terms of feedback is managed in interaction involving teacher and students, and (2) the vocational and linguistic skills that materialise as important for the individual students in these feedback sequences. Our results demonstrate that feedback is a functional educational tool for individualisation, providing learning opportunities for both language acquisition and professional knowledge. However, this requires authentic assignments that are designed to promote opportunities for more developed dialogues. Another conclusion is that a professional experienced teacher who can provide feedback on both professional skills and language use is particularly important.

**Key words:** adult learning, workplace education and training, migration, individualization, feedback, interaction analysis

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Courses in Swedish for immigrants (sfi) are designed with the primary goal of integrating newly arrived immigrants into working life (Abrahamsson & Bylund, 2012). An increasing number of courses are designed based on the participants' work experiences of different professional specialisations (Ministry of Education and Research, 2020). A buzzword in these settings is individualisation, i.e. the adaptation of teaching to meet the individual student's needs and prerequisites. Tuition should be "directed at those with different experiences, situations in life,

skills and study goals”, according to the syllabus for municipal adult education in sfi. Further, “instruction shall be planned and designed together with the student and adapted to the student’s interests, experiences, all-round knowledge and long-term goals”. Similar adjustments are examples of individualisation and its significance is exemplified by evaluations conducted by the Swedish Schools Inspectorate (e.g. 2018). Nevertheless, it is neither clear nor consistent how this buzzword is defined. There are few examples of “best practices” and there are also few examples of research on how individualisation could be applied to tuition.

This chapter is an attempt to give life to the policy term *individualisation* by approaching individualisation as a pedagogical practice from the perspective of feedback. We argue that individually adapted feedback could be considered a tool (out of several potential tools) for “doing” individualisation in a pedagogical practice and that feedback could be considered an example of how teachers could work with the policy term *individualisation* in their teaching. The perspective is elaborated below (sections 3 and 4), in which we describe how individualisation is defined and used in research and policy documents and suggest a definition of individualisation as a pedagogical practice, focusing on feedback. In the empirical part of the chapter (section 5), we investigate instances of feedback in two courses that combine language learning and vocational training for immigrants and discuss how feedback provides individualised learning opportunities for the acquisition of Swedish, as well as for the vocational knowledge needed for a future working life in Sweden. We then develop the definition further by analysing feedback sequences relating to two different vocational assignments aimed at practising core activities with high communication demands.

## **2. AIM**

The aim is to contribute to the understanding of individualisation as a pedagogical practice by studying feedback in interaction as one form of individualisation in the context of vocational adjusted language courses in Swedish for adult immigrants. The following questions guide our investigation:

1. How is individualisation in terms of feedback managed in interaction involving teachers and students in two vocational assignments in courses for immigrants?
2. What vocational and linguistic skills materialise as important for the individual students in these feedback sequences?

The questions are investigated through an empirical study comprising two assignments from two vocational courses for immigrants: firstly, a course in gardening and outdoor maintenance, and secondly, a course for immigrating medical doctors. The courses have different target groups regarding former education and future working life in Sweden. Yet, the assignments in question are both authentic, stimulating language acquisition and professional knowledge: a doctor-patient conversation role play, and a group work assignment aimed at designing and planting a flower bed.

## **3. THEORY**

This study has a socio-culturally based framework, suggesting that learning takes place through social interaction by participating in social activities (Vygotsky, 1978). The learner is considered

a creative constructor and active participant in the learning environment. Indeed, the very idea of individualisation reflects a socio-cultural view of learning, as instruction is adapted to the needs and goals of the students. Dialogue is seen as an important way to reach the *Zone of Proximal Development* (ZPD), e.g. the level that the learners have not yet mastered but can reach, with the help of a teacher or a more competent peer (Vygotsky, 1978). Thus, an analysis of interaction can provide knowledge about opportunities for individually adapted learning, concerning both language and professional knowledge.

In the following sections, we first outline some fundamental assumptions regarding learning a second language (referred to as L2) for professional purposes, essential for the present study. We then discuss the concept of individualisation and how it is defined in policy documents and research literature. *Scaffolding* could be regarded as a kind of individualisation, and for the purpose of the present study we will outline our view of *feedback* as a kind of *interactional scaffolding*.

### 3.1 LEARNING A SECOND LANGUAGE FOR A FUTURE PROFESSION

L2 learning was previously considered a cognitive and individual process, but according to a more modern, socio-cultural view, language learning actually takes place through social interaction (Firth & Wagner, 1997, 2007). The goal is to develop a *communicative language ability* (Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Celçe-Murcia, 2008) that includes multiple different competences, not just everyday language use.

The socio-cultural learning view corroborates a view on literacy development in which literacies are social practices that

constitute different types of *discourses* that not only refer to certain texts but also to how people value, write and discuss them in different contexts (Gee, 2015). Gee distinguishes between *primary* and *secondary discourses*. Primary discourse is the language we acquire in primary socialisation with our family and caregivers, i.e. a concrete everyday language. Secondary discourses are related to different domains, such as workplace or school, in which more abstract and specialised forms of language are used. The development of secondary discourses promotes the acquisition of new discourses, particularly if they share similarities. Similarly, literacy experience of a first language helps in the acquisition of new literacy practices in an L2 (Cummins, 1979). This means that if the learner has developed a specific professional language in a first language, it is easier to acquire this kind of resource in an L2. However, there could still be challenges as the professional context may vary across different cultures.

Gee compares the literacy development of new discourses with the acquisition of new languages, implying that acquisition must take place within a context in which the discourse in question is being used (2015). From this perspective, practice training or internship is valuable for language learning, particularly for acquiring the linguistic resources associated with the profession. A distinction has been made between explicit learning (in formal settings) and implicit acquisition (in informal settings) (Krashen, 1976), and these days a combination is considered the most effective way of learning an L2 (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Gee (2015) claims that this also applies to the development of new secondary discourses. Hence, the most efficient way to develop a new professional language should be a combination of explicit learning in, for example, an educa-



tional context, and implicit acquisition in a workplace. However, Ivanić (2009) highlights the importance of establishing a resonance between linguistic practices in education on the one hand, and in a professional context on the other hand, through authentic assignments for an authentic audience. There are different methods to create authenticity in instruction. Simulated professional practices such as role play, exemplified in one of the empirical settings below, is a case in point in vocational training (Cephas Charsmar, 2019). The highlighted advantages include, for example, a safe setting while simulating professional procedures, opportunities to discuss unspoken assumptions, and experience of teamwork.

### 3.2 FEEDBACK AND INDIVIDUALISATION

Within the framework of sociocultural theory, feedback is considered to be a situated activity performed in social interaction. Hattie & Timperley (2007) define feedback as “information provided by an agent (e.g., teacher, peer, book, parent, experience) regarding aspects of one’s performance or understanding” (p. 102), and it may be affirmative or corrective. Affirmative feedback acknowledges a correct response and may include praise (*very good, excellent, good*), while corrective feedback has two possible functions: to advise about what must be corrected or to guide the recipient towards their own revision (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Typical and well-studied structure of classroom dialogue is the initiative, response and feedback (IRF) structure (see, for example, Hammond & Gibbons, 2005; van Lier, 2001), in which the learner responds to teacher initiatives and receives feedback. In the context of vocational training, Öhman (2018)

demonstrates more elaborated feedback sequences, or “feedback trajectories”, comprising six distinctive phases: detection, investigation, calibration, exploration, demonstration and solution. Certain interactional resources are made salient in the phases, including inter alia gaze in detection, touch in investigation, body position in calibration and deixis in solution. Gaze is a salient resource for assessing the ongoing work, as well as in the professional skills to be acquired. With reference to Goodwin (1994), *professional gaze* is considered to be selective vision based on professional knowledge and aesthetics.

This study focuses on feedback as one form of individualisation, arguing that feedback is a tool in which students’ needs, previous knowledge and goals are considered. In policies, the definition of individualisation varies and may concern organisational aspects of education, but also situated teaching practices. In Bernard et al. (2019), the concept of adaptive teaching and individualisation (in terms of student-centred processes, methods and practice) concerns four aspects: flexibility, pacing of instruction, teacher’s role, and adaptability. In other cases, a distinction is made between *flexibility* and individualisation. Flexibility concerns educational organisation such as schedule, course type and level, while individualisation concerns adaptations made to a given course regarding the students attending the course in question (Ministry of Education and Research, 2013). In Wallin et al. (2019), individualisation in instruction is identified in relation to three strategies: 1) grouping of students (based on their prerequisites and needs), 2) differentiated teaching (adaption of teaching practices to different needs and prerequisites in the student group), and 3) individual tuition (one-on-one instruction with a single student). Hence, individualisation is not always solely considered a pedagogical practice, but also something that can

be managed via, for example, the grouping of students. However, like the Ministry of Education and Research (2013), we reserve the term *individualisation* for pedagogical practices, suggesting that administrative tools such as the grouping of students should be considered examples of flexibility.

Thus, for the purpose of the present study, we define individualisation as adaptations made by teachers within instruction and consider it solely as a pedagogical practice conducted by teacher and students in dialogue. Further, feedback is considered to be one of several potential adaptations to students' needs and prerequisites. Our view on feedback as a form of individualisation is theoretically grounded in the idea of *scaffolding*, which was introduced by Wood et al. (1976), derived from the Vygotskian learning view tradition. Hammond and Gibbons (2005) separate '*designed-in*' (planned) *scaffolding* from *interactional scaffolding*, which correlates to learning situations that occur spontaneously in interaction. This includes linking students' prior knowledge and goals, recasting and appropriating students' contributions to a more suitable discourse and using questions to promote dialogue (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005). The interactional level is analysed in the empirical study below, as we track feedback sequences in two assignments and analyse the professional knowledge (including language), approach and gaze that materialises as acquirable vocational skills for the individual students.

#### 4. PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Overall, individualisation is a field comprising few studies and few evaluations of actual practices. To the best of our knowledge, individualisation has not been studied in terms of feed-

back. L2 acquisition, however, is a wide field of investigation; below, we only refer to studies concerning language learning relating to a future profession.

#### 4.1 SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION FOR THE DEMANDS OF WORKING LIFE

The political ambition for a rapid integration into working life has increased the focus on learning a professional language. In the Swedish discourse on migration and language acquisition, it sometimes appears as if different professions have their specific language set, often expressed in vocabularies, and that it would be sufficient to acquire this language set in order to achieve rapid professional integration. According to research, however, it is the less frequent everyday words or the more abstract academic words that create difficulties for L2 learners (Lindberg, 2007). A limited vocabulary associated with a certain profession is not enough to develop a functional, communicative language in a workplace setting.

Researchers are concerned that rapid integration into working life may entail limited language learning at the expense of an elaborated communicative language ability (Lindberg & Sandwall, 2012). Several studies have shown that the combination of language training and internship does not always work as intended (Suni 2017) due to a lack of resonance between language instruction and the workplace, and lack of interaction opportunities at work (Sandwall, 2013). However, there are exceptions, as McLaughlin (2020), for example, demonstrates that informal and flexible language acquisition may take place at work, and in a study from Swedish healthcare, Tykesson et.al.

(2019) demonstrate practices of language scaffolding between colleagues speaking Swedish as a first and second language, respectively. Still, it is generally uncommon for adults to provide linguistic feedback to each other outside the educational context, and if provided at all, it tends to be embedded rather than explicit (Lightbown & Spada, 2013, p.39; Lyster & Mori 2006).

#### 4.2 INDIVIDUALISATION AND FEEDBACK IN LANGUAGE LEARNING CONTEXTS

Few studies have been conducted on individualisation. A survey carried out by the Swedish Schools Inspectorate (2018) shows that sfi courses often fail to adapt the instruction to the needs of the individual students. Instead, students are given the same materials, tasks and activities, regardless of their background or goals. One identified reason is a lack of time and resources, another is a lack of competence and training among teachers, who often claim that they do not know how to implement the objectives of individualisation in their instruction. This lack of individualisation is a recurring theme in criticism of sfi, although without defining the concept or analysing the practicability of instruction (Lindberg & Sandwall, 2012).

Feedback, in turn, has been widely studied in L2 classroom interactions, not least in initiation-response-feedback (IRF) sequences (e.g. van Lier 2001; Hammond & Gibbons, 2005). Researchers conducting conversation analysis have examined how these feedback turns are constructed and potentially influence learning opportunities. For example, in a study of L2 classroom interaction, Waring (2008) demonstrates that explicit positive assessment in the third feedback turn in an IRF struc-

ture often implies that both teacher and learners regard such an assessment as a closing of the sequence. Nassaji (2010), in turn, analyses how the effectiveness of feedback differs depending on the learner's level of acquisition and demonstrates that in the right situation, feedback focusing on form (*FonF*) can be highly effective. Another important issue regarding interactional feedback is the relationship between teacher and student that needs to be based on mutual trust (Lee & Schallert, 2008).

Feedback in vocational courses has been less studied, although Öhman's (2018) previously mentioned study of feedback trajectories is a recent example. Also, Lindwall and Ekström's (2012) study of instruction and correction in the context of manual skills is particularly interesting in relation to individualisation. The study demonstrates how efforts and errors by the instructed party provide the basis for further instruction from the teacher, and how instruction in the form of correction is based on the instructor's continuous assessment of the actions instructed. As also demonstrated by Öhman (2018), there are multiple and often tacit solutions to the task of vocational training, and demonstration and imitation are of particular importance.

## **5. EMPIRICAL STUDY: FEEDBACK AS INDIVIDUALISED SCAFFOLDING**

We will now turn to the empirical study. In this section (5) we present our method of analysis and the empirical data. In section 6, we analyse the feedback sequences that emerge in the two assignments in the studied vocational courses for immigrants and investigate how individualisation in terms of feedback is performed in interaction between the teacher and one or more

students. We particularly look at the vocational and linguistic skills that materialise as being important for the individual student's professional development.

## 5.1 ANALYSING FEEDBACK SEQUENCES IN INTERACTION

In order to document how feedback as individualisation develops in interaction, we use the linguistic method of interaction analysis, summarised in Broth & Keevallik (2020), for example, and based on ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967). Interaction analysis aims to understand human action and how participants in social contexts understand each other. Given its anchoring in actual interaction, it can be deployed for documenting how feedback emerges and is acted upon by the participants. For example, professional and institutional roles such as medical doctor or teacher can be observed in individual examples, based on how the participants act and respond to each other.

In the first step of analysis, recordings of the assignments from the two vocational courses were searched in order to identify sequences involving teacher feedback, understood as the teacher's response to the student's display of knowledge (Hattie & Timperly, 2007; Waring, 2008). The sequences were transcribed in detail according to Broth & Keevallik (2020, see appendix), capturing whatever resources the participants used for meaning-making. All names have been replaced by pseudonyms and the participants have given their informed consent to participate in the study.

After transcribing the recordings, the sequences were categorised according to the type of feedback: corrective or affirmative. We also noted the topic of the feedback and the different

categories that emerged: feedback as scaffolding for the individual student's professional knowledge, professional gaze (in outdoor maintenance) and professionalism concerning approach (in doctor-patient role play). Eight sequences from the categories were then chosen for detailed analyses with regard to how the feedback manifested in interaction, and how it could function as scaffolding for the individual student's continued learning. We particularly studied how feedback is performed and embedded in interaction, through different forms of scaffolding strategies from the teacher in particular, i.e. interactional scaffolding (Hammonds & Gibbons, 2005). Attention is also given to corrections of vocabulary, or ways of describing professional knowledge in Swedish. In the case of outdoor maintenance, the studied sequences were intermingled in-between the instruction, discussions and practical work. In the role plays, however, feedback was given directly afterwards, as a planned part of the assignment, announced in advance, in order to concentrate on both medical and communicative-linguistic aspects.

## 5.2 OUTDOOR MAINTENANCE: MAKING A FLOWER BED

The first vocational assignment was derived from a course in gardening and outdoor maintenance, spanning over nine months.<sup>10</sup> The course is a collaboration between the Swedish public employment service and a private company in the sector of maintenance service of public areas. The goal of the course

10 The group comprises five persons: three immigrants, one person born in Sweden with immigrant parents and one person with Swedish parents and Swedish as his first language. The video recordings include all five participants and one teacher. All participants have been anonymised.



is to educate unemployed individuals in a profession that has a shortage of skilled labour. Three out of five participants are immigrants. They learn, for example, safety procedures for different types of gardening equipment, procedures and how to plant and take care of flowers. There are no formal language classes, but the professional vocabulary for tools and plants is presented in relation to different assignments and the teacher explains common phrases and words in Swedish on an ongoing basis when the students indicate that they do not understand.

The assignment of designing and planting a flower bed is a recurring task in the sector and the results last for a long time, making the area a more attractive place for people living in the neighbourhood. Thus, it is an example of an authentic assignment that aims to bridge the gap between education and profession. The assignment is based on the pedagogy of learning by doing and it is designed in such a way that the students must collaborate. Collaboration of this kind is not typical for maintenance work: rather, studies of cleaning and maintenance work have demonstrated that future work will involve few tasks that demand interaction (Strömmer, 2016), i.e. they are “language marginal” (McAll, 2003 in Gonçalves & Kelly-Holmes, 2020). Yet, in an educational context, collaboration is a way to practice a language.

The students are first instructed on how to make a flower bed, then they plan the design of the bed together. They finally go outside and position the flowers in the prepared bed before planting them in the soil. Two tools are introduced: first, paper and pencil for making a sketch and second, a booklet with information about the available perennials and their flowering season, height and recommended distance between plants. The booklet has been made by the teacher for this very assignment. The teacher is present during the whole assignment and gives

plenty of feedback to the students during the assignment, both encouraging and correcting them. The video recordings include 20 feedback sequences and we have selected four of them for closer analysis, representing different types of feedback.

### 5.3 MEDICAL DOCTORS: DOCTOR-PATIENT ROLE PLAYS

The second assignment is derived from a customised course for medical doctors with a degree from outside the EU/EEA, aimed at preparing them for a “proficiency test”, given by the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare and necessary for obtaining a Swedish license.<sup>11</sup> The one-year course combines Swedish and Medicine. The language part includes basic Swedish but also vocational training in doctor-patient conversations, vocabulary and pronunciation. The medical modules include, for example, internal medicine, psychiatry and cell biology, taught by professional Swedish doctors. Parallel with the medical modules, “language support” is offered focusing on interaction, pronunciation and writing.

The communication skills of a medical doctor are more complex than for an outdoor maintenance worker (Karlsson & Nikolaidou, 2016) and the requirements are high for foreign professionals applying for a Swedish license to practice medicine (Hållsten, 2020). Medical doctors are considered to be global professionals with respect to the core content of the profession, but also regarding their communication skills (Berbyuk Lindström, 2008). As reported by Tykesson et al. (2017), many immi-

11 The course group comprises 17 persons, all immigrants. The video recorded role plays include three students, two Swedish doctors and one language teacher. All participants have been anonymised.

grant doctors have no difficulty discussing small talk during, for example, coffee breaks, is considered challenging.

Doctor-patient conversations with the aim to take anamnesis a significant of professional practice (Tykesson et. al., 2019) and the aim of the role play assignment is to prepare the student for the practical part of the proficiency test. One student acts as a doctor and the language teacher acts as a patient. As co-listeners, an experienced Swedish medical doctor sits in and gives feedback, together with the language teacher. Another student participates in learning. Each role play lasts for approximately 35 minutes, including the feedback session. Four of the feedback sequences from three of the role plays have been selected below for closer analysis. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the role plays took place on a digital platform. In the analysis, limits in how to use body language, facial expressions and eye contact have been taken into account. However, this kind of digital doctor-patient interaction must be seen as an expected form of communication in the profession.

## **6. RESULTS**

Below, we first analyse individualised feedback in the outdoor maintenance assignment, followed by the doctor-patient role plays.

### **6.1 INDIVIDUALISED FEEDBACK IN THE OUTDOOR MAINTENANCE COURSE**

During the assignment the teacher gives both encouraging and corrective feedback. Positive feedback is delivered in relation to completed steps of the activity (e.g. the planting), or in rela-

tion to suggestions from students in the group. Corrective feedback is also delivered after the students have completed a step, or when they make suggestions in which they demonstrate a lack of professional skills. The teacher does not attempt to correct language skills, but the students themselves, for example, occasionally ask for scaffolding concerning the names of plants in Swedish. During the assignment, the teacher encourages them in relation to their performance as students, but most often in relation to their performance as future professionals. There is a friendly atmosphere in our recordings, and the teacher seems to have developed an unusually close relationship with the students, as both a mentor and a friend.

#### **Positive feedback as scaffolding of professional knowledge and gaze**

The first example concerns positive feedback from the teacher to a student's suggestion about how to design the flower bed. The group is standing in front of a cleared flower bed and the teacher asks them about their design plans. The example demonstrates how the teacher ("Therese") supports a suggestion from one of the students ("Simon") about using sage in the flower bed, under the existing rose. The other three students are also present, although only "Sabir" speaks.

**Example 1. What about sage?** TH: Teacher Therese, SI: Student Simon, SA: Student Sabir.

1. TH: men vad sa du Simon (.) du tycker salvia?  
but what did you say Simon, do you think sage?
2. TH: ska vi ta in salvia?  
shall we include sage?
3. SI: ja asså tycker ni ska man lägga saliva här eller?  
well, yes, do you think should we put sage here?
4. SA: sölvia  
sage
5. TH: det blir jättesnyggt runt omkring skulle jag säga (.)  
I reckon it would look really nice around the place
6. för den här rosen blommor ju det  
because this rose flowers,
7. vet vi ju inte riktigt nu men säkert juni juli  
we don't know when but probably in June or July,
8. inte tidigare (.) och inte senare va och det är ju  
not earlier and not later to be sure and that's
9. samtidigt som salvian blommor  
the same time as the sage flowers
10. SI: ja  
yes
11. SA: och e sen vi ska ta den här höst- vad heter den  
and then we take this autumn - what's it called
12. TH: höstanemon  
autumn anemone
13. SA: höstanemon ((points to the back of the bed)) eller  
autumn anemone | or
14. SA: vad tycker du Sune  
what do you say, Sune?  
[...]

The teacher encourages Simon to repeat his earlier suggestion to plant sage around the rose by turning directly to him using his name, asking what he said, and whether he thinks sage would be a suitable choice for the flower bed (line 1). Simon repeats his suggestion to plant sage, now facing the group of students (line 3), and the teacher gives a positive evaluation (*it would look really nice*). She justifies her answer by framing the suggestion with additional professional knowledge on when the rose is expected to flower and the flowering period of the sage. Simon replies *yes* and Sabir takes a turn in suggesting that the taller plant called *Japanese anemone* (translated as *autumn anemone* in the tran-

script, which is a direct translation from Swedish) should be added at the back of the flower bed. This demonstrates how feedback from the teacher encourages the students to offer further suggestions and continue planning the bed. Sabir (who emigrated to Sweden around five years ago) initiates a word search, a language-related episode (Swain & Lapkin, 1998), by pronouncing the first part of the name of the flower *höst* (autumn) and thereafter asking *what is it called?* The teacher gives the full name of the flower and Sabir repeats it before continuing by pointing to the back of the flower bed, asking the student Sune for his opinion. The language-related episode functions as interactional scaffolding in the context of the assignment. Thus, the authentic situation is an opportunity for the student to practice Swedish and the words needed in the future profession.

During the assignment the teacher also gives positive feedback on the parts of the task that are already completed. Like example 1, the teacher's positive feedback is related to professional knowledge such as flowering, colours and height. Example 2 demonstrates how this is done in interaction, and how it encourages the students to continue the task.



Sabir for having a good sense for gardening when he suggests that they should make the flower bed smaller as it would look more attractive in relation to the adjoining stairs. The students appear to be happy after receiving the positive feedback demonstrated in example 2 as they smile and joke about the splitting of plants. Simon even applauds the group by clapping.

### **Correcting and adjusting as scaffolding of vocational knowledge and gaze**

During the assignment the teacher also adjusts the students' design in relation to both theory and practice. Corrections are actually the most common type of feedback during the day, with six instances of feedback on the students' ideas about design or how to make the flower bed, and eight more instances of feedback on the students' practice and placing of plants. The first type of feedback is demonstrated in example 3 below, in which the student Sune (a native Swedish speaker with a great interest in gardening) corrects Simon when he talks about the distance between the flowers and uses professional terminology when describing plant distance in terms of centre-to-centre distance. It demonstrates that authentic assignments involving collaboration between participants can also leave room for the interactional scaffolding of professional knowledge between students.



1. SI:    asså jag tänker ((points with spade)) här  
         well, I think                                         here

2.        ((points with spade)) här ((points with spade)) här  
   here                                         here

3. SI:    eh vänta vad var distansen?(.) hur långt  
         err, wait, what was the distance? (.) how far

4.        [skulle det va ifrån  
             should it be from

5. SU:    [cc ((turns to TH))  
             cc

6. TH:    cc på den  
             cc for that?

7. SI:    ja cc menar jag  
             yeah, I mean cc

8. SI:    är det ganska viktigt  
             is that quite important?

9. SA:    mh

10.TH:    ((walks to get the booklet))

11.SI:    annars det kommer inte växa bra  
             otherwise it won't grow properly

12.TH:    förti på den å ungefär tretti på stäppsallvian  
             forty for that and around thirty for the woodland sage

The students are encouraged to place the plants in the flower bed before bedding them down. This gives the teacher a chance to study the arrangement and give feedback on the design. Feedback of this kind is very hands on, as the teacher is kneeling in the flower bed, moving around the plants and sharing professional knowledge about, for example, the recommended dis-

tance between the plants. In example 4, the teacher gives feedback on the height of the mature bed so that the taller plants are placed at the back while the shorter plants are placed closer to the front. Selim and Sabir have placed the plants and are receiving corrective feedback. Selim is standing at a distance and Therese asks him to move closer (line 1, *did you also see this Selim here?*).

**Example 4. Rearranging the flowerbed.** TH: Teacher Therese, SE: Student Selim, SA: Student Sabir.

1. TH: såg du det också Selim här (.)  
did you also see this Selim here?
2. TH: här har vi den ((points at paper)) här är liten flocknäva  
here it is it's a tiny geranium
3. TH: ser du det är den och den blir 15 centimeter hög  
you see, it's this one and it will grow up to 15 centimetres
4. SE: hmm!
5. TH: [och daggkåpan blir 60 ser du så den blir  
and this dew cup will grow to 60 you see so it will be
6. SA: [och daggkåpa  
and the dew cup
7. TH: så pass mycket högre  
this much taller
8. SA: det blir [bra då kan den  
that'll be good, then it can
9. TH: [m
10. SA: komma tillbaka ((lifts hand and moves towards body))  
come back
11. TH: man kan också sätta i grupper  
you could also put them in groups

The feedback centres on the different plants (*dew cup* and *geranium*), which are named and described according to their height. The teacher reads the height out loud from the booklet (*this dew cup will grow to 60 you see*) and concludes that the dew cup is *so much taller*. By saying *you see* (line 3) and *did you see* (line 1), the teacher asks for Selim's attention, addressing him by name. Sabir demonstrates that he understands that they need to change the design by saying that *then it could come back* (line 8-10) and illus-

trates the move by lifting his hand in front of him and moving it towards his body. The feedback is based on visual impression and professional knowledge on the height of fully grown plants. The relevant vocational linguistic knowledge in the example are the names of plants, and how to define and talk about height.

### **Summary of individualised feedback on the outdoor maintenance course**

The analysed examples from the flower bed assignment demonstrate how the teacher delivers individual feedback to the students, encouraging them to continue learning the profession of outdoor maintenance and gardening. The assignment is authentic and points at the future profession. It demands collaboration between the students and encourages them to talk and practice the language of the profession, particularly words for plants and terminology that describes professional practices. The ongoing interaction leaves room for interactional scaffolding from the teacher, as well as from other students, as demonstrated in examples 1 and 3. When giving feedback, the teacher expresses her professional experience from the field, including an acquired professional gaze. The feedback is individually adapted to the students and their needs, previous professional knowledge and language skills.

## **6.2 INDIVIDUALISED FEEDBACK ON THE COURSE FOR MEDICAL DOCTORS**

Below, we analyse sequences involving feedback from two senior medical doctors (MDs; in each role play, one MD sits in) or the language teacher (T) delivered to the students in the feed-

back session after the role plays. Like above, we particularly look at teacher feedback including the scaffolding of professional knowledge and/or scaffolding of the students' continuous acquiring of Swedish, including corrective feedback.

#### POSITIVE FEEDBACK AS THE SCAFFOLDING OF PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND PROFESSIONAL APPROACH

In the first feedback sequence from the doctor-patient role plays (example 5), the MD summarises his impression and compares the student's performance with an earlier role play, saying *this time* and *as we said previously*. He indicates a positive development, although with a rather brusque evaluation: the presentation was *okay* (line 6). Yet, the MD actively addresses the student, and the example demonstrates how a student is individually evaluated in relation to previous feedback and performance (see also Öhman, 2018). There are other examples in which the student takes a professional position by discussing diagnosis and treatment instead of responding to her own performance. However, in example 5, S<sub>3</sub> responds to the feedback from the position of a student by nodding and smiling.

**Example 5. A good presence and presentation.** S3: Student, acts as doctor, T: Teacher, acts as patient, MD: Swedish medical doctor, OS: Other Student, sits in and listens.

1. MD:    men igen tycker jag att du hade en bra presentation en bra  
          but again, I think you gave a great presentation, a good
2.        sorts förmedlande av omtanke en bra kontakt med patienten  
          way of conveying concern, positive contact with the patient
3.        [på ett bra sätt  
          in a good way
4. T:     [m: m:
5. OS:    [nods
6. MD:    och presentationen var okej den här gången med hälsning och  
          and the presentation was okay this time with greetings and
7.        en introduktion jag tycker som vi sa tidigare  
          an introduction I think, as we said earlier
8. T:     m: m:
9. S3:    ((nods and smiles))

The feedback includes evaluations concerning the professional role, a demonstration of concern (line 2), and how to establish contact with the patient. In line 6-7, the MD refers to the kind of professional knowledge that is needed in a doctor-patient conversation: the doctor must introduce himself. This focus on how to address a patient can be seen as something typical for a Swedish context in which representatives of society are obliged to engage with the public in a cordial and accommodating manner.

### Correcting and adjusting as scaffolding of professional knowledge and professional approach

In example 6, the MD focuses on the term *gall bladder* and then on the student's specific situation. The feedback concerns correcting the misuse of terminology, framed by the MD, proposing a contextual explanation for the misuse.



*try to avoid it*, line 13), and again uses the English instead of the Swedish term followed by a second repair from both the teacher and the MD (lines 15, 16). The student acknowledges this by repeating the Swedish term (line 17). The example demonstrates that professionalism through establishing confidence is valued as important, related here to using the correct Swedish word. Through the feedback given, the MD positions herself as both an experienced professional and as a teacher.

Further, example 7 is another example of feedback on the use of medical versus everyday vocabulary. The MD comments on this in relation to the professional practice of taking anamnesis. Simultaneously, the MD wants S2 to look into the described symptoms more thoroughly.

**Example 7. The patient does not know the word.** S2: Student, acts as doctor, T: Teacher, acts as patient, MD: Swedish medical doctor, OS: Other Student, sits in and listens.

1. MD: om det var trigeminusneuralgi vilket är den svenska  
if it was trigeminal neuralgia, which is the Swedish
2. termen och du använder liksom det engelska uttrycket som  
term and you sort of use an English term instead that the
3. patienten inte känner till (.) istället måste du använda  
patient doesn't know you have to use
4. det svenska uttrycket nervskada  
the Swedish terms nerve damage
5. [eller nervbekymmer som man har  
or nerve concerns that are available
6. S2: [((nods, smiles, taking notes))
7. MD: kanske kunde du penetrera den här smärtan lite mer  
perhaps you could penetrate this pain a bit more,
8. hur den var distribuerad och så vidare och sen det vi hörde  
how it was distributed and so on and then what we heard
9. om ett ljud jag menar du kunde försöka ta reda på mer om  
about a sound I mean there you could try to find out more about
10. vad det är  
what it is
11. S2: ((nods and smiles))

The MD starts by detecting the problem concerning vocabulary, by correcting and instructing the student in how to balance between medical terms (*trigeminal neuralgia*) and every-

day terms (*nerve damage* or *nerve concerns*), from the perspective of what a patient understands (lines 1-4). The MD demonstrates a professional position, taking into account S2's lack of experience from what a Swedish patient might understand. Through the rather strong expression *you must*, the correcting part of the feedback becomes prominent, and the transcription demonstrates what Hattie & Timperley (2007) call *corrective feedback* followed by instruction. The student takes notes (line 6), thereby positioning himself as a student receiving feedback rather than a future colleague. The MD moves on and focuses on the professional activity of anamnesis-taking conversation as such, saying that he needs to find out more about a certain sound that the patient described (starting at line 7). Here, the feedback concerns the correction of professional knowledge (of the practice of taking anamnesis, the core aim of the conversation), but also professional vocabulary, indicating that *sounds* must be looked into in more depth.

### Correction and adjusting as scaffolding of professional knowledge

In example 8, the language teacher T (acting as a patient) refers to a role play in which she had described symptoms related to tongue cancer, and S3 suggested taking a tissue sample, although in a manner that T considers to be characteristic of a doctor-patient conversation (*remove a piece of meat from the tongue*). In the feedback session, T addresses S3 (line 1) when asking about for another way of saying this in Swedish, but the MD takes the turn and gives the correct Swedish term (line 4).



**Example 8. What's it called in Swedish?** S3: Student, acts as doctor, T: Teacher, acts as patient, MD: Swedish medical doctor, OS: Other Student, sits in and listens.

1. T: vad heter det på svenska (.) patienten frågade om du var  
what is it called in Swedish? the patient asked if you were
2. på väg att ta bort kött från tungan  
about to remove a piece of meat from their tongue
3. vad säger man på svenska ((laughs))  
what would you say in Swedish?
4. MD: (du) tar ett vävnadsprov  
you take a tissue sample
5. S3: v-ä-v-n-a-d-s-p-r-o-v ok s-p-r-o-v ((writes, spells out loud))  
t-i-s-s-u-e s-a-m-p-l-e ok s-a-m-p-l-e

The feedback from the MD is indirect as it is T's question that identifies the need for correction. T positions herself as a patient who demands professional knowledge (*how do you say ...*) and the MD acts as both a professional doctor and a teacher, instructing S3 on professional vocabulary in Swedish. Both the MD's feedback and S3's response are so-called FonF (*Focus on Form*, Nassaji, 2010): Teacher T asks calls for a particular Swedish term, the MD gives a correct answer and S3 repeats it, spells it out loud and writes it down (line 5). The feedback is individualised through the student's need to develop a professional vocabulary, focusing on their future professional role.

### Summary of the doctor-patient role plays

In the recorded role plays, the most frequent type of feedback is correction or adjustment of professional knowledge and practice. The feedback from the two MDs places the students close to the professional role, although the feedback is delivered in an educational setting, and both MDs act as teachers of the profession. In the examples, the educational context is present in the students' ways of responding: taking notes and spelling terms out loud. One of the MDs in particular shows specific knowl-

edge of the immigrating students' situation in Sweden, in the way he delivers feedback. This concerns both language and professional expectations on how to practice medicine in Sweden, for example, what to focus on while taking anamnesis and how to interact with a patient.

## **7. CONCLUDING DISCUSSION**

This chapter has addressed individualisation as a pedagogical practice in the context of vocational adjusted language courses for adult immigrants in Sweden. As demonstrated, individualisation is a buzzword in the context of adult language courses, but the lack of a consistent definition and the lack of research on how it could be applied calls for empirical studies on individualisation as a pedagogical practice. We have focused on oral feedback as we argue that individually adapted feedback could be considered a tool (out of several potential tools) for “doing” individualisation in a pedagogical practice as it involves a teacher’s response to learners’ displays of knowledge (Hattie & Timperly, 2007; Waring, 2008). Our view on feedback as a form of individual scaffolding resembles to the sociocultural concept of ZDP (Vygotsky, 1978). However, while previous research does not offer a consistent definition of ZDP, our interactional approach demonstrates, in a narrow sense, how feedback performed in interaction can be regarded as individualised scaffolding.

In the empirical study of two vocational assignments, the results demonstrate that the feedback sequences provide the individual students with learning opportunities concerning professional knowledge (including language), professional gaze (on

the outdoor maintenance course) and a professional treatment or approach (in the doctor-patient role plays). The analyses show that most feedback sequences in the data involve corrective feedback, and the authentic assignments appear to provide opportunities for the participants to discuss both language-related issues (mostly professional terminology, but also interaction-related issues in the doctor-patient role plays), and task-relevant professional knowledge adapted to a future working life in Sweden. The teachers actively address the individual students, referring to their individual circumstances, previous performances and knowledge, as well as previous situations in the courses, thereby providing opportunities for the students to develop their skills. Their future professional role is also prominent.

In line with previous research (Sandwall 2013; Suni 2017), the data indicate that language training during internship or practice in an education does not just “happen” spontaneously. Through the results we argue that the educational setting and the two authentic assignments offer significant scope for individualised feedback, which provides individual learning opportunities relevant to future professional participation: in the role plays in scheduled feedback sessions in which the teacher and an MD discuss their performance; in the outdoor maintenance activity through feedback intertwined in the professional activity of planning and planting a flower bed. As Ivanić (2009) emphasises, the combination of theoretical and practical training is important for second language learning, not least for adult learners. Through feedback, the participants are given opportunities to practice the new language for professional purposes, using scaffolding from experienced professionals. The presence of an active, engaged and observant teacher is proba-

bly crucial for this feedback to happen, as research in the field of second language acquisition demonstrates that corrective feedback is unusual in informal settings between adults, due to its face threatening nature (Lightbown & Spada, 2013, p. 39; Lyster & Mori, 2006). In other words, without the formal setting of a vocational course, it is unlikely that the studied corrective feedback on the learners' display of knowledge would have happened, considering the results from studies on language learning during an internship or practice (Sandwall, 2013). The educational setting is probably particularly important for the students of outdoor maintenance, considering the language marginal nature of the future profession, with few opportunities to practice the language when working and even fewer opportunities to receive corrective feedback from peers. Indeed, developing a completely new professional language in parallel with a basic communicative language ability is challenging, as the learner has no other previous work experiences in the field, and therefore no specific first language discourse on which to lean. Thus, support and feedback from a teacher can be regarded as crucial.

We further consider the authentic context of the two vocational assignments as particularly valuable for the type of feedback provided. According to Gee (2015), literacy acquisition must take place within a context in which the discourse in question is being used. The studied assignments are authentic, with the intention of practising core professional activities with high communication demands. As demonstrated, feedback concerns the assignments at hand, providing detailed professional knowledge and the professional skills relevant to solving them, such as gaze and how to approach a patient in a Swedish national context. Indeed, the feedback provided appears to link

the professional context to the educational context, establishing a resonance between linguistic practices in education on the one hand, and in a professional context on the other, as İvaniç (2009) emphasizes as being important for L2 acquisition for professional purposes. In the analysis, however, “authentic” is understood not just in relation to the activity, but also in relation to the teachers’ experience of the professional field. The two teachers address the students individually, as adult professionals or would-be professionals, and situate their feedback in a professional context. In this sense, the authentic context can mean not just the opportunity to practice an authentic assignment, but also to receive individually adapted feedback from experienced professionals.

Our analysis has pedagogical implications: Firstly, we consider authentic assignments to be of particular importance, not only because of their value for language learning as highlighted by Gee (2015), but also interactionally, as they appear to create opportunities for more developed dialogues in which the students can adjust their performance along with the process. It is also beneficial to design the assignment in such a way that individual feedback is made possible via, for example, planned sequences or by approaching the students with formative feedback during a workday. Not least, the continuous delivery of feedback that we observed in the outdoor maintenance context is interesting, as it seems to help the participants avoid the IRF structure, in which the third evaluating turn tends to close the sequence (Waring, 2008) instead of paving the way for further discussions. Secondly, we consider professional experienced teachers to be particularly important, as an experienced professional can give feedback from a professional perspective, con-

cerning both language use and specific skills such as professional gaze or approach. As demonstrated in the case of the medical doctors, the combination of a language teacher and an experienced professional is also fruitful, as the language teacher can detect linguistic difficulties, while the professional MD can provide an answer.

In sum, the study has demonstrated that feedback can be used as a functional educational tool for “doing” individualisation in practice, providing learning opportunities concerning the acquisition of language and context-specific professional knowledge. However, more studies are needed concerning, for example, how the participants respond to individualised feedback, and the data suggest that a longitudinal study of a group of students would be valuable for investigating the impact of individually adjusted feedback over time. Individualisation as a pedagogical practice must also be studied from multiple perspectives, not just feedback, in order to understand and evaluate its educational value for vocational adjusted language courses.

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## APPENDIX: TRANSCRIPT NOTATION

- [ Simultaneous utterances and/or overlaps
- ( ) Indicates that the transcriber is in doubt about what is being said
- (.) Pauses of less than (0.2) seconds
- (1.0) Measured pause in seconds
- ? Question intonation
- : Indicate(s) that the sound followed by a colon(s) is prolonged or extended
- (( )) embodied action or contextual information
- Good Produced with emphasis

# **All teachers are language teachers – A Norwegian Study on How Teachers in Vocational Education and Training Programs Experience and Reflect on Complementary Literacy Practices and Didactic Strategies in Multicultural Classrooms**

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**Abstract:** Infusing literacy skills instruction into the vocational curriculum, has become a responsibility of all vocational teachers regardless of the subject they teach. There is, however,

an absence of research on how teachers can gain the necessary expertise and guide their multilingual students when encountering complex vocational texts. This case study involves nine teachers in Norwegian Vocational Education and Training (VET) who have participated in dialogue seminars. Drawing on data from interviews, the researchers investigated how the organized seminars had shaped teachers' didactic literacy strategies as a complement to their technical subject teaching. We found that prolonged seminars guided teachers to take up a more complex understanding of textual levels and linguistic categories. Based on functional linguistics and second language acquisition theory, the findings highlight implications for prospective vocational teachers' awareness of students' literacy challenges and teachers' need for literacy competencies in order to make students competent to fulfil education and successfully attend labor market.

**Keywords:** didactic literacy strategy, vocational teachers, multilingual classrooms, complementary literacy pedagogy

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This study is based on a two-year long research project (2019-2021) investigating didactic literacy strategies for vocational teachers at two Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs, Restaurant and Food Processing (RFP) and Healthcare (HC). The teachers in this study work with multilingual groups of students; students with Norwegian as a first or a second language. According to the teachers, the students' reading and writing skills are at a critical level, and they have for a long

time experienced that literacy competence has been an obstacle to the students' learning outcomes.

The purpose of the study was to make vocational teachers more aware of students' challenges in reading and writing vocational texts in order to be able to guide and further develop students' literacy competencies. In the Norwegian context, the term literacy is used and understood as "a skill that enables an individual to interpret and use a number of semiotic resources to recreate and produce texts so that he or she would be able to exist and function in a complex society" (Skjelbred & Veum, 2013, p. 19). For our purposes, literacy is seen as a unitary process with two complementary aspects, reading and writing, given a content adapted to vocational education and training, related to learning subjects and preparation for a working life. When vocational teachers, without formal literacy education, are to guide their students on their language challenges, it presupposes competence within different linguistic categories and textual levels. The linguistic categories were gathered within three text levels: micro, mezzo, and macro level. These formed the basis for raising vocational teachers' awareness of students' literacy challenges. During the dialogue seminars, these text levels were transformed into didactic literacy strategies and we sought further knowledge of how these were suitable for vocational teachers' work with literacy integrated in VET. This led us to the following research idea:

How to develop vocational teachers' didactic literacy strategies for guiding multilingual students in multicultural classrooms?

It was reframed into the following research questions:

1. How do vocational teachers experience students' literacy competence?
2. What are the vocational teachers' experiences with using didactic literacy strategies as complementary practice based on their own literacy competence?

## 1.1 LITERACY IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN NORWAY

Educational authorities in Norway are strongly inspired by international research reports on future competence needs. With the OECD's Definition and Selection of Key Competencies (DeSeCo, 2005) and the follow-up project Education 2030 (OECD, 2018), special emphasis is placed on interdisciplinary competencies, referred to as "The Transformative Competencies" – transferable to new contexts, such as skills in reading, writing, oral communication and multicultural understanding.

Literacy is considered to be increasingly important for learning, and for completing the vocational training which faces challenges with high drop-out rates at the same time as society's need for skilled workers increases (NOU, 2018, 2019, 2020). Working life and society in general are characterized as text based (Karlsson, 2006). However, working life requires a literacy competence that differs significantly from the educational context, for example, ability to communicate with a wide range of target groups, relate to different texts to solve work tasks and be able to learn about new contents (Karlsson, 2006). This requires transferable literacy skills.

The basis for this literacy competence is laid in the school context, and mainly rested on the Norwegian language teacher,

despite the fact that this is the responsibility of all teachers (Dys-the et al., 2017; Hellne-Halvorsen, 2014). Norwegian VET is a dual system, combining school-based and workplace-based training for both “hard skills” and “soft skills” (Ortoleva & Betrancourt, 2015). In the school-based part of two years, students learn both vocation-specific subjects and general subjects such as Norwegian language. Since the latest reform (Udir, 2019), Norwegian subject has been taught only in the last year of the school-based part which reduces opportunities for cooperation between VET-teachers and language teachers.

Half of approximately 250 000 upper secondary school students choose VET, and 20% of these are either immigrants or Norwegian-born with an immigrant background. This indicates two factors: a) multicultural student groups are more a rule than an exception b) immigrants with assumed greater language challenges make up a significant proportion of the student group in VET.

In basic education, literacy competence was strengthened with the introduction of five basic skills (reading, writing, arithmetic, oral skills and digital skills) in all subjects with the Knowledge Promotion Reform in 2006 and further strengthened with the Subject Renewal Reform 2020. These basic skills are specified in different subject curricula as an ability to acquire new knowledge and insights, express oneself comprehensibly and precisely about program related topics and adapt texts to different purposes, recipients and medium.

## 2. THEORY AND METHODS

### 2.1. LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, various studies have documented that vocational teachers are required to maintain and update their teaching skills through continuous professional development (Ministry of Education, 2015). In regard to continuous professional development in second language pedagogy, under the auspices of the Norwegian Directorate of Education (2019), evaluations of the project “Competence for Diversity” showed that the arranged programs for in-service teachers had not responded well to their competence needs. The conclusion was that even though the teachers’ awareness had been raised, the project had to a lesser extent strengthened their professional beliefs or led to a change in using concrete teaching strategies (Lødding, Rønsen, & Wollscheid, 2018).

In a broader Scandinavian and international context, emphasis has been placed on an increasing need for simultaneous second language and subject knowledge learning in VET (Loeb et al, 2018; Platt, 1996; Schneider & Foot, 2012). However, research on this dual learning process has been much more widespread in more academically oriented topics, both in Norway and internationally (Blikstad-Balas, 2016; Cummins, 2017; Gibbons, 2006). The complexity of learning a second language and vocational subject has nevertheless been investigated and described by several researchers in Sweden, but with the main focus on either existing challenges for second language students and teachers (Kontio & Lundmark, 2021; Loeb, 2020; Sandwall, 2013) or didactic models that emphasize students’ learning strategies to a greater extent than the vocational teachers’ competence, skills



and input in teaching (Dahlström & Gannå, 2018). There is no research on how vocational teachers can develop their own literacy competence that would equip them to work with students' reading and writing skills in vocational education (Hellne-Halvorsen, 2014; Hellne-Halvorsen & Spetalen, 2020; Paul, 2021). This study is therefore meant as a contribution to this topic.

## 2.2 THEORY

The theoretical framework for the study is multifaceted. In part, it is rooted in socio-cultural theory of language use in specific contexts and domains, which for this study applies to the subject area RFP- and HC- programs and to students' learning. In addition, the study has a theoretical foundation in second language pedagogy and functional linguistics, which allows for an expanded understanding of text competence and emphasizes not only social and cultural competencies, but also individual and cognitive processes.

### Sociocultural literacy

The overall theoretical foundation for the study is in line with a socio-cultural understanding of literacy. This means that reading and writing are considered as social practices, where the purpose and design of the literacy play together with the social environment aligned with *New Literacy Studies* research (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Gee, 1999; Street, 2001). In our opinion, the subject- and context-specific use of literacy, as in *Writing in the Disciplines* (Bazerman et al., 2005) research, cannot be separated from the mediating function that literacy has for students' learn-

ing (Hellne-Halvorsen, 2014). Using text to learn, both in reading and writing, applies to all subjects and disciplines and in this way corresponds with the purpose of the American research tradition *Writing Across the Curriculum*. The direction places less emphasis on grammar and correct language, and more on understanding, response and discussion around texts (Bazerman et al., 2005). We will not link vocational teachers' literacy practices to one or the other of these directions. Recent research shows for instance that distinguishing between "writing to learn" and "learning to write" is not appropriate in an increasingly text-based society and working life (Hertzberg, 1986; Hertzberg & Roe, 2015; Karlsson, 2006). Research on writing in the vocational pedagogical field shows that the formal and grammatical aspects of literacy, and writing in particular, have received little attention in this field (Hellne-Halvorsen, 2014, 2019; Hellne-Halvorsen & Spetalen, 2020).

Skills in reading and writing across contexts, for different purposes and for different target groups indicate literacy skills across contexts as transferable competence, or transversal skills (Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, Castek, & Henry, 2013; Nägele & Stalder, 2017). This indicates a literacy competence that emphasizes both formal and functional aspects of language use, which this study draws attention to.

## Second language pedagogy

Creating meaning from texts with students having Norwegian as a second language, is a major challenge since second language acquisition already is a complex process that includes both spontaneous acquisition, active learning and controlled processing of

new information (Kulbrandstad, 2018). Adapting reading and writing instruction to multilingual students is consequently about knowing what kind of didactic strategies promote students' language and learning outcomes (Palm, 2008).

Today's approach to second language education in the national context has had a strong socio-cultural anchoring, where communicative competence has been central in an attempt to democratize the linguistic and cultural diversity of school classrooms (Jølbo, 2018; Selj, 2015). The more cognitivist angle towards language learning and teaching, with its focus on form and structure, has thus had a peripheral position (Alver, 2015), even though this perspective is equally important for development of transferable skills.

Multilingual students have greater metalinguistic awareness than monolinguals, and they need more focus on form in their reading and writing strategies (Ellis, 2002; Randen, & Danbolt, 2018). Reading presents their unique encounter with both the subject matter and the language system and enables the so-called pattern writing (Jølbo, 2018; Kulbrandstad, 2018). From the teacher's side, therefore, content response and meaningful interaction must be supplemented by directing the students' attention to the form and different linguistic and textual levels (Maagerø, 2005; Selj, 2015). A comprehensive British study emphasizes that teachers' systematic work at all linguistic levels simultaneously, works most effectively in writing and reading instruction (Wray, Medwell, Poulson, & Fox, 2002). Recent studies within second language acquisition have also shown that drawing learners' attention to formal linguistic properties and incorporating both explicit and implicit instruction, leads to more substantial effects than merely implicit or meaning-fo-

cused instruction (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). Students in multilingual classrooms will, thus, not receive training in functional reading and writing in vocational subjects unless the teacher works consciously with both the form and the content of the texts (Alver, 2015; Maagerø, 2005).

## 2.3 METHODS

This project was originally based on a case study in order to generate rich data on and anecdotal evidence of teachers' views and practices that could serve to suggest more focused directions of inquiry about another, additional phenomenon, that is, didactic literacy strategies (Yin, 1988). Due to the particularity as well as the complexity of a single case, we needed a laborious approach to understanding several concepts at the time:

- the didactical strategies linked to the textual levels, that were effective in other main-stream literacy subjects
- their feasibility in vocational subjects
- the teachers' enactment, adaptation and understanding of these

To address the research questions, we had an explicit case study plan prepared and intended to collect (a) texts relevant for teachers' instruction and our seminars on three textual levels, (b) observations of teachers' use of strategies in the classrooms, (c) reflective interviews with teachers after each observed lesson. However, due to the Covid 19-pandemic, we lost our unique opportunity to observe the lessons. Semi-structured individual interviews after the seminars have therefore been the only source of knowledge in our study that this article is based on.

As researchers in applied linguistics, first and second language pedagogy, we had previously developed a main structure of and a content for the seminars (Table 1). Together with the didactic literacy strategies evolved, these have constituted the essence of the case study.

Textual level:	Linguistic categories:
Micro (lexical)	<i>Word level:</i> compound nouns, derivations, collocations, metaphors, idioms, nominalizations, subject -specific words and concepts
Mezzo (syntactic)	<i>Sentence level:</i> information structure/packaging, punctuation, compound and complex sentences, subordinate clauses, paragraphs
Macro (textual and contextual)	<i>Textual and contextual level:</i> text types/genres, purpose of the text, target audience, textual structure, cohesion and coherence

Table 1: Different textual levels with clarifications

### Didactic literacy strategies

The case study was more specifically based on the development of strategies within the three textual levels. These were developed together with the teachers during the seminars as a basis for both their understanding of the students’ literacy challenges and for their testing and enactment of didactic strategies in the classrooms. It was emphasized that the strategies should have a functional use of the various text levels and that they should be relevant for both first and second language readers and writers.

Text linguistics is a field of study where texts are treated as communication systems with stretches of language beyond the single word (Askeland et al., 2003). This kind of level distinctions in our study (from lexis and syntax to texts) stems from traditional grammar but is also known as a common starting

point in various analytical frameworks used in discourse analysis (KhosraviNik, 2010) or functional linguistics (Halliday, 1973). Dividing it systematically and employing the bottom-up strategy is also in accordance with the general pedagogical principles in VET in terms of both wholeness and context and concretization of tasks that are being carried out (Sylte, 2019).

When it comes to second language pedagogy, teachers were encouraged to take a contrastive perspective for multilingual students, between their mother tongue and Norwegian, or to help them interact with fellow students with the same mother tongue in order to increase understanding. All of the strategies included the relevant focus on form – both explicit and implicit (Lightbown & Spada, 2006).

### Micro level

The first seminar dealt with words, their formation and internal structure at the micro level in texts (Golden, 2014; Kulbrands- tad, 1998; Thurmman-Moe et al., 2012), cf. Table 2:

Linguistic categories	Didactic strategies
<b>Derived words with prefixes and suffixes (affixes)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you identify any words in the text beginning or ending with particular affixes?</li> <li>• Which other words are they derived from?</li> </ul>
<b>Compound nouns:</b> single units of several words, a specific phenomenon in Scandinavian languages as multi-word expressions are not common	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does this word mean or consist of?</li> <li>• Take a look at the last word, which is the key word, and then the first word which is only a description or a specification.</li> </ul>
<b>Nominalizations:</b> a process of forming nouns from verbs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which other word do these abstract words come from?</li> </ul>
<b>Idioms, metaphors and collocations:</b> common in all languages and culturally determined	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be aware of collocations and which words belong together.</li> <li>• Try to recognize, explain and discuss them when you see them.</li> <li>• Are there any similar expressions in your mother tongue?</li> </ul>
<b>Subject-related and subject-specific words</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Underline the words you do not understand. What is the most frequent subject-specific word in the text?</li> <li>• Make a word list.</li> <li>• What is it called in your mother tongue?</li> </ul>

Table 2: Micro level

Mezzo level

The intermediate textual level dealt with phrases, sentences and paragraphs and the following didactic strategies were thus developed:

Linguistic categories	Didactic strategies
Sentence starters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Can you identify sentence starters in the text?</li><li>• Is it a word, a group of words or a whole sentence?</li><li>• Can you start a sentence in another way?</li></ul>
Subordinate clauses and their functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Which part of the sentence is the most important one? What is its theme?</li><li>• Which word(s) introduce subordinate clause(s)?</li><li>• How can you extend a sentence by explanations, clarifications, cause or consequence?</li></ul>
Paragraphs' theme and rheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is the content of the first sentence(s) in a paragraph? And what is the function of the sentence(es)?</li><li>• How many paragraphs are there in the text and why?</li><li>• Write down your own subtitles for the paragraphs.</li><li>• Can you rewrite a paragraph if you have the theme-sentence or a subtitle?</li></ul>

Table 3: Mezzo level

Macro level

Macro level was about giving students concrete frames and examples they could use in their own text production (Blikstad-Balas, 2016). We developed the following didactic strategies:

Linguistic categories	Didactic strategies
<b>Genre criteria and genre norms:</b> pattern and structure of whole texts such as logs, meeting minutes and reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be explicit when teaching genre criteria for students' own text production.</li> <li>• Which genre characteristics do you recognize in the text?</li> </ul>
<b>Coherence and cohesion in texts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the text about? (theme/coherence)</li> <li>• What does the text begin and end with?</li> <li>• Can you identify the words and expressions that act as markers to bind the texts' sentences and paragraphs together? (cohesion)</li> <li>• How do you move from one sentence or idea to another when writing your own texts?</li> <li>• Who is the author or intended reader of the text?</li> </ul>

Table 4: Macro level

We worked with these strategies deductively and each seminar focused on one text level with different didactical strategies that had evolved out of presentations and discussions on theoretical knowledge of various linguistic categories.

### Informants

All together nine teachers have participated in the study, in seminars and interviews, all female vocational subject teachers in the 30-60 age range and with a teaching experience from 2 to 30 years. The teachers represent three VET-schools, and two educational programs, on the east side of the city, the area with most immigrants in Oslo. Six of them have been working within HC and three in RFP. Four teachers have additional education, taken on a voluntary basis, in Norwegian as a second language and four are bilingual and have Norwegian as a second language and vocational teacher education from Norway. All teachers teach ordinary VET classes which consist of both students with Norwegian as a first language and Norwegian as a second language – i.e., multicultural classrooms.



## Interview

The interviews of vocational teachers were conducted digitally. They were audio-recorded and followed a semi-structured interview guide. The questions in the interview guide were strongly rooted in the case study with the three textual levels and the didactic strategies. In this sense, the interviews took the form of a professional conversation (Kvale, 2006) where we sought insight into the teachers' experiences and reflections on their benefit from the case study content.

## Ethical considerations

To achieve reliability, we collected the data and coded all adaptations of the didactic strategies and the interviews together (Robson, 2011). The interview recordings were stored on a secured digital platform and destroyed in July 2021. As our research study involved human subjects, it was registered with the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) under a registry number 827040. Throughout the research process, we tried to be aware of our role as researchers by taking an emic, or withdrawn role (Creswell, 2007), and maintaining the perspective of informants' practices, attitudes and experiences. Moreover, since we were constantly aware of the fact that the translations of interviews could have implications in terms of linguistic nuances, we attempted to preserve the authenticity of the teachers' statements as much as possible.

### **3. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

Our linguistic perspective is anchored in academic language use, also referred to as school literacy. This differs from everyday language use as the language is both context-specific, characterized by the discourse's subject-specific and subject-related concepts, at the same time as it is decontextualized and abstract, characterized by complicated grammatical structures, such as syntax and text organization (Krashen & Brown, 2007; Snow, 2010; Thurmann-Moe, Bjerkan, & Monsrud, 2012). In the analysis, we did not distinguish between teachers' experiences and reflections related to either their teaching practice in educational programs, their background or number of years as teachers. For this, we considered data material to be insufficient.

#### **STUDENTS' LITERACY SKILLS**

In the interviews, the teachers were asked how they would evaluate the students' literacy skills, for learning and for their future professional life. The understanding of literacy competence had no limitations, but included different registers and modes, i.e. oral communication, writing and reading, and various linguistic relationships related to words, sentences and textual levels.

#### **STUDENTS' GENERAL LITERACY SKILLS**

Teachers evaluated students' general literacy skills as extremely varying within a class. The general impression was that it was "below average", indicating that students had challenges with reading and writing. But one teacher emphasized that she also

had good students in the class. Nevertheless, one of the teachers claimed that no or few students had gone on to college or university.

Several teachers pointed out that writing was most challenging. One of the teachers said that many students “copy texts from textbooks and paste them into their own texts”. It was when students read aloud from textbooks that teachers could evaluate and understand students’ literacy challenges and skills: “When students read words incorrectly, it indicates that they do not understand the words and what they are reading”. Perhaps this might be an explanation for the fact that many students “do not want to read aloud in class”. Handwriting styles challenged teachers’ understanding of students’ written work: “I do not understand what they are writing, and I must ask students to reformulate – preferably orally – in order to help me understand”. The sentences were often incomprehensible and incomplete, and a teacher said that “this is the most difficult thing – the sentences often become incomplete”. The students wrote only key words without internal connection or connection between sentences and this had consequences for the students’ text writing, i.e. writing coherent text paragraphs. The academic content of student texts became incomprehensible. Hence, several teachers chose to combine the students’ written work with oral elaborations and explanations.

A common feature of the students’ literacy competence was related to word comprehension. Academic texts or textbook texts contain many words and concepts that do not belong to everyday language. Not being able to understand single words can confuse the understanding of longer paragraphs of text (Golden, 2014; Kulbrandstad, 1998, 2018). Teachers must

ensure that students both understand and can explain subject concepts and other difficult words and expressions. This is a part of the subject competence that students must acquire and apply in practical work and which teachers spend a lot of time on. “The students are not able to explain the concepts, but come up with examples instead”, said one of the teachers. Other teachers solved such challenges by writing down difficult words and subject concepts in a box with explanations and then the students were to tell and show how the concepts could be used.

The vast majority of teachers saw challenges with all three language registers: writing, reading and oral language use. A teacher at RFP program summed up the challenges as following: “Reading a food recipe and procedure, finding answers in the books and on the internet, writing recipes and procedures (...) work logs”. Another teacher summarized the three textual levels in this way:

It is probably about all these levels, to a greater or lesser degree, and it is connected. The students have challenges with both writing and understanding texts, they fall out and struggle with this due to little or insufficient vocabulary and word comprehension. This means that the sentences, among other things, are not complete.

Regarding students with Norwegian as a second language, teachers meant that many of them might have had a difficult background with social and traumatic experiences as refugees that affected their learning ability and literacy skills.

## STUDENTS' LITERACY SKILLS FOR SUBJECT LEARNING

It seemed that the teachers' experiences with the students' literacy challenges also challenged the teachers to combine the subject-specific teaching with literacy factors. A teacher put it this way:

It requires a lot of extra work for me as a teacher, as I always have to be prepared for words and sentences students don't understand. I have to choose the words I think the students struggle with in advance. This requires some additional work before, but also during the teaching itself. It takes some time, instead of focusing directly on the teaching and the subject matter.

Another teacher was more specific on the didactic facilitation. She believed that motivation and learning were achieved by simplifying the tasks of the students, differentiating and carrying out a step-by-step review of the text-based subject matter: "I lower the level and simplify. Then you can achieve more. Students can choose parts of the assignments given and do not have to choose all". She emphasized various methods she chose in teaching, such as mind maps, underlining difficult words, short presentations from all students and dialogical teaching (questions and answers). The most important thing was that the students benefited from the professional teaching adapted to their level. This could be supplemented with another teacher's statement: "Those who may not be considered to succeed, and get low grades, succeed because they are practitioners. Although they are linguistically weak. If they get good guidance in a company, if they work and are motivated, then they will succeed".

The students seemed to be confronted with their literacy challenges when they were out in practice. The following evaluation was given by a teacher at RFP: “The biggest challenge we see in practice is when students do not understand recipes or procedures, kitchen equipment and practical tasks. There are some misunderstandings. I often think that my colleagues are too strict when assessing students’ work because they fail to notice that low proficiency in Norwegian language often causes problems with solving practical task”. The teachers experienced that the students’ literacy challenges required a didactic facilitation in order for them to receive a professional education.

## STUDENTS’ LITERACY SKILLS FOR WORKING LIFE

Students in VET will normally enter working life as skilled workers after two years in school and two years as apprentices in companies. The school context is the last arena for many where students can receive explicit language instruction and develop their literacy skills (Hellne-Halvorsen, 2019). In working life, communication is included as an essential part of work performance, aimed at different target groups and with different purposes. Although the students in this study had not completed their education, it was nevertheless of interest to gain insight into how the teachers evaluated the students’ literacy competence for their future profession.

Some teachers expressed concern, especially for students’ competence in written communication: “They face great challenges when it comes to written communication. Both with customers, colleagues and partners (...) written and oral communication must be in place. There can be a lot of problems in communication and cooperation with others, if they do not master Nor-

wegian well enough". Other teachers were probably not quite so pessimistic: "They will eventually manage when they become familiar with the requirements set by the employer".

Thus, the teachers did recognize the students' literacy challenges, but were still optimistic about their ability to communicate after having entered the professional life. They believed that students would develop their literacy skills by practicing the subject matter.

## LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE AND DIDACTIC LITERACY STRATEGIES

A key question in the interviews was whether teachers' use of didactic literacy strategies to develop students' skills in reading and writing presupposed competence in linguistics, and furthermore, whether they had developed the literacy competence through this case study.

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DIDACTIC LITERACY STRATEGIES AND LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE

Teachers generally answered that they needed to develop their own language competencies: "Teachers should increase their own language competencies to gain a better understanding of what students need to know. (...) I believe that didactic skills alone are not sufficient, as language competence is absolutely important". Linguistic competence and the use of didactic strategies in reading and writing were thus related. Another teacher noticed that the perspective on didactic strategies did not address the students' real language challenges. It was emphasized that vocational teachers concentrated on spelling (orthography)

“because we lack knowledge about what we actually should supervise about and how”. “It is important not to get hung up on sloppy mistakes, but rather get to the root of challenges”, said another. Five of the teachers have had additional education in Norwegian as a second language (30 credits). These had knowledge of language structures in different languages. This knowledge was expressed by other teachers both in grammatical theory in general, and in particular “a comparative perspective on language”, in light of the fact that many students had the school language as a second language. It seemed that it was those four teachers, having another language and country background, who especially wanted more linguistic knowledge of the Norwegian language.

Some teachers emphasized that they had good enough competence in the Norwegian language: “I have enough knowledge of the language to guide”. It was the specific didactic strategies many teachers were in need for: “We are practitioners, and do not want linguistic concepts, only strategies”. This teacher placed particular emphasis on word comprehension: “I want more clues as how to develop students’ word comprehension”. Another put it this way: “We need concrete methods to teach students language”. The same teacher also called for more of this in teacher education: “There is very little of it”. She also saw this in connection to the students’ future role as professionals.

## DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS’ LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE AND DIDACTIC STRATEGIES

We noticed that most teachers had seen a connection between their own literacy competence and didactic literacy strategies. It was of particular interest to us researchers to gain insight into



whether the teachers had developed this competence through the case study and the seminars. Despite the fact that the case study was somewhat amputated due to the pandemic, all teachers replied that they had both become more aware of the students' language challenges and developed their own linguistic competence and didactic strategies: "Yes, I have learned a lot! There is a lot I have become aware of that I did not think about before, and that I now can facilitate. The feedback I write to the students, has a different content today". But the degree of benefit for some teachers was somewhat variable: "I have learned a little bit and developed the strategies to a certain degree", said one of the teachers, while another one was "unsure of my own benefit".

Several of the teachers were motivated to further develop this competence, and it was especially the methods and the sentential level that were being highlighted: "I never get enough. I want to learn about strategies, especially sentences, how they are structured and how to write them". This has indicated both a linguistic and didactic competence in literacy.

## TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES AND REFLECTIONS ON THE DIDACTIC LITERACY STRATEGIES

### Before the seminars

When teachers were asked to talk about concrete didactic literacy strategies they had used in classrooms before participating in the seminars, an interesting picture emerged. All of them reported that dealing with word level was the only strategy they earlier had employed and thought of as the key concept in learning a second language. Several teachers emphasized that printing out word lists, using illustrations, English or other languages

they mastered, were equivalent to helping students understand the subject matter. According to them, students' challenges were mostly about subject-specific terminology, and it was the main obstacle for their learning. One of the bilingual teachers admitted that it was rather difficult to even understand what kind of literacy challenges her students were facing when asked to give them some additional help in reading and writing tasks:

I struggled to identify their problems. They were orally strong. I remember that before I took Norwegian as a second language, I had to ask other teachers what the students were struggling with. Everyone told me that I had to work with specific subject concepts.

Another, rather experienced teacher told us that before the seminars and her own studies of second language pedagogy, she had never even thought about any language dilemmas: "I hadn't been thinking of Norwegian since my high school exam in 1998. It had never struck my mind that there were strategies one could employ before I learned about textual levels".

Before the seminars, the strategies teachers employed were undoubtedly sparse and involved predominantly the micro level in texts.

## AFTER THE SEMINARS

One of the most interesting categories of comment was the one related to the teachers' experiences with the strategies we had discussed and developed. They were all asked to name the strategies they remembered and wished to continue to use in the classrooms.

One salient aspect of the data was the participants' reports on achieving raised awareness of the language system's complexity. All of the teachers mentioned it explicitly and this indicated that the presentation of the three textual levels had indeed been understood as a whole, while simultaneously painting a slightly less visible picture of the necessary details.

One of the teachers summed it up in a following way: "It's fascinating that there is so much that is difficult! I notice things more now. It's completely different!". Another one pointed out that she was "much more aware of sentences and texts, and not only words [...] I would really like to try working with sentences, I think. It is through sentences and whole texts that one understands what certain words mean." In this way the teachers seemed to have become more focused readers and writers themselves: "I see whole texts now. I have become accustomed to look at how the sentences are structured, whether they are long or short. I'm interested in word order". Two of the teachers mentioned that they had even started to notice and critique other non-literacy teachers' language use at their schools: "We're supposed to be role models. Sometimes, when I see how other teachers write in form of key words, I wonder what kind of example they are setting".

All of the teachers used an interesting amount of metalanguage, such as *paragraphs*, *whole sentences*, *subordinate clauses*, *cohesion*, *sentence starters*, *word endings*, but the specific strategies mentioned in the seminars, seemed to remain somewhat overshadowed by their rather general talk on literacy practices: "Reading on a sentence level is definitely something I wish to improve".

Several teachers confirmed that they would begin to encourage their students to write whole sentences instead of only key

words and that knowing about the words' internal structure was interesting and important. Noticing sentence starters and compound nouns, finding alternative ways of constructing sentential ideas or answering questions with more complete sentences, seemed to be the most memorable strategies among the teachers. However, the importance of discussing collocations and longer word chains, paying attention to paragraphs, coherence and cohesion in texts or language form in general, were not equally emphasized, let alone given concrete didactic examples.

#### 4. DISCUSSIONS

The purpose of the study, on which this article is based, was to explore what kind of literacy skills vocational teachers needed to be better equipped to work with students literacy challenges in the subjects, cf. the research topic *How to develop vocational teachers' didactic literacy strategies for guiding multilingual students in multicultural classrooms?*

The teachers were introduced to several linguistic categories within the three text levels. These had formed the basis for the development of didactic literacy strategies that teachers could use in vocational subjects. The teachers in the study taught heterogeneous groups of students, but had as a basic premise that the linguistic categories could be equally relevant for all students regardless of their linguistic and cultural background.

The first research question was related to students' literacy competence: *How do vocational teachers experience students' literacy competence?*

The teachers' evaluations of and experiences with the students' literacy competence have formed the very basis for the case study. The teachers meant that the students' literacy challenges were an obstacle to their learning outcomes. This might also explain the large drop-out rate in VET. Among language registers, writing excelled as particularly challenging for the students. The teachers highlighted various linguistic factors as challenging for the students, with particular emphasis on syntax. Students' ability to convey academic content in text was seen as deficient. In a larger perspective, this has major implications. Students in VET are normally educated directly for an increasingly text-based working life (Karlsson, 2006), where communicating in writing with different target groups and different text purposes is part of the professional tasks. This requires literacy skills that can be used and transferred to different contexts and discourses (Leu et al., 2017; Nägele & Stalder, 2017) with emphasis on formal linguistic categories.

Such a transformative view of literacy skills represents a new twist in literacy research and challenges the view of literacy as merely a social practice (New Literacy Studies). The teachers in our study were concerned with these aspects of literacy and for that very reason wanted to further develop their own literacy competence in order to be better equipped to guide their students. The linguistic levels that were themed in the seminars, had given them benefits and increased their awareness of the students' literacy challenges. But it was still the didactic strategies that they wanted more of, especially related to the mezzo level in texts with emphasis on sentence constructions. All teachers emphasized that the use of didactic literacy strategies definitely presupposed linguistic competence. This has indicated that the

seminars should have been expanded, something the pandemic had prevented us from doing.

The second research question was about the teachers' experiences with using didactic strategies. Taken together, the results have suggested strong belief about the effectiveness of developed strategies and importance of complementary literacy education in VET through raising teachers' awareness of higher linguistic levels. The seminars in the study had helped teachers realize that language was a dynamic and rather complex system which was exemplified in textbooks and various classroom tasks related to reading and writing. All respondents in the study discovered a clear relationship between textual levels, competence and skills, personal and professional development (Wray et al., 2002). They gained positive attitudes towards literacy education infused in their vocational subjects. They moved from working with words and subject specific concepts to seeing sentences', paragraphs' and texts' structures. However, their raised awareness of the existing textual levels seemed to overpower the pedagogical knowledge of concrete strategies. This is in accordance with the previous study undertaken by Lødding et al. (2018), indicating that the theoretical understanding of new domains or content areas inevitably precedes the development of concrete teaching methods (Blixen & Pannell, 2020; Shulman, 1986). Dealing with various didactic strategies, which has indeed comprised the focus on language form (Randen & Danbolt, 2018), has helped teachers increase their metalanguage and strengthen their beliefs about being able to take over the occasional role of language supervisors (Alver, 2015). This may indicate that working with the suggested textual levels, categories and emerging didactic strategies has helped the teachers increase their own literacy competence.

The strategies we have developed together, have functioned effectively as an explicit tool, a focus on form and structure in texts that teachers have learned about, while their pedagogical knowledge has only started to unfold. In other words, teachers' understanding of textual levels was expanded after the seminars, but they also realized that there were additional gaps in their content knowledge. This might serve as an explanation to why they could not recall all of the didactic strategies. They remained uncertain about how to deal with the sentential level of texts even though they had experienced it as crucial. The higher the textual level, the greater the teachers' challenge to adopt and use adequate strategies. They were explicit in claiming that they needed more of both theoretical and practical knowledge on sentences, cohesion and coherence in texts in order to function as confident supervisors in multilingual classrooms.

Using didactic literacy strategies presupposes teachers' basic literacy skills as well as competence. Our study has shown that the seminars should be expanded to more practical work with texts aiming at students' literacy challenges. When developing didactic strategies, the functional aspect should be emphasized where language use and comprehension are primary (Halliday, 1973; Maagerø, 2005). We assume that extended, more repetitive seminars and greater focus on linguistic categories and didactic strategies within mezzo and macro levels, would have a greater effect on the development of teachers' literacy skills which, in turn, would make them more competent supervisors (Davey & Fuller, 2013; Selj, 2015). A more profound understanding of higher textual levels would secure a more frequent use of pedagogical strategies, that is, combining explicit and vocational teachers' previously implicit focus on language form, necessary

for the multilingual classrooms, as suggested by Lightbown & Spada (2006), Loeb et al. (2018) and Palm (2008). If they were to help the students gain an insight into the sentential and textual structures during reading and writing, they should be able to pay attention to them themselves. Our seminars on linguistic levels in texts have helped the teachers make initial headway in transforming their tacit into somewhat more explicit knowledge.

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Our study on didactic literacy strategies as a complementary knowledge and practice base for vocational teachers in multilingual classrooms, has evolved out of a yearning to give some shape and coherence to all those teacher beliefs, practices, but equally important gaps within VET, associated with an interdisciplinary focus on technical subjects, language and literacy. Even though our study is concerned with literacy competence within school context, we believe that the literacy perspective presented, is transferable to literacy and language use in working life contexts as well.

In sum, teachers seemed to be pleased with the whole process of participating in seminars and developing didactic strategies. They acknowledged that linguistic categories within each of the textual levels were relevant linguistic perspectives for developing vocational teachers' literacy competence and making them better equipped to develop students' literacy skills. We can conclude that linguistic competence is a prerequisite for guiding and developing students' literacy skills. However, the effectiveness of the developed teaching strategies remains to be further



tested and measured in future research on complementary literacy practices in VET classrooms.

It is our hope and recommendation that the scope of the seminars and further research on linguistic competencies and didactic strategies in the field of vocational pedagogy, get extended, including all textual levels, especially the higher ones, across contexts and discourses. In keeping with an underlying commitment to maintaining interdisciplinarity, future research should link literacy practices of schooling to practical principles of VET pedagogy, teachers' professional growth and transformative didactics in the interest of prospective workers' enhanced competence for learning in education and working life.

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## Are apprenticeships inclusive of refugees? Experiences from Denmark

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### Abstract

**Context/purpose:** The influx of a large number of young refugees in Europe during 2015–2016 drew attention to the role of vocational education and training (VET) in the integration of refugees. In Denmark, the VET system is based on the apprenticeship model, where most training is located in workplaces. Apprenticeships are internationally praised for their inclusiveness, as they provide direct access to employment for vulnerable learners. The research question examined in this chapter is what role apprenticeships play in the integration of immigrants and refugees. Special focus is placed on the recent development after the “refugee crisis” of 2015–2016 and the introduction of a new special apprenticeship programme for refugees in Denmark, known as Basic Integration Education (IGU).

**Approach/Methods:** First, this chapter reviews research on the capability of apprenticeships to include disadvantaged youth, and particularly research on ethnic minority students in apprenticeships. Next, it examines the political response to the refugee crisis and the process behind the introduction of the new apprenticeship programme, IGU, in Denmark. This study is

based on analyses of key policy documents on the development of IGU, including official acts and documentation, evaluations, applied research publications and statistics. It also includes analyses of 11 individual interviews with key stakeholders in vocational schools, nongovernmental organisations and labour market organisations involved in the programme. The interviews conducted either face-to-face or by telephone and were recorded, transcribed and analysed for the description of two examples of how the IGU has been organised.

**Findings/Results:** Immigrants and refugees face some special barriers in apprenticeships, including problems of navigating a complex system, entrance requirements and access to apprenticeship contracts and to communities in workplaces. A special apprenticeship programme for refugees (IGU) was introduced in Denmark during a period with labour shortage, but also with new anti-immigration measures, which limited refugees' access to apprenticeships. This chapter assesses the strengths and weaknesses of the IGU programme in the following five years and examines two successful examples of IGU programmes.

**Conclusion/Key message:** While apprenticeships are not particularly inclusive of ethnic minorities and refugees, the IGU programme for refugees is considered a success. The success is due to a tripartite agreement in 2016 that solved the critical issues concerning wages, apprenticeship contracts, certification, curriculum and governance. The IGU, however, also has some weaknesses, which make many refugees leave the programme before completion to shift into better-paid regular employment.

**Keywords 3–5.** Apprenticeship, refugees and migrants, social inclusion

## INTRODUCTION

During the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, apprenticeships in many countries were replaced by formalised and school-based forms of vocational education and training (VET). In the Nordic countries, this was driven by the aim to strengthen democratic citizenship in education, reduce educational inequalities and provide access to higher education for all (Jørgensen, 2019; Michelsen & Stenström, 2018). For the Nordic Social Democratic governments, apprenticeships represented employer-led training with unsure quality and risk of exploitation of youth labour (Jørgensen, 2018). Apprenticeships were associated with outdated and specific skills and with male-dominated blue-collar work, and they were seen as a second-choice option for “weak learners” (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training [Cedefop] & Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2021; Gessler, 2019). In Sweden and Finland, apprenticeships were almost completely abandoned, while Denmark and Norway maintained modernised forms of apprenticeships that were combined with public school-based training (Jørgensen & Tønder, 2018).

Since the 1990s, the position and image of apprenticeships have moved in a positive direction among policy makers. Apprenticeships have gained political attention due to the growing concern over persistent high youth unemployment and high NEET rates. Results from comparative transition research have repeatedly demonstrated that countries with apprenticeships and dual systems of VET are the most successful at integrating young people into the labour market (Cedefop, 2018; Gangl & Müller, 2003; Wolbers, 2007). In 2013, the European Union



adopted a resolution on the European Alliance for Apprenticeships and emphasised the positive effects of apprenticeships on low youth unemployment rates and on easy transitions to employment (Council of the European Union, 2013). This new interest in apprenticeships has given rise to a variety of apprenticeship initiatives of diverging quality. Some apprenticeship systems can be of low quality and have an ambiguous reputation, especially in liberal market economies with weak regulatory frameworks (Cedefop & OECD, 2021; Ryan & Lorinc, 2018). In the Nordic countries, apprenticeship systems are generally strongly regulated to ensure high quality, and since the 1990s, apprenticeships have been strengthened to improve the opportunities for upper-secondary education for disadvantaged youth (Jørgensen & Tønder, 2018).

The influx of a large number of young refugees in Europe during 2015–2016 drew political attention to the role of VET in the integration of refugees. Young refugees represent a vulnerable group with an uncertain future in their new host country. Frequently, their connections with families, friends and broader social networks in their home country are broken. Hostilities and persecution in their homeland have often limited their regular educational completion, and VET has many advantages for this group. In Denmark, the VET system is based on the apprenticeship model, where most of the training is located in workplaces.

The research question examined in this chapter is what role apprenticeships have in the integration of immigrants and refugees, with the focus on Denmark. It explores the key advantages of apprenticeships for young people who are not aiming for higher education, and it examines the main barriers for ethnic

minorities in the apprenticeship system. An interesting innovation is the special Danish apprenticeship programme for refugees, called Basic Integration Education (*Integrationsgrunduddannelse* [IGU]). It was established in 2016 by the government in collaboration with the main labour market organisations to meet the refugee crisis. After five years, it has demonstrated many of the benefits of apprenticeships, but it also presents some persisting and some new challenges regarding apprenticeships for refugees.

## METHODS AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter draws on a theoretical framework of ethnic categorisation, selection and segmentation in education (Kao et al., 2013; Portes & Zhou, 2015). In addition, it relies on theories of stratified school-to-work transitions (Gangl & Müller, 2003; Heinz, 2008; Wolbers, 2007) and theories of social inclusion in apprenticeship systems (Bonoli & Emmenegger, 2020; Gessler, 2019), or what Bonoli and Wilson (2019:370) call “the political economy of inclusiveness in dual VET systems”.

The following review of the key research findings is based on a focussed search for and review of peer-reviewed research literature in English and the Scandinavian languages on the inclusiveness of apprenticeships for immigrants and refugees. For Denmark, it also included other research publications, evaluation reports and white papers that investigated the role of VET in integration and the effects of special VET initiatives for refugees. This included numerous reports prepared by public and private institutions and nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) working in the field of immigration, refugees, VET and employment, most of them in the Danish language.

The examination of the political response to the refugee crisis is based on document analyses of policy documents covering the main reforms of immigration and refugee regulation during 2015–2019 and studies on these reforms by official institutions and NGOs. In the document analyses, the primary interest was in studies of refugees' access to and support for apprenticeship programmes, including access to work-based training placements. It also included policy documents on special initiatives designed for refugees and immigrants, for example pre-vocational programmes and measures for integrated work and language training in Denmark.

To examine two specific examples 'good practice' of IGU programmes, two sources of data were collected. First, to find examples of 'good practice' in IGU, a comprehensive literature search was made, which included newsletters, journals, periodicals and newspapers. Secondly, individual qualitative interviews were conducted with 11 professionals in vocational schools, municipalities and labour market organisations. The interview persons were selected to include a broad variety of stakeholders' views on the IGU programmes. The interviews were conducted either face-to-face or by telephone and were recorded, transcribed and analysed using qualitative content analysis (Schreier, 2012). In addition, the interviews were used to search for empirical reports on barriers and success factors for refugees in VET, including vocational preparation and guidance, language training measures, job training and mentoring schemes. The interviews were also used to validate and deepen the findings from the review of the reports.

## **BENEFITS OF APPRENTICESHIPS FOR DISADVANTAGED GROUPS**

In Denmark, Norway and the German-speaking countries, VET systems are based on the apprenticeship model. These apprenticeship systems are strongly regulated and cover most of the labour market, including labour-intensive industries, high-tech manufacturing and knowledge-intensive service industries. Apprenticeships in these countries are considered high quality and are recognised as valuable alternatives to higher education. They generally provide access to well-paid and stable jobs with good career opportunities (Cedefop, 2018; Cedefop & OECD 2021). Therefore, they are important progression routes for both strong and disadvantaged students who do not opt for higher education. Evidence from Denmark shows that many disadvantaged youth who fail in compulsory school succeed in apprenticeships and gain access to stable employment (Jørgensen, 2015).

Based on a review of international comparative studies of VET systems, some key qualities for apprenticeship systems that aid in students' successful transition to employment can be discerned. First, most training takes place in workplaces, where apprentices can be socialised into the cultures and communities of working life (Billett, 2011; Chan, 2013; Heinz, 2008). Due to the structure of apprenticeships, students have already accomplished a successful transition to the labour market when they complete a programme (Wolbers, 2007). In countries like Denmark and Norway, a majority of apprentices continue after an apprenticeship as regular employees in the firm where they were trained (Jørgensen & Tønder, 2018). Second, during apprenticeships, young people acquire specific vocational skills with

high direct applicability in the workplace. Through a historical process of mutual institutional adaptation, the skill profiles of apprenticeships and the skills requirement for occupational work have become aligned (Deissinger, 1998). Consequently, apprentices have very high chances of gaining employment that matches their skills after completion (Levels et al., 2014). Third, as the skills conveyed in apprenticeships are occupational and not firm specific, they are highly portable in the labour market (Gangl & Müller, 2003). The students' mobility in the labour market is further supported by their prolonged socialisation in a workplace, where they acquire generic skills, such as learning to cooperate, solve problems and take responsibility for the quality of their work (Gessler, 2019; Jørgensen, 2015). Fourth, the smooth transition from education to work in apprenticeships is linked to the high transparency afforded by the vocational principle (Deissinger, 1998; Jørgensen, 2019). When young people choose an apprenticeship, they can have a clear image of the vocational identity and the occupation of which they are becoming a part (Billett, 2011). The vocation/occupation operates as a "sign post" guiding young people on their way from education to work by providing an image of their opportunity for "becoming" and "belonging" to a vocation (Chan, 2013; Colley et al., 2003). Fifth, the learning environments of apprenticeships differ significantly from school-based education. Authentic workplaces can offer rich resources for learning through participation in authentic work tasks, collaboration with experienced craftspersons and making a difference for others (Billett, 2011; Chan, 2013). These qualities make them attractive for young people who are not opting for academic education and who are at risk of dropping out of general education. Lastly,

the benefits of apprenticeships are due to the strong involvement of labour market organisations and a strong institutional framework (Gessler, 2019). Apprenticeship systems rely on a corporatist form of governance, which ensures the legitimacy, recognition and value of apprenticeship programmes due to certification, examinations and other quality assurance procedures (Cedefop, 2018; Gerholz & Brahm, 2014).

This summary of the qualities of apprenticeships that support the integration of young people into the labour market indicates the potential advantages of apprenticeships in integrating refugees. In Denmark, a majority of the refugees arriving have not completed any formal education beyond basic schooling (Thomassen, 2019), but many have gained various skills from work experiences. In the VET system, these skills can be formally recognised and support refugees' completion of VET programmes. Apprenticeships are mainly based on practical and work-based forms of learning, so that refugees in apprenticeships can start learning vocational skills even with limited qualifications in the language spoken at work. As part of their work-based training, refugees can practise and develop their language skills in real-world settings and build new social networks. In contrast to these potentials of apprenticeships for refugees, research indicates that immigrants and ethnic minorities face a variety of barriers to accessing and completing vocational education in apprenticeship systems.

## **ETHNIC MINORITIES IN APPRENTICESHIPS**

Most refugees arriving in Denmark from 2014 to 2016 were young, and the majority had not completed any education beyond compulsory school (Thomassen, 2019). Denmark is a

high-wage country, where the number of unskilled jobs has been halved since the 1990s. In advanced knowledge economies like Denmark, education and training are key to integrating young refugees into society and the labour market. However, research has previously demonstrated that migrants and refugees in general are disadvantaged in the education systems in Europe, especially in apprenticeship systems. Some of the main findings from this research are reviewed in the following.

Imdorf's (2017) study explored the mechanisms behind ethnic discrimination in apprenticeships in small and mid-sized companies. It reviewed the findings from previous research of employers' stereotyped expectations of immigrants' lower productivity, their school and language deficits, "alien mentality", social conflicts between different ethnic groups, young male macho-like attitudes, negative effects on customers, weaker match with existing staff and higher dropout risk. It also pointed at research, which found that some employers expect immigrants to be more ambitious and willing to perform than native youth. Based on conventionalist theory, the study indicated that ethnic discrimination in apprenticeships could be explained by employers' efforts to avoid the risk that immigrant apprentices will create difficulties for supervisors or that they will be rejected by customers or the existing workforce.

Hillmert (2013) showed that the disadvantages of immigrants vary between countries depending on the structure of their education systems and the segregation and selectivity of schools. To explain immigrants' underrepresentation in apprenticeships, Chadderton and Wischmann (2014) emphasised how racial segmentation in the labour market can shape the educational expectations of young immigrants and divert them from

apprenticeships. Bonoli and Wilson (2019) compared a variety of inclusiveness measures in the three apprenticeship systems of Switzerland, Germany and Denmark. They emphasised the difficulties in engaging employers in social policy measures and concluded that Denmark stands out as the country with the clearest state commitment to extending young peoples' access to VET training. This includes measures like lower ambition certificates, subsidised apprenticeships and firm-based pre-apprenticeship programmes, such as the IGU programme for refugees. In line with this approach, Bonoli and Emmenegger (2020) examined the inclusiveness of apprenticeship systems. They called attention to the political trade-off in apprenticeship systems between inclusiveness and selectivity (competitiveness). They emphasised that, even in the Danish case, there are limits to state intervention to increase the inclusiveness of the apprenticeship system, as employers can withdraw and reduce the supply of apprenticeships.

Reviewing previous research on the inclusion of immigrants in education, Koehler and Schneider (2019) highlighted the opposing cases of Sweden and Germany. The state-led, comprehensive school system of Sweden is best at offering equal opportunities for children of immigrants, while the stratified and selective school system of Germany is among the poorest. In Denmark, compulsory education is comprehensive and unified, similar to the situation in Sweden, but its upper-secondary education is highly selective, with a separate apprenticeship track, similar to in Germany.



## ETHNIC MINORITIES IN THE DANISH APPRENTICESHIP SYSTEM

In Denmark, children of immigrants are overrepresented among young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs), and they have significantly higher dropout rates in upper-secondary education, especially in the VET system, which is based on the apprenticeship model. Children of immigrants are significantly underrepresented in the Danish VET system. At age 29, only 18% of male descendants of immigrants have completed an upper-secondary vocational education, compared to 34% of male, native Danish youth (Mino Danmark, 2020). This is probably due to a combination of conditions, especially the specific barriers for immigrants in getting access to apprenticeships. Another factor is higher aspirations among male children of immigrants for higher education (an “*immigrant drive*”), with a preference for higher education programmes like engineering and medicine. Birkelund (2020) found that, in Denmark, these higher aspirations help some children of immigrants succeed against the odds in higher education. They complete higher education in spite of the disadvantaged socioeconomic and educational background of their parents. However, children of immigrants also have higher non-completion rates in higher education, as can be expected from their disadvantaged background. Birkelund (2020) concluded that the high aspirations of children of immigrants operate as a double-edged sword. They help close the educational gap between immigrant and native-origin youth but also induce the academically weak children of immigrants to opt for higher education, at which they tend to fail. While those immigrant children probably could

have benefitted more from choosing to enrol in upper-secondary vocational education and an apprenticeship, they would also have faced a variety of barriers there. While the participation in VET of male children of immigrants is significantly below the average of native Danish youth, this is not the case for female children of immigrants. One reason for this is that the children of immigrants account for 25% of all students in the VET programme for social and health care, where a great majority are women (Statistics Denmark [DST], 2021).

There are various explanations why the children of immigrants are underrepresented and have higher dropout rates in Danish apprenticeships. One is their disadvantaged background, especially regarding mastery of the Danish language and their weaker acquaintance with the specific occupations in the VET system compared to native Danish students. In addition, the apprentices participate in demanding work processes in collaboration with experienced adults who are not always well prepared to support the learning and transition process of ethnic minority apprentices. In the Danish VET system, in-company trainers are not required to have any pedagogical training, and very few have completed any formal course or education in workplace guidance.

Young refugees often have additional disadvantages that can impair their attendance and completion of a VET programme. They can have traumatic experiences of persecution in their homeland and of living for extended periods under precarious conditions after leaving their homeland. In addition, it can increase their sense of insecurity if, for example, they are separated from their family and friends, have financial problems and only have temporary accommodation and/or a temporary residence permit (Jeon, 2019; Koehler & Schneider, 2019).

Another barrier to refugees' access to the VET system and apprenticeships is the new entrance requirements introduced by a reform in 2015. With the aim of reducing high dropout rates, students' initial VET admission levels were raised, including the requirement of a successful graduation of the 9th grade, with a passing leaving exam in maths and Danish. It is difficult for refugees to meet this requirement because the language training is at a low level during the first three years after asylum is granted.

A more decisive barrier for immigrants and refugees is their access to apprenticeships. If they complete the first year of school-based training, they must find an apprenticeship and achieve a training contract with an employer. This is mainly the students' individual responsibility. Only about one-half of students who start in upper-secondary VET complete the programme. Lack of training placements is one of the main reasons for non-completion. Ethnic minorities and others without social networks that provide access to an apprenticeship have particularly high dropout rates. Generally, apprenticeships are distributed through informal networks and direct contact between students and employers. Immigrants and refugees have weaker social networks and local knowledge about where to seek apprenticeships. They can receive support from the vocational schools but are significantly disadvantaged. In addition, as the competition for apprenticeships is strong, ethnic minorities are subject to discrimination by employers, who are concerned about language or cultural problems and, therefore, prefer native Danish apprentices (Gessler, 2019; Slot, 2008).

Due to these disadvantages, ethnic minorities have higher dropout rates and are two to four times overrepresented in the compensatory school-based training programme (*Skoleprak-*

*tik*) offered to VET students who are unable to find an apprenticeship. In the period from 2005 to 2020, non-Western immigrants made up 22% of the students in the *Skolepraktik*, while they comprised only 11% of the students in the introductory basic courses (DST, 2021). The *Skolepraktik* programme has a lower value in the labour market than the regular programmes, and the students there have high dropout rates.

## **VET AND THE POLITICAL RESPONSE TO THE DANISH REFUGEE CRISIS**

Asylum seekers in Denmark have very few education opportunities, and in contrast to the situation in Germany, they are excluded from apprenticeships. Recognised refugees with a residence permit, in general, have the same rights as native Danish citizens to participate in education and training. They are also entitled to state study grants in the first school-based courses of the VET programmes. However, the actual opportunities for refugees in the Danish VET system are limited by a variety of barriers and the recent shift in integration policy. The role of VET for refugees is not only determined by the affordances of VET by itself but also by the general refugee and integration policies at the national level (Jørgensen et al., in press).

Danish refugee policies have historically shifted between adversarial and embracing positions. Adversarial positions have included the policy towards German refugees after the Second World War who were interned and repatriated. An embracing position was the reception of refugees from Hungary after the Russian invasion in 1956 (Jönsson & Petersen, 2012). In 1983, Denmark passed a new act that is considered one of the most

liberal immigration laws in Europe (Bjerre et al., 2021). Over the following decades, policies emphasised integration of refugees in society through investment in human capital, language training and measures to improve employment in accordance with principles of the universalistic Nordic welfare state (Brochmann & Hagelund, 2012).

Increasingly, however, immigrants and refugees were seen as a threat to the welfare state and the national identity. Decades before the other Nordic countries, Denmark saw the rise of an influential right-wing ethno-nationalist party. Over a period of 15 years, starting in 2001, this party acquired a key role for liberal-conservative governments, which introduced a large number of anti-immigration measures and restrictions for refugees. These policies were continued by the Social Democratic governments, which took new unusual initiatives to limit immigration and deter refugees from seeking asylum in Denmark (Hagelund, 2020).

In 2015, in the middle of the refugee crisis, Denmark got a new right-wing government, which over the next two years introduced over 50 new anti-immigration laws and restrictions on refugees. It implemented both an innovative new apprenticeship programme for refugees (IGU) and two major reforms, which reduced the opportunities for refugees to participate in apprenticeships. The first reform in 2016 was based on calculations of the financial burden of immigrants and refugees due to their low employment rates (Bjerre et al., 2021). This reform involved a shift towards “employment-oriented integration”, which prioritises immediate job training and work placement over lengthy education and language training programmes (Arendt et al., 2020). In cooperation with the municipalities, all refugees must

draw up a plan to become financially self-supporting. The plan usually aims at gaining employment within one year and only rarely includes education in the regular VET system. Some refugees attend short training courses in the CVET system (AMU), which prepares them for unskilled and semi-skilled jobs.

The second reform was launched in early 2019 as a “paradigm shift” in refugee policy. The main policy aim was changed from integration to repatriation, and refugees were to be granted only temporary asylum and residence permits. Their financial allowance was cut and renamed from integration allowance to repatriation allowance. In addition, other restrictions were introduced, for example, limitations on the right to family reunification. Both reforms had negative consequences for refugees’ access to regular VET programmes and apprenticeships. The strong emphasis on immediate work placement in supported jobs reduced refugees’ opportunities to acquire Danish language competences at the level required for admission to the VET system (Arendt et al., 2020). The temporary asylum gave refugees and employers little interest in embarking on an apprenticeship of usually four years’ duration. These barriers and the new admission requirements for VET in 2015 can explain why the enrolment of non-Western immigrants and refugees in apprenticeships decreased by more than 50% from 2015 to 2020 (DST, 2021).

## **BASIC INTEGRATION PROGRAMME (IGU) FOR REFUGEES**

In the period after the high influx of refugees in 2015–2016, Denmark had labour shortages in some industries (agriculture, cleaning, hospitality, etc.) and low unemployment rates. In addi-

tion, the Danish labour market is projected to have a severe shortage of skilled workers with a completed apprenticeship in 2030 (AE, 2021). The situation was thus very favourable for the successful integration of the new refugees through the VET system. The governance of the VET system is, for the most part, left to the labour market organisations in collaboration with the state (Jørgensen & Tønder, 2018). The employers' organisation expressed interest in the integration of the refugees by means of lower introduction wages, but this was strongly opposed by the labour unions (Mailand, 2017). As a compromise, a specially designed apprenticeship programme for refugees (IGU) was agreed on and supported by the government in tripartite negotiations (Bredgaard & Ravn, 2018). The two-year IGU for refugees and their reunified families is an innovative apprenticeship programme, which after five years is considered a success with more than 2,700 apprenticeship contracts registered.

The IGU is modelled on the standards of a special apprenticeship programme for disadvantaged youth in the Danish VET system. It is not recognised as a regular apprenticeship programme, as it does not have standardised national learning goals but a flexible content that can be adapted to the needs of the refugee and the requirements of industries or companies. The IGU is open to refugees and reunified family members between the ages of 18 and 40 years who have been in Denmark for no more than 10 years. It has a total duration of two years, of which 23 weeks must be school-based, typically a combination of language training and vocational courses in the public Danish further training system (AMU). The trade committees, vocational colleges and some NGOs have designed a variety of model programmes for specific industries.

The IGU programme is a compromise that serves different purposes for the main stakeholders in VET. The IGU provides a cheap but regulated labour supply. It provides apprenticeship training for skilled employment and can also serve as a pre-vocational preparation for a subsequent regular apprenticeship. Most of the IGU programme is organised around work-based training, and the apprenticeship wages in IGU are quite low. The employers receive financial support from the state for training refugees in the IGU and for Danish language mentors in the workplace. With the IGU, employers get access to a supply of cheap labour that can be flexibly trained with financial support to meet the requirements of industries with labour shortages. Most of the refugees in IGU are in the private sector, primarily in the retail, transport and manufacturing industries (Rambøll, 2018).

The wages and working conditions of IGU apprentices are regulated by collective agreements between the labour market organisations. When refugees complete an IGU, they are eligible for membership in an unemployment insurance fund, which is often closely linked to the labour unions. With the IGU, the labour unions get the refugees included in regulated and controlled training programmes, which prevents them from being added to the growing underclass of unregulated immigrants in precarious employment. The labour market organisations favoured the apprenticeship model because they have a dominant role in this system.

The state has an advantage in the IGU in that it only involves limited state funding and leaves much of the training responsibility with the employers. The two-year programme deviated from the right-wing government's new integration policy, which emphasised short on-the-job training and work placement with



the aim of gaining employment as quickly as possible, mostly in unskilled jobs. However, for the municipalities that have the responsibility for getting refugees into employment, the IGU is a useful measure to make refugees employable. After the refugee crisis in 2015–2016, the labour market saw a growing shortage of skilled labour. The enrolment of young people in apprenticeships has been declining for the last decade, and the unemployment rate for unskilled workers has been much higher than for skilled workers. Consequently, an apprenticeship programme with certification that provides access to some occupational labour markets was seen as an advantage for all. The IGU conforms to the criteria formulated by Aerne and Bonoli (2021) for the success of such special VET programmes. The IGU was negotiated between the labour market organisations and was not imposed on the employers (Bredgaard & Ravn, 2018). It appeared as a win-win initiative for the main stakeholders. It was flexible and could be customised, and it relied on the existing governance structures of apprenticeships, though it also deviated by not having standardised national learning goals. To illustrate how the IGU programme was put to work in practice, two examples will be described in the following.

## **TWO EXAMPLES OF INNOVATIVE USE OF THE IGU**

The success of the IGU programme is due to the flexible combination of Danish language training, school-based vocational training and training at work. The programme has mainly been aimed at industries with labour shortages, and the completion of an IGU provides good chances for full-time, stable and perma-

nent employment. Two examples can demonstrate how the IGU has been used differently within two industries. The examples are based on interviews with key persons involved in organising the programmes and on reports and articles in Danish journals and newspapers.

## **BUS DRIVER PROGRAMME**

In Denmark, becoming a bus or lorry driver requires the completion of a regular apprenticeship of 3½ years. The duration of the programmes can be reduced for adults after validation of their prior learning. In addition to a driving license for buses, the job requires high skills in customer service, communication, technical maintenance, safety, time planning, writing work reports and self-management. The IGU programme for bus drivers was designed in cooperation with large employers, and it is organised by a training provider (UC Plus) with close ties to the bus companies. As the large bus companies in public transportation have a high demand for skilled drivers, the IGU programme provides a good opportunity for refugees looking for permanent employment.

The transport sector employs many ethnic minorities, and many drivers have Danish as their second language. The large cultural diversity makes it easier for refugees to become included in the social communities of the multi-ethnic companies. The training provider has extensive experience with the training of ethnic minority students and promotes an inclusive learning environment. The composition of students in the IGU classes is not very different from the composition of other bus driver programmes.

The training provider has organised a separate Danish language training centre located close to the driver training centre. It has achieved official accreditation to provide standard certificates in Danish language for foreigners. The language training is organised with specific emphasis on correct language for the transport occupations. The centre offers integrated training for language and technical subjects to make it more useful for the refugees.

The IGU programme is very popular among refugees, and admission involves a strict assessment of all applicants to ensure a high completion rate. To increase retention, the educational provider offers a preparatory nine-week course in occupational language and culture. Afterwards, refugees in the IGU bus driver programme attend regular classes with other non-refugee students during the first six-month school-based period. Subsequently, they shift to work-based apprenticeship training, where they acquire the practical skills and workplace culture and become engaged in the social life of the bus drivers.

The completion rate is high for the first six months of school-based courses, where the refugees acquire driver certifications and learn applied Danish language skills. The dropout rate is higher for the subsequent apprenticeship training, because the bus companies offer the students regular employment before they have finished their formal training period due to the fear that competing bus companies will hire them. However, this is considered a “positive dropout”, as it leads to employment of the refugees. A weakness of the programme is that it has very few female students due to cultural norms and the gendered division of labour in the families.

## **PATHWAY TO REGULAR APPRENTICESHIPS IN THE LAUNDRY INDUSTRY**

Laundry companies serving large public hospitals include a high share of ethnic minority employees. In 2017, the largest Danish laundry company (*Midtvask*) was concerned about its future opportunities for recruiting qualified employees and therefore became engaged in the training and education of refugees. The skill requirements in the laundry industry are increasing due to higher quality standards and advanced automation. In cooperation with five other local companies, the laundry company initiated an apprenticeship programme for refugees (IGU), where vocational training and language training were integrated.

The training programme at this laundry company is noticeable for at least three qualities. One is a long-term perspective, where refugees can proceed from three months of preparatory training to the two-year apprenticeships for refugees (IGU) and further on to a regular VET programme. Not all refugees go through all three steps, which have a total duration of four to five years. Another quality is the close collaboration between the six companies, a provider of language training, a vocational school and various job centres and municipalities. Their close coordination is crucial to the success of the project. Yet another quality is that the refugees are trained along with the company's regular employees, which is a great advantage for the refugees' social integration.

In the first preparatory programme, the refugees are in part-time internships in the company and attend intensive Danish language training in the workplace. In the second step, refugees are employed as apprentices in the two-year IGU programme for refugees. They sign an employment contract and a training

agreement with the company. A written training plan is prepared, which includes 20 weeks of school-based courses and 18 months of apprenticeship training in the workplace under mentor supervision. The school-based courses include Danish language training, technical-vocational subjects and general subjects. When they complete the courses, they can either take up employment or continue in a regular two-year apprenticeship programme for industrial operators.

The company trains the refugees along with their other employees. This improves the refugees' opportunities to learn the Danish language and culture. Taking on refugees solved a staffing problem for the six companies involved. The refugees replaced regular employees who were away on off-the-job training. For each regular employee who started the VET programme, the companies took on a refugee who could replace that employee. The companies formed small teams of one Danish employee and one refugee who attended the VET programme together. This team was replaced by another team in the workplace, and the size of the workforce was kept stable as the two teams alternated between the VET course and work.

The refugees receive a journeyman's certificate when they complete the regular VET programme in the company by passing the final examination. As this certificate is recognised across industries, the refugees have very good employment opportunities compared to gaining only firm-specific skills.

## **CONCLUSION**

Apprenticeships are recognised internationally for promoting social inclusion of disadvantaged youth because they provide

direct access to employment (Bonoli & Wilson, 2019). This has been a strong argument for a political revival of apprenticeships in many countries. In Denmark, the apprenticeship system has been maintained in a purer form than in other Nordic countries, and for decades, it has secured an efficient transition to stable employment for around one-third of the youth cohorts.

The majority of the refugees arriving in Denmark in 2015–2016 had not completed any formal education beyond basic schooling. Apprenticeships have many potential advantages for refugees because they provide specific skills that can be acquired by young people with limited Danish language skills. These vocational skills can be learned as an integral part of refugees' enculturation and participation in social communities in the workplace. In addition, apprenticeships offer rich learning environments, where young people can learn, not only through a foreign language, but also through practical interactions with authentic work tasks, experienced colleagues, tools and materials (Billett, 2011).

However, international research has pointed at a variety of barriers for ethnic minority youth trying to access apprenticeships. In Denmark, ethnic minorities are disadvantaged concerning their socioeconomic conditions and should statistically be overrepresented in the vocational track of upper-secondary education. However, they are underrepresented in VET, especially in apprenticeships. They are referred to the compensatory school-based programme much more frequently than ethnic majority students are. This can be explained by employers' discrimination in hiring apprentices, refugees' lack of social networks that provide access to apprenticeships, the entrance requirements in the VET system, family preferences for higher education and cultural barriers to accessing workplace commu-

nities. Similar to ethnic minorities, gender minorities encounter these forms of barriers in apprenticeships (Fuller et al., 2005; Reisel et al., 2015).

Similar barriers have also been identified in the Danish VET system, and they are even more challenging for the large number of refugees who arrived in Denmark in 2015–2016. For them, regular VET programmes and apprenticeships have become almost inaccessible. This is the result of major reforms of the refugee policy since 2015, which has introduced numerous new restrictions. They include granting only temporary residence permits, cuts in refugees' financial allowances and the shift to "employment-oriented integration" that gives priority to short-term job training and immediate employment (Bjerre et al., 2021). In addition, the policy aim has shifted from the integration of refugees to repatriation.

In contrast to this, the IGU is a promising example of how an apprenticeship programme can support refugees' integration into the labour market. It was established in 2016 as a result of a tripartite agreement between the government and the main labour market organisations. After five years, it has demonstrated many advantages, but also some persisting challenges, of apprenticeships for refugees. The success of the IGU is due to strong support from the main stakeholders and local cooperation of unions, employers and NGOs to promote the programme. As the two cases above demonstrate, the IGU can be used both as a preparatory programme for regular apprenticeships and as a direct route to skilled and stable employment.

The cases confirm the validity of the criteria formulated by Aerne and Bonoli (2021) for the success of such special VET programmes. The IGU can be customised to individual refugees

and companies and it relies on the existing structures of governance. The IGU was agreed on by the labour market organisations, supported by the state and accepted by the employers. The two examples are located in industries with labour shortage, which explains some of the high engagement of the employers. In addition, both industries employ a high share of ethnic minorities, which made it easier for the refugees to fit in and feel secure. Both examples demonstrate the importance of careful preparation and selection of the refugees in order to achieve high completion rates. In interesting innovation of the laundry company is to train the refugees along with their other employees, which accelerates the social integration and language learning of the refugees.

The IGU programme also has some weaknesses. Like other special apprenticeship programmes, it is difficult to gather a sufficient number of refugees to have homogeneous classes in a specific vocational programme. As many different institutions are involved in these types of apprenticeship programmes, they require a high capacity for coordination, as emphasised by Aerne and Bonoli (2021). This was especially demanding in the case of the laundry company, where six different companies, two educational providers and many municipalities were involved. Another weakness is that the wages in the IGU programme are quite low, which involves a risk of “wage dumping” in some industries (Mailand, 2017). In addition, this leads many participants in the IGU to terminate their programme before completion and shift into regular employment to gain higher earnings.

The IGU programme demonstrates that VET programmes modelled on apprenticeships can be efficient measures for the integration of refugees. However, the national refugee policy is



decisive for refugees' opportunities in the VET system. Since 2015, Danish governments have pursued very restrictive anti-immigration and anti-refugee policies that have limited refugees' opportunities for all kinds of post-compulsory education. These policies seem to be more rooted in nationalist, anti-immigration political attitudes than in long-term concern for the labour market (Mailand, 2017). The Danish labour market is looking into a severe shortage of skilled labour, and the IGU programme demonstrates how apprenticeship programmes can offer effective transitions to employment for refugees.

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## Teachers' and Adult Migrant Students' Perspectives on Integration and Belonging in the Context of Finnish Vocational Education and Training

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**Abstract:** This article examines how teachers and adult migrant students view integration in the context of Finnish vocational education. Integration is understood as a complex and two-way process in which finding a place and a feeling of being socially bonded happens through participation, acquiring new skills, negotiation and involvement of both migrants and natives. Our research questions are: 1) What kinds of meanings do teachers

and adult migrant students give to integration in the VET context? 2) Under what conditions can a sense of belonging emerge or be experienced by adult migrant students?

The qualitative data, 25 interviews with VET teachers and adult migrant students, were analyzed using thematic analysis. According to the results, integration is understood as participation in the formal and informal spaces of daily life such as VET education, working life and hobbies. Integration can be promoted by supporting participation and a subjective feeling of belonging.

**Keywords:** integration, belonging, learning, adult migrants, vocational education, Finland

## 1 INTRODUCTION

In this article, we explore teachers' and adult migrants' views and experiences of integration in the context of Finnish vocational education and training (VET). The focus of the article is on vocational education as a site for supporting the learning and integration of adult migrants. Our research questions are: 1) What kinds of meanings do teachers and adult migrant students give to integration in the VET context? 2) Under what conditions can a sense of belonging emerge or be experienced by adult migrant students?

When a person arrives in a new country, they are expected to acquire a place in the new society, in both the national and local communities, culturally, socially and physically. This process of acquiring a place can be considered to be integration, although what this means in practice is the subject of debate (Saharso,

2019; Ager & Strang, 2008). Officially, integration is considered a two-way process that requires mutual involvement, learning, adjustment and negotiation of positions and responsibilities, and leads to changes on the parts of both migrants and natives (Morrice, 2017; Komisarof, 2009; Leong, 2014). Modood (2011) argues that migrants seek to become equal members of the host society or community and thereby gain a feeling of independence, equality and real bonding to the new society (see also e.g., Penninx & Mascareñas, 2016). Previous studies show that this involves unequal power relationships, and usually more changes are expected on the side of migrants (Berry, 2001; Kalonaityte, 2010). In addition to the personal, integration also has a policy dimension. Policies, as Penninx & Mascareñas (2016) argues, tend to represent society's expectations and demands rather than being based on participation, negotiation and agreement with immigrant groups. The aim of the official Finnish Integration Program is to ensure that those who have a residence permit in Finland get access to normal accommodation, education and training as soon as possible, and subsequently to the Finnish labour market (Government of Finland, 2016; Saukkonen, 2016).

Finland has been a destination for increasing numbers of migrants since the late 1980s (Statistics Finland, 2016). In comparison with other European countries, Finland's foreign population is still rather small, comprising 258,000 people (4.7% of the population) in 2018. In that same year, almost 400 000 people living in Finland had a mother tongue other than Finnish or Swedish (Finland's national languages) or Sami (an officially recognized minority language) (Statistics Finland, 2019). Migrants in Finland come from 180 countries, with the largest

groups coming from Estonia, Russia and Iraq. In 2018 the three most spoken languages of citizens with a migrant background were Russian, Estonian and Arabic (Statistics Finland, 2019). The number of migrants in Finnish educational institutions, including VET, has grown steadily. Between 2010 and 2018, the percentage of foreign language speakers in Finnish VET grew from 4.6% to 11.4%. In response to these trends, and partly too because of the wave of refugees coming to Europe and Finland in 2015, migrants' access to Finnish VET was made easier in 2016, for example by reserving some places for migrants and changing the language requirements (AMKE, 2016; FNAE, 2017). Despite the demographic changes in the student population, educators are not yet fully prepared to face the complexity and multidimensionality of diversity they have brought about (e.g., Kärkkäinen, 2017; Teräs, 2007). Improving our understanding of integration from the different viewpoints of those involved in education could enable us to promote the integration of migrants in formal learning, particularly in VET.

VET is considered one possible educational path for adult migrants who want to upgrade or gain new skills and improve their chances on the job market (Bergseng et al., 2019). However, a number of factors may make adult migrants' educational paths more difficult. The national curriculum for any level of education tends to be designed for native students, so it may be difficult for students with a migrant background to adapt to the culturally and cognitively rooted teaching and learning practices (e.g. Lamonica et al., 2020). Insufficient language skills, age at migration, and a lack of both cultural and economic capital can also impact on educational advantage (Contini, 2013; Lamonica et al., 2020). Then although VET is an important arena of



integration for migrants, the transition from VET to the labour market is not always smooth (Bergseng et al., 2019). The research literature therefore indicates that the relationship between education and integration should be considered more holistically, and more consideration should be given to the kind of support adult migrant students need for educational achievement and gaining a feeling of belonging.

## **2 THEORY**

### **2.1 PARTICIPATION AND A SENSE OF BELONGING AS MIRRORING THE NATURE OF INTEGRATION**

This study uses the concept of integration, despite its vagueness, inadequacy, and politicization (eg., Grzymala-Kazłowska & Phillimore, 2018; Miera, 2012; Veikou, 2013), to explore the phenomena and processes caused by increased migration. The use of the concept in this study goes beyond normative and assimilationist stances (Grzymala-Kazłowska & Phillimore, 2018; Phillimore, 2012) and emphasizes the two-way nature of integration. We mean by two-way the active and mutual involvement of migrants and non-natives in various activities and the life-long process of learning that takes place in different spaces (Modood, 2011; Morrice et al., 2017).

Fair participation leading to equal opportunities, independence and a feeling of being truly bonded to society is seen as one of the key issues in successful integration (e.g., Grzymala-Kazłowska, 2018). By fair participation we mean actual involvement in education, working life and social life as well as a subjective feeling of participating (Forsander, 2013; Ryan, 2018). Opportunities for participation outside formal settings also matter (Alenius, 2015).

Meaningful participation in different areas of life followed by a subjective feeling of taking part in whatever is going on leads to many positive developments. Through participation individuals see themselves (and are perceived by others) as valuable members of the community (Forsander, 2013) and have the opportunity to extend and diversify their social networks and feel truly bonded to a certain place (Phillimore et al., 2018). Especially having local, in this case Finnish, friends is considered to support integration (Dahinden, 2013). Socio-psychological stability and security are gained by engagement in searching for different types of anchors, e.g., economic, material, cultural, and habitual (Grzymala-Kazłowska, 2018). Independence and autonomy, as well as a feeling of control over one's own life, are recognized as being important to integration, regardless of a migrant's gender, education, socio-economic position, family status (Ager & Strang, 2008; Bakker et al., 2014; Cheung & Pillimore, 2013) or migration status (Strang et al., 2018).

The process of creating a sense of connection to people and places, realized as a feeling of attachment, embeddedness and stability in the new country, is also a sign of gaining a sense of belonging (Fortier, 2000; Grzymala-Moszczyńska & Trabka, 2014; Ryan & Mulholland, 2015). Belonging refers to a subjective feeling of being safe, comfortable and at home, and is experienced in people's friendliness. The sense of belonging is considered a basic human need, which adds to well-being (e.g., Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and is formed in the "process of being and becoming, belonging and longing to belong" as manifested by individuals themselves (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 202). Belonging is understood as identification with the country of residence. It is considered to be a result of everyday routines and practices

(Anthias et al., 2013), and is related to having a feeling for and being familiar with the manners and customs of a certain social context (May, 2013).

Definitions and the boundaries of belonging are constructed, negotiated, disputed and performed as an effect of social and political processes (e.g. Ager & Strang, 2008; May, 2013; Yuval-Davis, 2011). The issue of belonging comes to the fore when individuals' welfare is disturbed and threatened (May, 2013, p. 94), for example when living in a new cultural and linguistic environment. The process of negotiation of the senses of belonging and attachment is dynamic, temporal, spatial and relational (Ryan, 2018). This process is the result of a complex interplay of various social and intersectional dimensions such as ethnic and national attachments, age, gender, education, legal status, class, migration channels, policies, and religious and family background (e.g. Kaukko & Wernesjö, 2017; Yuval-Davis, 2011); it can also be related to everyday experiences and opportunities in the new country (Vertovec, 2007; Wessendorf, 2018).

Ryan (2018) argues that desire to have a new life somewhere happens step-by-step through "experiences of engagement with the people and places that make up their social worlds" (p. 235). Thus, both integration and belonging are long-term processes which mostly occur imperceptibly, as they are integral to everyday life (Veikou, 2013). They happen as one makes sense of new experiences and new knowledge on the basis of one's previous knowledge and experiences (e.g., Merriam et al., 2020). The process of integration also affects the native population, who must give up some earlier beliefs and acquire new knowledge and skills (Pitkänen, 2007).

Some previous research shows that the lengthy nature of the process is also related to the ideal of a 'good' migrant as some-

one who works hard, unlearns old ways and shows gratitude in order to become accepted (Näre, 2013; see also Shukla, 2016). Migrants often try to overcome the suspicion that they lack skills and qualifications through education, including VET (e.g. Kärkkäinen, 2017; Simons & Masschelein, 2008). Educators and employers may be concerned about migrants' language skills and their cultural background (Ahmad, 2020; Olakivi, 2020), especially if the migrants come from so-called 'Third World' countries (Krivonos, 2019). Merriam et al. (2020) noted that typically the 'ideal' adult learner is white, middle class, quite young, and already working and well-educated (p.112). These views of the 'ideal' adult learner are challenged by the presence of migrants, especially those with a non-Western background.

### **3 METHODS**

#### **3.1 RESEARCH CONTEXT AND PARTICIPANTS**

The VET programmes of the study were organized according to the Finnish Competence Based Qualification (CBQ) system. This offers flexible recognition of previously acquired competences through training, work experience or being engaged in some other activities (FNBE, 2014). Learning and the assessment of students' competences happens mostly in actual workplaces. Before taking competence-based exam students are required to prepare a portfolio. Personalization is a feature and strength of Finnish VET (FNBE, 2010). Attention is paid to individual students' needs, including for those of students of migrant background (FNBE, 2010). This is usually realized through a Personal Study Plan designed in cooperation with the student, language support, and flexible language requirements (FNAE, 2017; Law on Vocational Education for Adults, 274/2015).

As this qualitative study focuses on meaning-making that is constructed in collaboration with the interviewees, the study has features of the constructivist approach (Schwandt, 2007). The study was conducted in one of the biggest providers of adult vocational education in Finland. We found the participants, both teaching staff and students, through a contact person in the institute who was carefully informed on the terms of participation. We selected participants for the study through purposeful sampling, and the main criteria for participation were, for migrant students, arriving in Finland as a young adult or adult, aged over 21, and studying in a VET programme, and for teaching staff, having some experience of teaching migrant students. We tried to ensure that the sample was diverse in terms of age, gender and VET programme. The participants ( $n=30$ ), all of whom participated voluntarily, consisted of two groups: migrant students ( $n=17$ ) and teaching staff ( $n=13$ ). The vocational programmes they were involved in were Social and Health Care (practical nursing), Cleaning Services, Hotel and Catering Services, Food Production (bakery/confectionary), Wood Processing, Audio-visual Communication, Business and Commerce, Safety and Security, and Construction. The gender ratio of the students was 13 women and 4 men, their ages ranged from 22 to 45 years, and they had moved to Finland either as adults ( $n=16$ ) or as youths ( $n=1$ ). Their reasons for migrating to Finland were marriage to a Finn ( $n=8$ ), marriage to an Ingrian Finn ( $n=2$ ), marriage to another person of the same ethnic background ( $n=1$ ), following their husband who got work in Finland ( $n=3$ ), coming as an asylum seeker or under refugee status ( $n=2$ ), or having Finnish ancestry ( $n=1$ ). The students spoke 17 languages (including Finnish) and came from Africa

(n=3), Eastern Europe (n=5), South America (n=2) and Australia/Oceania (n=1). Most of the students migrated to Finland from their country of birth (n=9), but others had lived in one or more other countries before arriving there (n=6). Two of them had acquired Finnish citizenship. The length of stay in Finland ranged from 3 to 20 years. All the students had participated in language courses during their time in Finland, although there were significant differences in the type and length of courses and consequently in the students' level of Finnish language proficiency. About a third of the students had some work experience in Finland (n=5) and a few studied in the field that corresponded to their education or previous work experience (n=3). Though participation in preparatory training is not always obligatory before undertaking the CBQ test, all the students had participated in this type of training in the form of school-based preparatory training, apprenticeship training, or alongside their regular work. All the migrant participants were participating in regular VET programmes designed for Finns.

The teaching staff (n=13) ranged in age from 33 to 64 years. The gender ratio was female (n=8) to male (n=5). Teaching experience (generally and in terms of teaching migrants) varied from very little to 20 years. Some experience involved teaching migrants on integration training programmes. About half the teachers (n=7) had some international experience, two (n=2) had lived abroad for an extended period of time, and the partner of one of the teachers was a non-Finnish citizen. The teaching staff claimed to speak other languages with varying degrees of fluency: English (n=13), Swedish (n=6) and German (n=5).

### 3.2 DATA AND DATA COLLECTION

We used interviewing, including one focus group interview, as our method of data collection (Brinkmann, 2014; Pietilä, 2010). The interviews were semi-structured and focused on themes such as adult migrant students' and VET teachers' views on and experiences of migrants' learning processes, integration, teaching this group of migrants, and the role of education and the VET teacher in these processes. The themes for the interviews were developed after initial familiarization with existing research in the field and finalized after pilot interviewing.

All 13 staff members (including the director of the adult institute) were interviewed individually. The set of data gathered from the students ( $n=17$ ) comprises 11 individual interviews and one group interview with six female students studying cleaning services. In the individual interviews, knowledge was built in interaction between the interviewee and the researcher. During the group discussion, the researcher acted as a moderator and the participants were encouraged to debate and construct knowledge in the process of their interaction (Pietilä, 2010).

Before the interviews, the main researcher contacted all the potential interviewees to provide information on the research and to explain the purpose of the interviews and group discussion. All interviews with the institute staff were conducted in Finnish. Despite being offered a choice, all the student participants also wanted to discuss in Finnish. This preference was respected and other languages were used only if necessary. The interviews lasted from 30-120 minutes and were audio-recorded (30 hours of recording) and transcribed (520 pages of text). In order to follow the Finnish Research Council's ethical policy on

the anonymity of research participants, the participants were coded by a single letter and a number, teaching staff (T<sub>1</sub>-T<sub>13</sub>) and students (S<sub>1</sub>-S<sub>17</sub>). All the participants signed the informed consent and were informed about the possibility of withdrawing from the study. The multilingual and multicultural setting of the study was taken into account in the process of collecting, analysing and reporting the data according to suggestions developed by Nikander (2008), Ratsas, (2005) and Ryen (2002).

### 3.3 DATA ANALYSIS

The data were analysed using inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The identified themes mirror the data on migrant students' and teachers' perspectives on integration and belonging in the Finnish VET context. Before the analysis we familiarized ourselves with the range of research and theoretical concepts related to the topic. Those parts of the data that related to integration and belonging were read, re-read and coded freely (inductively). The codes were grouped in potential themes, which were reviewed, defined and named. Finally, examples were chosen for analysis. The analysis concentrated on description of the patterns in each theme, but it also involved theorizing about the patterns, their meanings and implications in relation to the literature presented in the theory part. The analysis was conducted using Qualitative Data Analysis & Research Software (Atlas.ti). Table 1 presents an example of the steps of the analysis of the whole data set.



Table 1. An example of the steps of the analysis.

Codes	Sub-themes	Main theme
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Updating skills</li> <li>- Gaining new position</li> <li>- Negotiating between context and positions</li> <li>- Gaining context-specific knowledge</li> <li>- Negotiating of responsibilities</li> <li>- Negotiating one's own learning and integration path (also responding to the obligation to learn)</li> <li>- Negotiating who am I and where I belong</li> <li>- Negotiating one's own role in giving space to the expression of migrant identities</li> </ul>	<p>Negotiation of new position as difficult, and the lifelong learning process</p>	<p>Theme 2: Negotiation of new positions and meanings as a lifelong learning process and an expected condition for experiencing belonging</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Learning as part of migrant everyday life, which happens in a variety of spaces</li> <li>- Constant learning of new things</li> <li>- Hard beginning</li> <li>- Learning about the working culture of a certain field</li> <li>- Extending one's vocational knowledge</li> </ul>	<p>Adjusting through the acquisition of new skills and knowledge</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Accepting a reduction in position</li> <li>- Adjusting to Finnish ways of doing and thinking</li> <li>- Accepting that the homeland will always be a homeland</li> <li>- Living (in) the present</li> <li>- Taking the best from both contexts</li> </ul>	<p>Acceptance</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Being positive about others' intentions</li> <li>- Being patient</li> <li>- Concentrating on emerging opportunities</li> <li>- Being proactive in building one's own life in a new country</li> <li>- Self-confidence</li> <li>- Finding one's own path</li> <li>- Joy of learning something new</li> </ul>	<p>Positivity (as a condition for negotiating a new position)</p>	

## 4 RESULTS

### 4.1 INTEGRATION AS PARTICIPATION AND FINDING ONE'S OWN PLACE IN THE HOST SOCIETY

The study's participants, both VET teachers and migrant students, perceived integration as finding one's place in a new society and developing belonging through mutual engagement in various interactions. Participation in education and working life during practice periods was recognized as only one of the possible avenues to being bonded to Finnish society. The study participants (especially the teachers) saw being involved in common activities outside the formal education context, such as hobbies, as excellent opportunities to diversify and extend social networks and intercultural learning for everyone involved in these interactions. A few teachers pointed out that people with a migration background show that they are active in society through such involvement. The teachers perceived this activity as positive and claimed that potential employers shared this perception.

[...] a hobby naturally gives the opportunity to be engaged in different activities with people. If you don't have a job, having some hobbies can be a good idea. Through hobbies you'll get to know people and often in order to get a job, it's necessary that somebody knows you. (T10)

As was made clear in this and some other interviews, especially having Finnish networks and knowing a Finn was considered essential for finding a job. Participating in both education and in activities outside the official hours of education and working life was considered to create ample opportunities to gain con-

text-relevant knowledge (including knowledge of the Finnish language) and was seen as a condition for gaining independence, autonomy and full membership of society. These aspects were further recognized by some teachers as a step towards creating the sense of belonging:

[...] Integration is like you would find your place in this society. You have here your home, work or study place and you feel a part of this society and you know how this society works, what your rights are, what your obligations are, for example as a citizen [...] you can work and in the end you'll find your place [...] earn money, and you'll become a tax payer and then eventually you'll be integrated. And maybe at first you miss your home and you want to leave, but then [you think] that this is the place where you live now. (T12)

Here the teacher also follows ideas of the ideal migrant who contributes to the host society. At the same time the teacher recognizes the importance of employment in creating a feeling of belonging, but without commenting on the relevance of employment to the migrant student's qualifications. The teacher also recognized the importance of knowing about the new society. Some students, too, emphasized that knowing enough about the host society is linked to having the same ability to act as everybody else, being independent and attached to the host society. Separate interviews with one student (S6) and one teacher (T3) showed that ignorance of the details of practical matters in Finland, like for example being unaware of the laws related to managing a company or property rights in Finland, created complications.

On the other hand, though recognizing the importance of equipping migrants with knowledge of how to deal with officialdom in Finland, T7 expressed concern at the idea of limiting integration to formal settings and the transmission of such technical information. The teacher saw this as a threat to creating a true bond with Finnish society. Some students' experiences reflected the validity of T7's concerns. Despite attending courses and having context-specific knowledge, some students said they felt excluded and lonely, with only limited contacts with Finns outside the formal hours of learning and integration. A couple of teachers also noticed that their migrant students frequently had poor social networks and that not all migrants have the same chance of inclusion, as the following reflection on migrant students from non-Western backgrounds shows:

[...] now we once again have to make clear whether we're talking about Westerners or others. People from Western countries are usually accepted by society much more easily because they have pretty much the same cultural background: the Russians, Germans, Swedes, Americans, Brits, French, they integrate more easily. But then if we're talking about someone from Burma, India, Arab countries, Africa, they're very much outsiders and they aren't accepted easily. (T7)

This excerpt is also an example of how students are categorized and at the same time the generalizing and stereotyping of what kind of students they are and where they stand in relation to (opportunities for) integration. Othering practices and colonial thinking (e.g., seeing Africa as one country), and dividing the world into more privileged and intelligent Westerners, the 'first

World', and less privileged and less intelligent non-Westerners, 'Third World', may work here as barriers to participation and to finding one's own place in society.

Similarly, not being fluent in the host country language was considered a hindrance to full participation and a cause of many frustrations for both students and teachers. Two or three students had experienced that being foreign-born was quickly associated with a lack of Finnish language proficiency. In two cases their peers and co-workers used their poor proficiency in Finnish as grounds for questioning their right to belong to Finnish society. The interviewees, both teachers and students, recognized that every vocational field and workplace offers different opportunities for being engaged, having conversations, exchanging ideas, learning, extending social networks and at the same time developing a sense of belonging.

#### 4.2 THE NEGOTIATION OF NEW POSITIONS, SKILLS AND MEANINGS AS A LIFELONG LEARNING PROCESS AND AN EXPECTED CONDITION FOR EXPERIENCING BELONGING

Integration was also characterized by teachers and students as acceptance and a long process of negotiating new roles, positions and meanings (often in relation to others). According to these views, being a migrant requires acceptance of the idea that moving to a new country usually involves a reduction in status, and gaining equal status in the new country requires persistence, hard work and time. This indicates that teachers and migrant students themselves believed that immigrants are expected to work hard and show gratitude, and that one becomes accepted

once one becomes the ideal “good” immigrant. One teacher explained the need to update skills and how long it takes to find a satisfactory job. Many students described their life as a long journey of learning Finnish, and learning both a vocation and about the specifics of Finnish working life. Discussions with some students showed that a good education did not always result in a good position in the labour market, nor in immediately finding the right integration path. For three students, this negotiation process and learning journey as well as the desire to be accepted and to belong involved trying out different training courses and vocations. The length of this process was also related to distrust in migrants’ skills and the expectation that one should be perfectly prepared for a certain vocation. As the following excerpt shows, it was believed that these problems could be overcome with learning:

[...] there where they come from they have their own requirements concerning work quality and these requirements can be so different from here. Then it easily happens that the guy does his job for a while, then someone says that he still doesn’t know enough or isn’t good enough. So much time has to be invested in learning. (T10)

Adjustment, acceptance and learning were usually perceived as obligations or conditions for integration and belonging. Some teachers suggested that in order to adjust successfully, students needed to unlearn their old ways, which prolonged the process of adjustment. This also meant that the expectation was that migrants in integration training and vocational education should change, become something else, adapt, obey and submit to what is

needed. The change was viewed as the end result of participation in education and consequently integration. The dilemma they face in negotiating a new position is evident in this reflection:

[...] we had an Afghan guy and he was some kind of village chief in his country of origin [...] he couldn't go to such a working-class job, he couldn't wear overalls [...] I mean he was keeping up his role in his country of origin, though it didn't matter here at all [...] In a way, immigrants have to give up something from their past. (T10)

The aspect of unlearning something in one's own past did not emerge in the students' interviews. They considered their previous experiences as a basis for learning and integration. Only one teacher, in the field of construction, discussed the need for a two-way process and mutual collaboration.

The process of negotiation for a new position and of understanding one's own role in this process was accompanied by many existential dilemmas. This was evident in students' reflections on who they are, their right to be in Finland and on what terms, what really makes somebody a part of a new society, what is important, and if the feeling of becoming a part of the host society reduces the migrant's background identity. For example:

I've been asked many times [why I came to Finland]. If I came, for example, because of marriage or work, then I'd be a foreigner. My grandmother is a Finn, she speaks Finnish. I was only born in another country. But I don't feel that I'm a Finn. No! But I have a right to be here. (S3)

The student talked about the way her belonging was questioned by some of her Finnish peers, which she experienced as unfriendliness and a challenge to her process of developing a sense of belonging. Another student considered the best possible solution when negotiating between different cultures to be taking the best from both cultural backgrounds, recognizing that constructing one's own identity meant balancing between existing and historically and socially created frames. Teachers, too, showed that they were involved in the process of negotiation by discussing how, on the one hand, to respect students' origins and, on the other, to promote their integration by adapting their own pedagogical practices or encouraging their students to adjust to Finnish working life.

Both teachers and students recognized that the process of adjustment and negotiation is especially challenging when migrants arrive in Finland. The challenge then is the need to live in a completely new environment, the lack of local knowledge (e.g., the language, or how to deal with everyday matters) and limited social networks. Teachers saw their own early years of teaching migrant students as challenging, too, awaking contradictory emotions (like joy, anxiety and uncertainty) and involving a process of gradually gaining self-confidence, expertise in practice and acceptance of the circumstances. Learning to interact and constructing reciprocal relationships between teachers and students was a question of two-way, mutual integration which seemed to happen of itself, without their being aware of it.

Both students and teachers viewed a positive attitude to others' intentions, patience and intercultural encounters as emerging opportunities and as promoting integration. They also



thought that openness to new situations, encounters and learning made the negotiation of positions and adjustment easier. This was discussed by two students of Eastern European background who were convinced that if migrants had persistently negative thoughts, their lives would reflect that negativity. These two students had a different strategy: they took control of their lives and gained the necessary qualifications. They asserted with evident self-confidence that they would succeed in Finland. They were not alone in having such views:

In [student's homeland] we say that a man makes his own life. If you want to work you will always get a job [...]. In my view, everything depends on you [...] And I'm convinced that I'll get a job. (S1)

These views are in line with 'ideal integration' thinking and may be a sign that the students have internalized the 'ideal immigrant' mentality, according to which, migrants should think positively, be grateful, find a job and have a good life in order to integrate. At the same time, some of the students recognized that different groups of migrants have different starting points for developing their own lives in Finland, with refugees (or others forced to migrate) and non-Western migrants being at a relative disadvantage. As the discussion with the following student shows, the process of really belonging and being attached may be lengthy and difficult:

In the beginning I wanted to move back, the first two years. I didn't want to study Finnish or anything else. I was 15 years old [...]. It was a difficult age and all my friends stayed there

[in my home country]. And then everything changed when I got my first job and I was appreciated there. (S<sub>3</sub>)

As the above excerpt illustrates, getting a new job that corresponds to a person's expectations may change one's psychological state and may encourage a feeling of attachment and future orientation to a new country, and stability.

The negotiation of a new position in the context of demographic changes was also challenging for Finnish teachers. However, the teachers considered that concentrating on the positive aspects of teaching migrant students, like feeling that they are learning something new and growing as professionals as well as the migrant students' appreciation of their work, helped them do their work properly and with passion, and adjust to the new situation.

## 5 DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to examine the meanings that teachers and adult migrant students give to integration, and under what conditions a sense of belonging can emerge or be experienced by adult migrant students. According to the findings, the participants saw participation, engagement in various activities and the extension of their networks as greatly supporting structural integration, for example, in terms of finding gainful employment (Drever & Hoffmeister, 2008). This aligns with Ager and Strang (2008), who argue that participation is a key element in finding one's way to one's own place in a new host society and ensuring a feeling of belonging. The study has also shown that both a variety of interactions and social connections and their quality are

essential for belonging (Dahinden, 2013). Social contacts limited to one's own ethnic group and other migrant groups do not ultimately seem to be sufficient (Cheung & Phillimore, 2013).

The conviction was that migrants should take the initiative, accept the situation, learn, and finally integrate and contribute to society, e.g., by paying taxes. This follows the perspectives of the 'good immigrant' and 'ideal integration' (Näre, 2013; see also Shukla, 2016). According to the results, especially teachers' talk echoed a normative perspective on integration, i.e., migrants' own responsibility for being agents of their life (Grzymala-Kazłowska, 2018; Grzymala-Kazłowska & Phillimore, 2018), especially for those of non-Western backgrounds (Krivonos, 2019). For migrants, learning more and responding positively to any subsequent changes in their lives were seen as beneficial and an essential part of their lives and obligations, but they were seen as voluntary for Finnish teachers. Such expectations may be related to the belief that migrants' lack of certain qualities, certain types of previous experience and learning is an obstacle to integration and that this can be corrected by means of education (Lamonica et al., 2020). However, in accordance with principles of learning in adulthood this previous knowledge and experience should rather be seen as a resource for negotiating new meanings and building migrants' lives in Finland (Merriam et al., 2020).

Local knowledge, including knowledge of the Finnish language, was perceived as a facilitator of participation in society, and this knowledge was believed to be further extended as a result of engagement in different interactions. This type of knowledge was linked in the study to migrant students gaining independence, and to their feelings of equality, stability and security, all of which are elements in gaining a subjective

feeling of belonging (Grzymala-Kazłowska, 2018; Ryan, 2018; Yuval-Davis, 2011) and creating connections between migrants and the state (Ager & Strang, 2008). However, some participants challenged this type of thinking and questioned the view of integration as something that develops through acquiring practical knowledge (e.g., related to dealing with Finnish officials) and participation that is restricted to the official working hours of Finnish institutions (Ager & Strang, 2008; Veikou, 2013). This argument is connected to a sense of belonging and attachment that develops gradually and imperceptibly in daily interactions and observations and mainly in informal spaces (Alenius, 2015; Veikou, 2013). The results of the study suggest that the opportunities for learning that exist in daily life are not fully understood and utilized. Finnish national policy emphasizes the importance of lifelong learning and education (including VET education) for integration (Ala-Kauholuoma, 2018; Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, 2017). However, the results of the study suggest that the role of education in integration should be considered critically, in terms not only of students' individual needs and difficulties in the recognition of migrants' skills and experiences, but also of teachers' pedagogical competence in culturally responsive teaching and the response of teacher in-service education in this regard.

The study showed the importance of a two-way perspective on integration and difficulties related to it. This mutual character and reciprocal nature of integration emerged when teachers and students talked about the need to rethink and negotiate their own positions, rights and obligations, and their own role, often in relation to others. The teachers echoed the view that they, as natives, also have some responsibilities in this respect

(Komisarof, 2009; Leong, 2014; Modood, 2011). By engaging in interaction and negotiation both migrants and teachers had an opportunity to build a new understanding of themselves as people and professionals. This process was accompanied by teachers reflecting on their practices and their practices being occasionally questioned by other parties involved in the process. Migrant students' sense of belonging was particularly threatened by their peers' questioning of their right to be in Finland. In line with previous research, all these processes were shown to be emotionally, socially and cognitively challenging and stressful for both migrants and natives (Leong, 2014).

## **6 CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

This study deepens our understanding of integration as a process of fair and equal participation leading to the gaining of independence and autonomy and developing a subjective feeling of belonging (Ager & Strang, 2008; Grzymala-Kazłowska, 2018; Ryan, 2018), and which requires involvement and change on the side of both migrants and natives (Komisarof, 2009; Leong, 2014). The results also raise awareness of the challenges and opportunities that support adult migrants' acquisition of new knowledge and skills and promote their integration in an educational setting. First, the study shows that, although educational institutions can support integration and create possibilities for integration to happen, there should also be more opportunities for "meaningful" interactions outside the hours of formal schooling and work (see also Grzymala-Kazłowska, 2018). Second, it became clear that adjustment and the development of

a sense of belonging depend on the intersection of opportunities, socio-demographic dimensions and expectations (see also Kaukko & Wernesjö, 2017; Wessendorf, 2018; Yuval-Davis, 2011). Normative views on integration may be a barrier to two-way, mutual integration. Third, especially novice teachers struggle with the negotiation of new positions and the increasing diversity in the classrooms.

In conclusion, future research needs to lead to better understanding of diversity and intersections as well as ways of supporting migrants and experts in professional orientations, including VET teachers. This, as well as broadening teachers' and migrant students' perspectives on integration, may be crucial for promoting migrant students' integration and their sense of belonging. Further research is needed on the conditions most conducive to integration and the development of a sense of belonging and attachment, with the emphasis on researching integration as lifelong learning, as a two-way process that requires mutual engagement and change on the part of both migrants and natives (see also Miera, 2012).

Due to the small size of the sample population ( $n=30$ ), the findings of this study cannot be generalized: they could be different in another educational institution or another region of Finland. Nevertheless, different groups of interviewees and different types of interviews enriched the study by providing different parties' perspectives and generating a much richer set of data in terms of interaction and knowledge, which added to the study's credibility (Pietilä, 2010) and content (Hennink, 2008). To deepen understanding of the process of integration and the role of VET in this process, comparative research in the VET context and work organizations nationally and globally could

be of value.

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## Newly arrived immigrants' endeavours to establish themselves on the Swedish labour market

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**Abstract:** A large proportion of adults immigrating to Sweden have post-secondary education and professional experience. Various initiatives of a more or less lasting nature are carried out with the aim of integrating the new arrivals into Swedish society and working life. One of the initiatives developed in the Stockholm region is the education program Swedish for vocations (Sfx). This article presents the results of a sub-study on the educational program Sfx that draws on narratives of a sample of former Sfx participants. The narratives cover three periods in the interviewees' biographies: the time before immigration, the first period of time in Sweden with a focus on their participation in the Sfx program and what it meant for their establishment in

society, and their views on a more sustainable (long-term and comprehensive) utilization and development of newly arrived immigrants' skills.

**Keywords:** competences, employability, integration, labour market establishment, Sfx (Swedish for vocations)

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The integration of newly arrived immigrants is presented in the public debate as one of the major challenges facing Sweden today. Integration is usually associated with establishment on the labour market. Getting a job or some form of paid employment is used as a strong indicator of successful integration into the new country (Forte, 2020).

In the European Commission's latest in-depth review of the situation in the Member States regarding everything from the economy, trade and the labour market to education and healthcare, Sweden is warned, among other things, about the poor integration of foreign-born people into the labour market (European Commission, 2020). Sweden is the EU country with the largest gap in the employment rate between native-born and non-EU-born, more than twice the EU average. However, employment rates vary between different socio-economic groups. While labour shortages exist, the integration of people with a migrant background into the Swedish labour market is a major challenge. There is also a mismatch in the labour market where the skills of the unemployed do not match the jobs available, particularly in high-skilled jobs (op.cit.).

This chapter presents the results of a sub-study of a larger research project on Swedish for Vocations (Sfx), based on nar-

ratives of a sample of former Sfx participants. Sfx stands for a collaboration initiative between the municipalities in Stockholm County with the aim of utilizing the skills of newly arrived immigrants.

The interviewees' stories cover three periods: the time before immigration, the first period in Sweden with a focus on their participation in the Sfx program and what it meant for their establishment in society, and their views on more sustainable (long-term and comprehensive) usage and development of newcomers' skills. More specifically, it examines the transition of former Sfx participants from education to work, the strategies they apply to assert and establish themselves in the Swedish labour market, and how Sfx education can help to better prepare newcomers for the demands, both expressed and unspoken, that the Swedish labour market places upon them.

Sfx started exactly 20 years ago as a partly ESF-funded project<sup>12</sup> in the Stockholm region, on the initiative of the County Administrative Board and in collaboration with the County Council, three municipalities and the County Employment Board. The aim of the project was to create a new form of education to improve the efficiency of Swedish language instruction for new immigrants with an academic background in medical care. A new training concept would shorten the time it takes to learn Swedish and later supplement it with additional training in professional language to obtain Swedish authorisation, which would lead to a faster transition into working life (Höghlielm & Gougoulakis, 2009). Initially based at Södertörn University in Södertälje, the program was run on a full-time basis and, in addition to the language, the participants studied social studies

12 ESF: European Social Fond

and medical vocabulary. What made such training urgent was the shortage of trained staff in the Swedish health service.

Gradually, more Sfx programmes were launched, targeting other groups of newcomers with other professional backgrounds, such as engineers, educators, economists and craftsmen, while Sfx was incorporated into municipal adult education. These programs also received good evaluations, helping to establish Sfx training in the region. Nowadays, all the municipalities in Stockholm County collaborate on the Sfx programs and anyone who lives in the county and fulfils the requirements that are regulated by an inter-municipal agreement can apply. If the home municipality approves the application, it pays the municipality that organizes the particular Sfx-program according to an inter-municipal compensation tariff (KSL, 2012).

The target group for Sfx is individuals who, based on the current migration and integration policy framework, have been granted a residence permit in Sweden and are received in a Swedish municipality ([www.sfx.se](http://www.sfx.se); Gougoulakis & Lagercrantz, 2020; Länsstyrelsen Stockholm, 2017; Höghiell & Gougoulakis, 2009; Höghiell & Gougoulakis, 2007). Sfx and other activities targeting newly arrived migrants, arise at the intersection of mainly three policy areas: migration and immigration policy, labour market policy and integration policy.

## **2. PREVIOUS RESEARCH AND POLICY DOCUMENTS ON THE INTEGRATION OF NEWCOMERS AND THE USE OF THEIR COMPETENCES**

A review of Nordic migration and integration research produced by NordForsk (2017) shows that research themes such as integration, transnationalism, labour market, education and

gender are prevalent in Nordic research on migration and integration. Especially, integration is studied predominantly in relation to the labour market:

This undoubtedly reflects the precarious employment situation that many migrant groups face in Nordic societies; the employment rate of migrants constantly lags well behind the native-born population, especially in the case of humanitarian migrants. (NordForsk, 2017, p. 31).

Migration policy and integration policy are different. The former focuses on harnessing demand-driven labour migration and its potential, while integration policy has a broader perspective, covering areas such as the labour market, education, health and housing from a gender equality perspective (Regeringens proposition 2020/21:1, Utgiftsområde 13).

Knowledge of the Swedish language and study and vocational guidance are identified as particularly important for the establishment of new entrants (cf SOU 2019:4; SOU 2020:66). The KLIVA Inquiry (SOU 2020:66), which has been tasked with proposing possible changes to municipal adult education in Swedish for immigrants (Sfi) and Sfi in combination with other education programs in municipal adult education (Komvux), has based its work on the overall objectives of Komvux. These objectives also apply to Sfx, as the education is provided under the auspices of the municipal adult education system and are aimed to support and stimulate students in their learning, to provide opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills in order to strengthen their position in working and social life and to promote personal development. Thus, Sfx should form



part of the overall strategy for national and regional provision of skills for the world of work.

Other special efforts made by municipalities and various associations to support new migrants' establishment in society, such as activities with refugee guides and family contacts, help to create networks and facilitate their language learning:

People starting up again in Sweden should be given the best possible conditions to establish themselves and contribute to our common welfare. The work on integration and the establishment of newcomers in working and social life is a fundamental part of the government's goal of a society that is cohesive and provides equal opportunities for all. There are many indications that the current pandemic is worsening the conditions for integration and establishment. (Regeringens proposition 2020/21:1, p. 1744, our translation)

The underlying assumption in official documents is essentially that the establishment in working life of new arrivals, and, by extension, their integration into Swedish society, is dependent on specific measures and efforts. Implicitly, these are based on the notion that the newly arrived, as "non-Swedes", are less employable. Therefore, they need to learn "Swedishness" through different and preferably individualizing techniques, such as "personalized action plans, individual job coaching and guidance, which aim at making the project participants responsible for their situation as unemployed" (Vesterberg, 2016, p.63). What seems to promote the attainment of desirable Swedishness (and employability) is the elimination of various deficits that the newcomers are afflicted with, and rarely the recognition of their assets and actual competences (Diedrich & Styhre, 2013).

The transition from education to the labour market, and the discrimination faced by immigrants in the labour market, is highlighted in migration research (e.g. Rooth & Carlsson 2007; Larja et al. 2012). The NordForsk report refers to Näre (2016), who points out that the labour market is often perceived as a neutral field, separate from other social fields, such as requirements for family reunification, and that integration is uncritically linked almost unilaterally to language proficiency and employment. According to the research, some of the factors influencing the integration of newcomers into the labour market are: the economic situation, the labour market's demand for specific skills and the level of education of newcomers, but also suspicion about the education of certain countries, the lack of contacts and social networks, the availability or absence of social interventions that could facilitate newcomers' entry into the labour market, and the presence of explicit and/or subtle discrimination linked to ethnicity or religion in recruitment, which may be due to employers' limited knowledge and uncertainty in dealing with differences and cultural diversity (see Forte, 2020).

The research presents various solutions that could potentially help newcomers to find a job. These include different forms of employment, complementary skills enhancement in the form of training and/or workplace internships, combined with validation of real skills, and a change in attitude and readiness of workplaces to accept individuals with different ethnic and cultural backgrounds (e.g. Delmi, 2018; Andersson Joona, 2018).

Notwithstanding, it cannot be stressed enough that newcomers do not form a homogeneous category with a common background, nor do all included in this category share the same experiences in their attempts to get established in the Swedish labour

market and in society. For example, statistics and research show that newcomers are run the risk of ending up in jobs for which they are overqualified, or doing odd jobs outside their qualifications for meagre pay just to survive. But behind this overall statistical pattern lie other sub-patterns that need to be identified and analysed. Therefore, research that applies idiographic methods in studies of newcomers' integration into society, and how they are treated in the Swedish labour market, is valuable, as it brings insights and understanding of individual events or actions, based on observations and authentic narratives.

### **3. THEORETICAL FRAMING**

In this part, the concept of “employability” is highlighted from a competence development and integration perspective. It focuses on a discussion of what attributes and competencies employability should include and are therefore worth training.

#### **3.1 SOCIAL CHANGES AND INTEGRATION**

The accelerating pace of change that characterises our times, triggered by social, technological and cultural movements, affects the nature of society at all levels. The more globalised and open economic activity becomes, the stronger the competition between regions and countries. Production and working life are being transformed in ways that are not always easy to get an overview of and comprehend. The future can no longer be planned with the same confidence as in the past, with the risk of an imbalance between supply and demand for skills in the labour market. The skills that were previously required to make

someone sufficiently “profitable” are therefore not the same in today’s world of work:

For the knowledge-driven economy, it is not enough for the workforce to have a good basic education. Rapid restructuring and changing production conditions require that individuals also have the capacity to continuously develop and renew their skills. (NVL, 2007, p. 18)

Today’s society is also characterised by cultural diversity, which means that multicultural encounters are becoming increasingly common and a challenge to integration for all. These encounters are not frictionless and can give rise to conflicts due to a lack of capacity to manage differences and diversity. This inability can possibly be explained by a failure to consider how relationships of a more structural nature, in the form of social inequalities, discrimination and segregation, prevent individuals with a migrant background in particular, from being able to participate in society on equal terms and with equal opportunities (SOU 2006:73).

The phenomenon of integration in society involves processes of reciprocity, willingness to understand and interaction between individuals. The prospects for successful integration are non-existent if the demands of integration are unilaterally directed at ‘the others’, who are also perceived to be bearers of ‘foreign’ customs, norms and values, and less knowledgeable and less competent. Under such premises, integration fails and instead of social cohesion, exclusion arises, leading either to resignation or destructive polarisation.

### 3.2 WORKING LIFE AND EMPLOYABILITY

Employability as a concept is linked to the concept of competence and how competences are developed through learning. Whether someone becomes employable is determined by the knowledge, skills and personal qualities possessed, which increase the probability of getting and being able to keep a job (see Pegg, Waldock, Hendy-Isaac & Lawton, 2012).

However, employability is not just about getting a job, nor does it automatically come with a certain education related to that job:

Employability is more than about developing attributes, techniques or experience just to enable a student to get a job, or to progress within a current career. It is about learning and the emphasis is less on 'employ' and more on 'ability'. In essence, the emphasis is on developing critical, reflective abilities, with a view to empowering and enhancing the learner. (Harvey, 2003)

The policy discourse on employability does not only focus on the ability of education and training institutions to provide the labour market with graduates ready to contribute to economic growth by providing knowledge, skills and creativity in existing and future activities. It also marks a shift in the view of lifelong learning from an investment in social capital, democratic citizenship and personal development towards an investment in human capital for economic growth (Regmi, 2015). This shift is also reflected in the way we talk about learning instead of education to indicate that the individual's responsibility to learn what is required to be employable.

Employability is currently used as an explanation, and to some extent a legitimisation, of unemployment (Stråth 2000). This kind of discourse positions the citizen as responsible for her/his own employment, and less emphasis is placed on structural inequalities and problems in the labour market. (Fejes, 2010)

However, an individual's employability in general and in particular for a newcomer seems to depend on the propensity of employers to hire individuals who do not have, in our case, a Swedish education, or education from certain institutions (see Forte, 2020; cf. Brown & Hesketh, 2004; Blasko, 2002).

The relevance of the applicant's professional skills and experience in a "Western" labour market, the level of necessary language skills, access to business contacts and understanding of the cultural codes that prevail in a Swedish workplace (Forte, 2020) discrimination against individuals from certain ethnic backgrounds, gender, sexual orientation or disability (e.g. Bursell, 2012). One explanation highlighted in the research regarding discrimination is that employers often hire people who are similar to themselves, and this is true regardless of whether the employer is a native-born or foreign-born person (Åslund & Nordström Skans, 2010; Frödin & Kjellberg, 2020). Discrimination can also be expressed in terms of newcomers being over-represented in more insecure jobs or having jobs that are below their qualifications (Eriksson, 2011).

### 3.3 ABOUT COMPETENCES

The concept of competence is interpreted and described in different ways in different contexts, and for this reason the content of education and training needs to be based on current analyses

of the world around us in order to meet the challenges facing the world of work and the workforce. The different dimensions of the concept also include a cultural dimension, which must be taken into account in the analysis of appropriate competences, not least by the fact that Swedish society today is characterised by globalisation, migration and the increasing flow of refugees. People with different cultural backgrounds (lifestyles, traditions and values) are becoming part of Swedish society and working life (SOU 2006:73).

There are different categorisations of competences depending on the qualities and characteristics they refer to, as suggested by the terms used, such as key competences, core competences, basic competences, generative competences, professional competences, life competences. Although the terms differ, there seems to be a fairly broad consensus on the competences required by today's and tomorrow's citizens to be prosperous, creative and secure. It is therefore not enough to have knowledge of something in order to be employed, but this knowledge must be demonstrated in the form of various skills in interaction with the environment in question. This is underlined by the fact that competences, such as the three main categories – professional competence, social competence and personal competence – presented by the Nordic Network for Adult Learning (NVL, 2007), are multifaceted, consisting of a multitude of sub-categories. Each of these needs to be specified, analysed and developed.

#### **4. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

In this study, interviews were conducted with five former Sfx participants. By means of the interviews, which had the character of informal conversations, the aim was to get their life sto-

ries about the time before moving to Sweden, their first time in the new country and their meeting with Sfx, as well as the time after they had finished Sfx. The choice of relatively unstructured interviews was deemed most appropriate to put the participants' settlement journey in the new country in a meaningful context (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014; Czarniawska, 1998). Thus the empirical data consists of the interviewees' own stories, experiences and meaning-making. It is through these narratives that we gain a greater understanding of the interviewees' life experiences and how individual and societal conditions have influenced their strategies for establishing themselves on the Swedish labour market.

Due to the current pandemic, the interviews were conducted via Zoom and telephone. The five participants, two women and three men, had different professional and educational backgrounds. In our limited sample, we deliberately aimed for a wide range of informants in terms of gender and other "background variables". Contact with the interviewees was established through teachers in Sfx and personal contacts. Although face-to-face interviews would probably have allowed for a different form of interaction, interviews via digital tools provided the opportunity to obtain rich narratives from the interviewees. In order to get the depth of the interviewees' stories that were sought, efforts were made to create a conversational climate that would facilitate it (Hydén, 1997). While the pre-determined interview areas provided direction for the conversation, the aim was to be flexible during the conversation and to allow the interviewees themselves to tell their story, their experiences and their reflections (Mishler, 1986). Their linguistic level of the Swedish language varied. Even though the questions asked, and



the stories told did not cause problems in terms of comprehension, the interviewees said that the language could sometimes prevent them from fully expressing themselves. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim, with some linguistic adjustments to facilitate understanding.

The Swedish Research Council's (Vetenskapsrådet, 2017) principles of good research practice have been taken into account in the conduct of the interview study. Each interviewee was also asked to read and approve their own portrait presented here and decided whether to anonymise it or not.

## **5. RESULT AND ANALYSIS**

Our interviews with the five former Sfx participants lasted for more than an hour and are presented here in the form of small personal portraits in which extracts from the interviewees' own utterances appear verbatim. The results of the interviews are then analysed in four themes, of which the fourth, concerning the participants' efforts to find a job and establish themselves in the labour market (especially after Sfx), comes more into focus.

### **5.1 PERSONAL PORTRAITS**

#### **Fernando (42 years)**

At the time of the interview, Fernando had been in Sweden for 11 years. He was born and raised in Brazil, but it was love that brought him to Sweden. He met his Swedish girlfriend during a trip to Thailand. In his "luggage" to Sweden, he had a 5-year agronomy degree from the University of San Paolo and a few years of work experience, as a soy and sugar cane engineer, and as a consultant in an agricultural cooperative:

My goal in the early days was just to survive, so I was open to anything to make it here. I could stay with Malin, who had an apartment here, that was the least of the problems, but I had to start taking charge of my life. Suddenly I was in a completely new market, I didn't speak the language, I had to get by. I took a lot of odd jobs here and there. The first krona I earned in Sweden was by massaging a dog ... (laughs), yes it's true, who had had an operation and had some back pain and needed some massage. There I earned my 100 SEK a day for looking after the dog and massaging the dog. There's nothing wrong with that, it was fun and it was what I could do, at the same time it was a big step down in life from leaving Brazil with a master's degree in agronomy, a super specialist education, and having worked with big banks and cooperatives... It's a big step down. But I think it was the right thing to do and I did it. I did lots of other things, I've worked in restaurants, shovelled snow off roofs and all kinds of things to get by in the first period.

Right from the start, Fernando went to enrol in Sfi where he lived. There he saw on a screen that there was a special language course for newly arrived engineers offered by Järfälla komvux in cooperation with KTH Royal Institute of Technology. After two weeks in a regular Sfi class, he started Swedish for Engineers (Sfinx):

For me it was just perfect (...) Much better quality of Swedish language teaching than Sfi, which I had heard about. Sfi doesn't have a good reputation. I said I wanted to do it and applied to go to Sfinx.

Fernando describes the contrast between Sfinx and the Sfi class as two different experiences, which he says were due to the motivation of the participants and the commitment of the teachers. After six months of language studies in Jakobsberg, he was given the opportunity to choose from Swedish-speaking courses at KTH to complement his previous education:

I now have 13,5 ECTS from KTH... and those points have been worth more than the 280 from Brazil. The point was to have a KTH education in the CV, in my contacts with companies of course... There is a big difference if you are going to do an internship. If you're just a new immigrant here, it's really hard for a company to bring you in as an intern...it's a bit hard to justify. But if you are a KTH student, then you are absolutely welcome. (...) If you're from KTH, you're welcome to come in. It opens doors. At KTH you get in touch with all the companies there, you talk to the teachers who have contact with all the companies.

The meeting with KTH and the stay in its academic environment was especially appreciated by Fernando, because he was treated as an academic, who had studied agronomy at a prestigious university and was now studying further:

Then I came back to who I was, what I could do and what I was passionate about. At least they saw me as an engineer from Brazil and not as an immigrant.

While Fernando was studying at KTH, he actively sought to get in touch with Swedish working life. He offered to do practice

in a start-up boutique specializing in training and equipment for Kitesurfing:

So I went and knocked on the door. I introduced myself and said that I am studying but don't know many people here, or none at all, and had time to spare ... I could hang around and help out. Let me work here with you. You don't have to pay me, I just want to come here, have a social network with people I can talk to and all that...

After some time, Fernando was asked by the shop owner to work as a kitesurfing instructor, which meant a more permanent position: "my first real job exactly one year after I had arrived in Sweden". Fernando worked in the surf shop for two years when he was headhunted by Alfa Laval as a business developer focusing on the Brazilian market. He enjoyed the new job but only stayed for a year because of the long travelling distance, which put a strain on family life. He became unemployed and searched frantically for different jobs, but time passed without results. Feelings of desperation and frustration took over:

I knew I had so many qualities, I could do so much ... why wouldn't a company want me? Until one day I started thinking: if I'm as good as I say I am, why should I wait for someone to hire me? I'll hire myself... Then I started my own company. I have to have a job, and what's the easiest way to get into the market? The construction industry!

For four years Fernando successfully developed his construction company until he sold it, again to prioritise family and

have more time with his young children who couldn't understand why their father was working all the time. He dreamed of a 9-to-5 job and through his contacts he landed a position as a property technician and later as a service manager at an HSB cooperative housing business office in Stockholm. In this new position, he met many immigrants, with similar experiences to his, who turned to him for work: "Then I got to see the same situation from the other side of the table and that was so cool in my career."

Fernando's current employment, which he enjoys immensely, began after he had worked for two years at HSB. The job offer came from Clean Air, a multinational company specialising in air filtration with headquarters in Solna and operations across Europe:

Now I have 11 different companies under me all over Europe. In that phase of my life (...) I use saying that nowadays I live more at the airport and abroad than at home.

### Feodor (39 years)

Feodor was born and raised in Russia's Far East. He came to Sweden in 2012 to reunite with his girlfriend who was pregnant with their first child. He brought with him a 5-year university degree in international tourism from the Far Eastern National University, one of Russia's oldest and largest universities in the region, and a 1-year degree in Russian tax law from the Far Eastern State Academy of Economics and Management.

While studying at university, he worked in various companies, as a salesman in one place and then in a holding company

as a safety and health manager. After his studies, he was hired by a large cement factory with more than 2000 employees, as a foreman in the shipping and packaging department. He also gained experience from working for a debt collection company, where he was responsible for customer relations, and from setting up his own business selling consumables to hotels, spas and inns, among others. Feodor's work experience in his home country was not directly related to his education in the tourism and service industry:

No, I first worked with tourists here in Sweden when I moved here. I had started to work a bit in my home country, but in different sectors, not in tourism.

The first time in the new country is marked by visits to various authorities, especially the Migration Board and Sfi. Feodor had finished level Sfi-C at the education centre in Järfälla municipality when someone he knew told him about Sfx. He registered his interest and after a relatively long time ("it was not so easy to get to Sfej then") he started his Sfej studies at Åsegymnasium:

I got help with the application from the study counsellor in Järfälla because this is not something you can fix yourself. Even now. We have acquaintances who have moved here not so long ago and the woman wants to study, she is well educated, but she knows nothing about it. She has only heard that it is not possible to study in a municipality other than the one you are registered in.

When Feodor thinks about the time he studied Swedish at Sfej, he speaks very positively in comparison to Sfi and SAS (Swedish as a second language). He found the content of the Sfej education more relevant:

Sfej was actually the best language school, at least for me here in Sweden. It was intensive and different from SFI and SAS at municipal level. The language teaching was oriented on concepts and expressions related to economists and lawyers, sort of.

At Sfej, Feodor finished Sfi level D, as well as SAS at the basic level, but did not complete the entire Sfej education for financial reasons. He looked for all kinds of jobs or internships to have an income and to get his own rental contract instead of paying “double or triple the price” to live in other people’s apartments:

If you come from another country and have a family, you have to support it. I took a break from the education and applied for an internship first at a tourist agency but they turned me down because I am not very good at English, even though I studied English for many years throughout my education.

Feodor got his first internship with the help of a Russian-speaking coach from the Swedish Public Employment Service:

She studied at Lund University and could explain how everything worked here. She helped me a lot. Helped me find an internship in a company as an office manager and administrator/financial assistant. I handled the simplest tasks with invoices and such, entering information into the system and

such. But many companies just take advantage of interns' jobs and have no intention of hiring... They told me that if you want to work with us, you have to get a Swedish economics education, yours is not enough. Even if your education from your home country counts as economic education, it is not enough.

The experience of his internship and the disappointment of not having a "Swedish economics education" made him think about getting a new education that might be applicable "all over the world". But before he decided to embark on a new course in business development and logistics, he had been employed as a tourist guide in the Stockholm region for Russian-speaking tourists. However, the position was terminated when the flow of tourists from Russia dropped dramatically due to the events in Ukraine. Feodor was then approached by a Russian guy who ran a limited company in the construction industry and offered him a "permanent position there even though I had no experience in the construction industry". But he didn't like the new working environment:

It was dirty, dusty, noisy... I actually damaged my eyesight there and I have to wear glasses. I then changed companies and got a higher salary but due to lack of work I had to quit after a few months... Then I thought it might be time to apply for some education.

The supply burden forced Feodor to look for various jobs that meant he could not fully complete the Sfx education, even though he was satisfied with it. For the same reason, he made various breaks during his studies and missed therefore certain



elements of the course, such as meetings with economists and lawyers from various companies. Nevertheless, Feodor is grateful for the opportunity to participate in a learning environment, like the Sfej programme, with others from similar backgrounds and levels: “Most people are highly educated and ambitious and achieve their goals. They know they can”. The Sfej education has had a great impact on him, not least socially. Although a few years have passed, he still keeps in touch with some of his classmates from Sfej. They are basically his social network:

For me it's mostly with my classmates that I have contact with because I have no Swedish friends, actually, just acquaintances. It's mostly my old classmates who are the network that can tip or recommend you to their boss or peer and so on. It's a bit more difficult with Swedes...

#### **Carmina (42 years)**

Carmina came from Romania to Sweden in October 2006 to be with her Swedish husband. At the time, she had a teaching degree in English and Romanian, as well as two master's degrees from her home country, one in Literary Studies and one in Educational Management. At the time of her move to Sweden, Carmina had started a PhD program in Literary Studies in Romania, in which the mandatory exams had been passed, but the thesis itself was not completed. The continuation of her dissertation work involved many trips to Romania to meet with supervisors and to procure books. The first time in Sweden is described as tough; a new country, a new language:

Before I came to Sweden, I worked in Romania as an English teacher in high school. When I started doing my PhD, I worked as a junior assistant at a university and gave seminars in literary studies.

It was quite difficult... In the beginning it was very nice to be in Sweden, to know that you are going to live here... change country... everything is new. But after a while you miss the home country, you miss the job. You have to fight so much for things that you already fought for... so that you do it all over again. But it worked. It was good, I was very ambitious to study Swedish as soon as possible.

In January 2007, Carmina started at Sifa SFP, Swedish for Teachers, as it was called at the time. Before that, she had started studying SFI at the SFI Centre, where she eventually learned about a language course for newly arrived educators, which was faster than the regular SFI course:

I thought this is wonderful. That it's intensive, that you can meet people from other countries who are also teachers and exchange experiences, that you have a course that shows how things are done here in Sweden and compare with our home countries. The vocational courses and the language courses were quite adapted to our experiences. We were able to discuss, and we always came back to our backgrounds in some way in the discussions and assignments that the teachers gave us.... It was absolutely fantastic. The best school.

During the vocational course, study visits to different schools were organised, as well as work experience one day a week for

a whole semester. Carmina thinks it helped her and her fellow students to see how Swedish teachers work and to compare with schools in their home countries. For her, the differences were perhaps not so great, except for the discipline, which was greater issue in Romania:

That's what I noticed, there was a bit too much freedom (in the Swedish school) and the students were everywhere, but you also understood that there are different teaching styles.

After completing her SFP education in 2008, she started the supplementary education at the university for foreign teachers (ULV) taking the courses she lacked in her teaching degree from her home country. After the SFP education, Carmina took a job as a home language teacher and leisure time teacher while she completed her doctoral dissertation, which she defended in 2010. In order to improve her knowledge of Swedish and to expand her subjects, she started studying Swedish as a second language at the university:

Then I started working as an English teacher at a school in Nacka; it was only one semester. After that I found a job as a teacher in SVA at Lernia and then I was almost finished with my education in Swedish as a second language. I acquired 90 ECTS, and eventually wrote my bachelor thesis in SVA. I then switched to Hermods and was there for 5 years while studying Spanish, so I got another subject. Then I started my employment as a SVA teacher at Sifa in 2017.

For a year now, Carmina has been working as a coordinator within STLS, Stockholm Learning and Teaching Studies, alongside her position as a Sifa teacher, where she has the opportunity to be in contact with researchers and teachers in the field. Carmina's experience of the SFP programme and her own journey to establish herself in the Swedish labour market is an invaluable asset in her work as a teacher in the Sfx programme. This background makes her even more sensitive to the needs, difficulties and expectations of Sfx participants and what might need to be developed in Sfx, so that participants can be better equipped for the Swedish labour market and continue working in their profession in Sweden:

We have good language courses (at Sifa) but we continue to develop them. We give a little more support to those who need to practise writing and speaking more. Speaking the language is very important and I would say that even more courses could be offered to students, maybe in the afternoon after the regular classes. Our students are academics. They are very good in writing and reading, but sometimes they need extra help to practise speaking and listening comprehension, especially in early courses. Also to get out to the schools, it's important to have contact with the Swedish school and go out on internships and visits to different schools. Just to see the classrooms and observe different lessons helps a lot to have an idea. Then some earlier information about ULV, teacher licensing, Skolverket ... that you have to send all the papers to UHR (for assessment). There are many who don't know how it works. When I was at Sifa I didn't get as much information from the beginning as I wanted and I missed that. There was a lot of

research on my own about what to do afterwards, and there is a lot that you don't know. Although my husband is Swedish, he didn't know much of that.

Carmina would like to see the Sfx programmes provide more study and career guidance also on an individual level for better support and orientation on opportunities and difficulties regarding one's employability in the Swedish labour market and the different pathways into the profession in Sweden. She also believes that, given the academic background of the participants, SIFA could have been organised under the auspices of a university, which would have strengthened its status and identity as a form of education. Carmina stresses that this should in no way be interpreted as a criticism of the current Sfx but, on the contrary, as a way to make a good education even better.

#### **Morteza (21 years)**

Morteza came to Sweden as an unaccompanied minor when he was 16 years old. He was born and raised in Iran by Afghan parents who had moved there 40-45 years ago, although he is not sure of the time. He only went to school for 4 years because he had to work as a tailor and welder, but without any training in it. His parents have no education at all. His mother was a housewife, taking care of her 7 children. Morteza's journey to Sweden was from Iran via Turkey to the island of Lesbos in Greece in a small boat with 35-40 people. From there he continued to the Republic of North Macedonia, then to Hungary and eventually to Sweden. The reason for the final destination being Sweden was not Morteza's idea:

I didn't even know there was a Sweden. It wasn't me who brought me here by myself but someone else who helped me ... I don't know but it wasn't just one but several; from Iran to Turkey there was one person who helped me. Then it was his friend who helped me on... they were traffickers who got paid for it.

When Morteza arrived in Sweden, he was placed in a family. Due to a lack of places, he had to wait 6 months before starting school. Morteza describes the youth high school and the introductory program he attended for two years as "not really a high school, but like a school for the disabled or something like that". Starting in a Swedish school, he describes as tough. Not only was the language foreign, but the alphabet was different from what he had encountered before. Although Morteza could read Persian, the letters were not the same as in the Swedish language. After leaving secondary school, Morteza was helped by the social services with housing and also further education at Komvux. Morteza started training to become a car mechanic, but soon felt that it didn't suit him. Since he had previous experience of welding, he was recommended to talk to the headmaster, who recommended the Sfx for welders at Centrum Vux in Haninge. His grades were not good enough to enter a regular vocational programme, but the Sfx welding course allowed him to start, after an interview with the teacher there.

The Sfx group Morteza ended up in consisted of both newly arrived immigrants and others who had been in the country for years. What they all had in common was that they had experience in welding, with one exception. The Sfx training involved both Swedish language instruction and welding. Due to the

pandemic and teachers in the at-risk group, Swedish language teaching was entirely distance teaching. However, the welding instruction was on-site and is described as being the focus. As Morteza had a relatively good knowledge of Swedish, he was encouraged to read books on his own instead of attending the Swedish lessons.

Some students in Morteza's Sfi group were older and had language problems, which made it difficult to absorb theoretical elements. Morteza stepped up and helped his fellow students with the language as much as he could, including googling for information and explaining what different things mean and how they work. For Morteza, language is not always a decisive barrier to work, but what counts for the company is "how you work and whether you understand what you are doing. Those who had problems with the language but had worked for 20 years as welders in their home country, they got jobs". His friend, for example, spoke very good Swedish but he didn't get a job because "he wasn't interested, he came late and was on his mobile phone and so on. You know when you are on an internship you want to show how you are and how you work".

As part of the training, Morteza had a two-month internship in a company:

But because I was a good student, my teacher had talked to the head of the company about starting my internship with them. When I was interviewed by the manager, I had to tell him what I knew about welding. He was impressed and asked if I could come and work for them. It was holiday time and they needed staff. After a month they said they were happy with me and that they needed me. It felt great to work there during the

summer. Otherwise, I would be at home all summer and not do anything. When I finished my internship, I was immediately hired by the same company.

Not everyone in Morteza's Sfi group got a job after the training, despite having done work experience in different places. Morteza believes that it matters which company you happen to do your internship at, but the most important thing is how you are yourself: "Here in Sweden, there are a few points you have to keep in mind", such as keeping appointments and showing interest and commitment to the work. The corona epidemic, he adds, has also contributed to making it harder to get a job, while many lost theirs.

Although Morteza was satisfied with his Sfx training, he wishes it also offered the specialised elements required to perform more complex welding tasks and to obtain a full welding licence:

The certificate we got from the Sfx training is not a full licence equivalent to the training at a vocational high school. It's just a certificate that in my case looks good... I got A's in everything, but it would be better if the certificate from the Sfx was at the same level as the one from the vocational high school... It's probably a financial issue because it's a special education that costs a lot of money.

Morteza also thinks that the training could have been longer to learn "much more about the language" and preferably have more Swedish lessons: "just once a week on Fridays. It doesn't help".

Despite Morteza's strenuous background and adventurous journey to Sweden, he has managed to find an orderly life with



which he is content. It was also his attitude right from the start in the new country, which gave him the opportunity to become independent and grow:

(The hardest thing) for me was to find a job. In the beginning, the first year and a half, it was all about staying here in Sweden and to get a residence permit. But after that I just thought about being able to develop on my own and not getting help from others. Right now, I'm managing it, I'm doing well. During the training when I started the internship, I also got a driving licence. I got student aid from CSN and was able to pay my expenses, including my driving lessons. I saved for a whole year for that. It cost me a lot.... So, I think I have everything. I have my own apartment, I have my car, I think I have everything. I think it's going to be even better in the future.

#### **Geranaz (30 years)**

Geranaz grew up in Iran, where she studied a science programme in high school and then studied to become a physiotherapist, which is a four-year program in Iran. Immediately after graduating, in 2002, she moved to live with her Iranian husband in Sweden. Geranaz says that both her parents are academics and work as teachers and researchers in Iran. Her father teaches English at the university. Her interest as a child was languages, both Persian and English.

When she arrived in Sweden, she was told that it was not obvious that there were opportunities to start SFI immediately. She wanted to learn the language as quickly as possible and not being able to start studying Swedish straight away she describes

as frustrating. Just being at home was not an option. Relatively immediately, however, she was offered a place at SFI. The students Geranaz met in the SFI programme were a mixed group with varying experiences of previous schooling. She had been in the country for three months and quickly learned the language, which prompted the Sfi teacher to wonder how long she had been in Sweden and whether she had studied anything before. Geranaz replied that she was an educated physiotherapist in her home country, and this led to Geranaz being advised to enrol in the Sfx for medical staff instead. As all participants in Sfx were academics, the pace was faster, the demands were higher, stimulating and fun:

It was a huge difference to start at Sfx. On the one hand, the teacher, the demands and expectations were much higher and it suited me, and on the other hand, the classmates I worked with. I was stimulated and I felt that this was fun. The other (Sfi) was not fun. I stood there for two weeks and wondered how many times are we going to do the same things... I will rot here. At Sfx it was different, it was fun and stimulating and so rolled on there.

Through acquaintances, Geranaz got a tip about a nursing home in the city that needed staff. She applied and was positively received. They gave her the chance to start and see if she could manage it, even though she didn't speak Swedish fluently:

I went there and said: Hi, I'm a physiotherapist and right now I'm studying the language, but I have experience in nursing. They were positive and said 'come in and try and see how

much you understand'. And I understood everything but expressing myself was more difficult. They said the main thing is that you understand. And so I got a job there as a substitute while I was studying at Sfx.

Working in a nursing home as a care assistant, alongside Sfx, gave her the opportunity to meet patients and talk about care with colleagues.

When Sfx was completed, Geranaz applied for a Swedish licence as a physiotherapist through the Socialstyrelsen. It was this body that checked the grades from Iran and approved that she proceeded to the theoretical and practical exams which were conducted through Karolinska Institutet. After completing and passing the exams, the manager of the workplace, where she had worked as a substitute care assistant, offered her an employment as a physiotherapist.

After she had been working for a few years in elderly care and primary care, Geranaz decided to study to become a care teacher. Today she works in the municipal adult education on the care and nursing program.

When Geranaz is asked to think what help newly arrived immigrants with a professional background would need, she mentions the opportunity to get out at an early stage during Sfx to get a glimpse of real working life:

We would have been able to be more in the authentic health-care environment whether it was study visits, auscultations, not just for a week, but for a longer time, to meet more people. I think there could have been more of that.

It's all about gaining insight into how healthcare works in Sweden, says Geranaz. Although physiotherapist education in Iran is similar to that in Sweden, there are some differences in the practical work, such as technical aids, training equipment and the methods used. The anxiety she felt about facing all the new things could have been avoided by getting out into the professional world earlier to grasp the concept:

Then I think Sfa could have been filled with more practical information, how to communicate with patients and to get a better picture of the care. I got it when I came out and was getting my physical therapy licence. Then we had to do a practical part and the program hadn't prepared us for that. We had a week's auscultation, but theoretically, we hadn't been practiced what a physiotherapist should focus on, what physiotherapists should think about; it was very general. This practical part was a big hurdle for me, I felt that I wasn't prepared for it, but apparently, I was because I passed the exam. Linguistically, I thought I was missing words, a bit about how to talk and interact during the examinations with the patients (...) Nowadays, I think they get that because they have nursing teachers in the program.

In addition to the importance of meeting teachers with a solid nursing background, Geranaz also stresses the importance of getting support and guidance on how to proceed after the Sfx training. This would facilitate the path to further studies or to employment:

I think perhaps you should have a job coach who can go in and support you, because there's an art in looking for a job, and having the courage to go in for it. It would have been really hard for me if I hadn't had that nurse to help me, to go to different health centres to look for a job. It's the language and the confidence and a lot of other things, like a friend or someone with connections ... that would definitely help.

## 5.2 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

### 5.2.1 A new country and a new life / Striving for a new and better life

People make the choice to leave the country they grew up in and move for various reasons. One of the interviewees in this study differs from the others. His first time in Sweden as an unaccompanied refugee child followed certain rules and caring routines. The reasons for immigration of the other interviewees show a more or less similar pattern. They came to Sweden as adults because they had met a partner living in Sweden. What was characteristic of all four was that they had at least a university education from their home country and, with one exception, work experience in an occupation for which they were educated. As newcomers, they face the same kind of challenges: a completely new country and language, an unfamiliar labour market and intensive contacts with authorities. Since their aim was to settle in the country, they were motivated to make an effort to find their place in this new life. Learning the language and finding a job to support them financially, were the top priority. In this respect, our interviewees are going through basically the same process as immigrants in general. How the

journey into the Swedish community is then shaped depends on the supporting structures made available by society and the individual's drive. Anyway, they describe their encounter with Sfx as a decisive event in their new lives.

### 5.2.2 "A faster and more stimulating education"

#### – Meeting with Sfx

The interviewees became aware of Sfx when they had started Sfi in the municipality where they lived. Usually, it was the Sfi teacher who informed about this special language training intended for newcomers with a certain educational and vocational profile. Tips about Sfx also came from acquaintances or information provided at the municipality's adult education centre. In all cases, they were then helped by a study counsellor to arrange the application to the municipality, which would decide whether or not they could participate, as there would be an additional cost if the training was organised in another municipality.

Interviewees described their experience of Sfx as positive, with participants who were highly motivated to learn Swedish and with committed and competent teachers. The program set high standards and expectations that the participants appreciated and found stimulating.

### 5.2.3 Contact with the world of work

#### – "Dare to give us a chance"

The analysis here, regarding the interviewees' experiences of encountering Swedish working life trying to get a job, ties in with the next theme, which deals with the former Sfx partici-

pants' suggestions as to what more could have been offered the Sfx students to facilitate their transition to the world of work and, by extension, facilitate a smoother integration into society.

It is a varied picture that emerges from the narratives. It seems that Sfx programs that offer some kind of work placement create greater opportunities for students to gain employment in the organisation where they are placed. However, the same does not apply to students from the other Sfx specializations, who need to work harder on their own to find a job after their education. The contrast between the Sfx period and the post-Sfx period can be significant, not least because of the lack of contacts and organised support.

However, all informants would primarily like to get a job that they have experience in and would have been grateful if they could get help with that when they finished their Sfx education. But at the same time, they say they are willing to take any job to make ends meet. Individual strategies vary and so do the solutions. Some even take the initiative and start their own business, but not necessarily in their previous field of work.

The search for a job is also described as a laborious and stressful process. The combination of uncertainty and lack of social context that life in the new country entails can lead to psychological strain and even feelings of desperation and reduced self-esteem and confidence: "I knew I have so many qualities, I can do so many things... why doesn't any company want me?"

What is worth noting in this context is the importance that teachers can have as contacts with the world of work, or even Sfx classmates, who can act as a kind of network. In other respects, the stories clearly show a need for employers, preferably in cooperation with the education provider and other actors, to open

up and dare to welcome newcomers by giving them a chance to demonstrate their skills and abilities. In particular, the target group for Sfx represents a huge pool of skills which, if left untapped, would be a great waste for society.

#### 5.2.4 More contact with the authentic vocational environment

When our informants were asked to think about what they would have liked Sfx to help them with, the answer was unanimous: contact with the world of work was highlighted as the most important factor. This should not be taken as a criticism of the current Sfx, which essentially provides effective language training with which participants are very satisfied.

What is requested is the possibility to do an internship within the framework of Sfx or to get a probationary employment directly after completing Sfx. The value of being in an authentic vocational environment and having the opportunity to socialise and communicate with colleagues in the workplace could have been included in the content and design of the Sfx program. The limited days of workplace visits, where applicable, are appreciated but insufficient to provide a slightly deeper insight into prevailing working conditions.

A different approach regarding early contact with the vocation could in some cases have led to a reflection on whether to continue along the same professional path in Sweden or to retrain and acquire a new profession. In connection with this discussion about early and increased working life contacts, our informants raised the need for individual guidance in combination with “a person who full-time helped the participants to find an internship”.



It goes faster when you get help to get in, and be guided when you are completely alone and don't have as many contacts and other networks that protect and support you. Sfx is perhaps the only contact and could well offer a way into working life.

As much as participants want more individual study and career guidance, they also want better validation of their formal and real competences. The feeling they convey is that the education from their home country is not valued fairly and is perceived to be of low status or less equivalent to "Swedish education".

A further wish, also linked to the Sfx participants' need to maintain a contact surface with their profession, is to have the opportunity to meet teachers during the training who themselves have a similar professional background to the participants.

## **6. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The current survey shows that new arrivals, who settle in Sweden for various reasons, want to quickly establish a life in society, do well for themselves and become self-sufficient, preferably by using their professional skills: "If you come from another country and have a family, you have to support it". The way to a job that corresponds to one's professional skills is through recognition by validating these skills, and knowledge of Swedish. The support that society can provide in these two respects is crucial for faster establishment on the Swedish labour market and the possibility for newly arrived graduates to get the "right job". Coordinated efforts and cooperation between different agencies create better conditions for newcomers to come into their own, remain employable and feel part of Swedish society.

When these efforts are limited or non-existent, newcomers are forced to prioritise survival over focusing on quickly learning the language and possibly supplementing their foreign qualification with Swedish-specific skills. Instead of continuing in their profession as would have been the right thing to do, they accept less qualified jobs that are far below their education and skills profile. The risk of displacement effects in the labour market is evident when well-educated and, in many cases, professionally experienced academics compete with the less educated for low qualification jobs, irrespectively of occupation. Nevertheless, there is no lack of examples in our empirical evidence that manage to take up the challenge and take the initiative to start a completely new business, although not in the same professional field as before.

From an employability perspective, there is reason to consider whether the participants' skills are directly transferable to a Swedish professional context, and if not, what can Sfx do to maintain and strengthen the participants' employability. The interviews with our informants revealed a mixed attitude towards Sfx. They are satisfied with the Sfx training in Swedish language, which includes training in the respective professional vocabulary, the intensive pace of study, the relevant content and the skilled teachers. Participants also find Sfx an important social environment where they meet and get to know others with similar backgrounds and situations:

It's mostly my old classmates who are the network that can tip or recommend you to their boss or peer and so on. It's a bit more difficult with Swedes..."

"We (at Sfx) help each other. It feels like we are one big family."

On the other hand, the participants lack real contact with the authentic professional environment that would give them a realistic picture of what is required and expected of them. Presence in a workplace under supervision also gives them a chance to show what they can do and what they lack, but also to realise whether they want to continue practising the same profession in Sweden, or perhaps want to try something new, or retrain. The transition to the world of work, once the training is completed, is said to be particularly critical. For individuals out of touch with important contacts or support and advice from any agency in getting an employment, in any form, the situation is perceived as quite hopeless and desperate. In addition, if they get other jobs that do not match their qualifications, the distance to their previous occupation widens, which negatively affects their self-confidence.

Sfx in its current form has mainly functioned as effective Swedish language training for newcomers and has not fully focused on developing and ensuring the employability of participants. The components of employability are not an easy task to identify and convey in a theoretical training. Nor can the skills needed of the labour market be precisely identified and easily met through training. This is even more difficult in the case of training designed to prepare for future tasks or problems that need to be solved, many of them unknown at the time of training. The alternative is to start from the competences available and try to develop them further in close cooperation with the profession. For example, including in the content and design of Sfx training workplace placements for longer and more continuous periods would entail new challenges for providers, both pedagogical and organisational. In particular, a revised version

of Sfx would be based on an analysis of the competences that are desirable to develop in order to facilitate entry into the labour market and society. This in turn would lead to the development of subjects and learning processes that focus on the personal as well as the social and professional dimension of competences.

Today, a few Sfx programs are organised within one of the cooperating municipalities' adult education, which gives a fragmented picture of the activities. Some Sfx pathways are certainly suitable for the komvux sector, but it is doubtful whether this educational environment is the most appropriate one for the purely academic pathways. The interviewees would have preferred Sfx to be a matter for higher education (universities and/or higher vocational education institutions). With regard to the background of the participants, such a scenario would be in harmony with their habitus and thus make them feel more at home in a higher education environment. Universities and/or higher vocational education institutions would thus have a greater influence on the academic and pedagogical content of the training, but in cooperation with and under the supervision of a coordinating actor, preferably a regional one. Moreover, if the Sfx mission was extended and broadened, so that in addition to Swedish language teaching it also offered complementary education and/or supported the transition of Sfx participants into labour market in cooperation with authorities (such as the Swedish Public Employment Service) and other stakeholders, Sfx would also be open to more newcomers with qualifications that are not directly transferable to the Swedish labour market.

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# Latin-American Migrants' Transformative Learning and the Swedish Language Class as Catalysts of their Multicultural Vocational Education Experience

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**Abstract:** The multicultural aspects of education in Sweden have been discussed in relationship to social integration and labour market needs. The language and vocational components of a successful job placement have been usually taken care of by folk high schools, municipal adult education, higher vocational education and upper-secondary schools. As the volume and stream of migrants continue to increase in number and diversity, new combinations of opportunities and challenges emerge for heterogeneous groups of learners and education providers alike. Thus, multicultural education is a key concept that needs discussion and examination. In the migrant groups that go through the vocational education path, several foreign-born clusters make their way to progress; and one of these groups is made up



by native speakers of the Spanish language. Both the way such communities of learners perceive the different multicultural elements of their tuition, and the way cultural heterogeneity exerts a transformational influence on their pedagogical process are aspects that belong in such multicultural realm. In an attempt to highlight aspects of the vocational education experienced by a cultural group that, albeit internally diverse, shares many linguistic similarities; this chapter discusses the perceptions of a group of Latin-American students about James Banks' (1993) multicultural education dimensions and Mezirow's (1997) transformational learning as regards their vocational education experience that features content and language integrated learning (CLIL) components. During this study qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews and content analysis was applied to the findings. The results show that the education programmes they completed accentuate a multicultural angle in some dimensions and fail to do so in others.

**Keywords:** transformative learning, multicultural education, content and language integrated learning, vocational knowing

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Culturally diverse groups interact more and more as a result of migration in the globalised and technologically interconnected world of today. Due to several reasons, individuals decide to relocate to new territories; and they engage in a dual learning adventure. On the one hand, they usually face a foreign culture infused and mediated by a language that is new for them; and on the other, they discover social structures and organisation

types that, they see, work in dissimilar ways after comparing to the ones they were used to before. Both components conceive skillsets that complement prospects of inclusion into the new society and are usually presented as key to succeed as functional citizens and improve life chances.

As countries see that their populations are not as homogeneous as before, new regulations and support programmes are put in place to tackle latent social integration challenges that emerge from ever-growing cosmopolitan dialogue. With the aim of increasing work placement, vocational programmes attempt to tune in with the labour market in favour of student populations desiring to join the labour force and allow for development of their potential. While the fast pace working arena and its trends change globally, in Northern Europe, the recent influx of intense migration has brought an additional dimension to the manifold questions that had already piled up on the tables of directive boards and governmental bodies in charge of the entire education system. In Sweden, vocational education enjoyed recent revamp (SFS 2015:939), in which the 2009-established Higher Vocational Education Agency better articulated the regular 2-year and the qualified 4-year programmes to the labour market, the humanitarian migratory crisis and a smoother transition into university studies. Previously, in 2002, the Swedish Agency for Advanced Vocational Education and Training had been created with the goal of complementing the existing upper-secondary education with an in-depth post-secondary VET option.

According to Ministry of Education and Research statistics, 60% of all Higher Vocational Education programmes include some sort of Swedish language component that aims

at enabling students to ease into local professional life (Utbildningsdepartementet, 2013, p. 29). Still, considering that the provision of these programmes is often distributed amongst several entitled stakeholders in the education system – namely, higher vocational schools, municipal adult education centres, folk high schools and universities, students and institutions have more than one alternative in the model for its completion. The flexibility, that has originally emerged as a policy to make qualification paths more accessible could also constitute a point of criticism (Kuczera & Jeon, 2019) due to the fact that certain student communities, especially the ones in vulnerable categories, do not always come with comprehensive knowledge about the education system. This may constitute decisive factors to choose the way to pursue careers and study plans (Norris, 2011, p. 15). The panorama of options for a migrant to engage in VET might not appear as clearly organised at first, and the consequences of their choices might be accompanied by important life transformations.

Bearing in mind that *i*) statistics show Sweden's adult education is a prevalent choice for people over 20, with one of the highest rates in the group of OECD countries (OECD, 2018), that *ii*) individual modularised lifelong learning paths geared for adults kept being the most popular way to attain qualification in a new field (Cedeforp, 2019), and that *iii*) recent cross-national reports recommend that skill shortage should be tackled through more effective work placements for migrants (Kuczera & Jeon, 2019, p. 108; European Commission, 2010, p. 2); it is paramount to examine students' perceptions. However, in Eliasson, Osman & Teräs' (2020, p. 133) words, there is not extensive research on the factors that facilitate migrants' success;

and after scrutiny of students' accounts about the multicultural building blocks in their vocational education journeys, catalysts that spark successful employment can be found. In general, adult education is considered to be a valuable option for young migrants to rely upon; and according to recent reports, its VET areas are uniquely relevant to foreign-born migrant learners due to their upper-secondary education lag as compared to native-born youth counterparts (Kuczera & Jeon, 2019, p. 129).

Foreign-born migrant individuals and their VET trajectories, as well as their job placement have been documented and researched in Sweden; especially recently, when massive waves of migrants arrived in the country. The admission figures reported by the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education show an admission increase of 24%, and these numbers usually show categories as *Swedish* and *non-Swedish background* (MYH, 2021, p. 20), but Spanish-speaking individuals had been reported to reach almost 63,000 as the fourth non-Swedish biggest language community ten years ago (Edlund, 2011, p. 190). However, it seems that no preminent numbers of studies focusing on this group of adult migrants have been conducted in Sweden, with a few exceptions when studies about language introduction for migrants make tangential reference to native speakers of Spanish within that bigger group of *non-native* in Sweden (Isaksson, 2009; Johansson & Lorentz, 2006; King & Ganuza, 2005).

Moreover, cultural diversity in this education sector presents an axis for analysis in order to better understand parts of their trajectories and learning experiences and to extrapolate to the programmes' multicultural education facet. Along with culture-related dimensions, linguistic preparation stages usually

happen before they access the vocational programmes. Nevertheless, taking into consideration that culture and language are usually bundled into a unit that activates meaning in a context, a logical standpoint is to presume that content and language integrated learning (CLIL) episodes naturally happen in any educational setting when jargon and specialised terms occur. Seeking to expand the the occupational gamut, apart from the National Programme of Swedish as a Foreign Language, or SFI, a Swedish for academic purposes programme was launched in 2001 and first evaluated in 2004 (Höghelm & Gougoulakis, 2009, p.13) with the idea of combining a vocational core with the language tools for skilled adult migrants. After two decades of implementation, this programme is now called Swedish for Trained Professionals, or SFX, which is marketed as a pedagogical idea that follows content and language integrated learning guidelines and whose objective is to bridge migrants who have both earlier work experience and a certified profession with their relevant guilds in Sweden. Independently of its effectiveness, this programme, as well as the analogous *Swedish for Employees* and *Swedish for Professionals* at university and university college level, are mainly targeting skilled migrants who arrive with valid documents and certifications. For those who are unskilled, SFI-VET combination programmes and the regular SFI with an intermediate Swedish as a Second Language course, or SAS, are in place. Nonetheless, a recent study by Gougoulakis & Lagercrantz All (2020, p. 143) shows that many participants of this programme are not employed in similar occupations to the ones they had before migrating to Sweden.

## 2 THEORY AND METHODS

For the arrangement of components in the study, *multicultural education* and *transformational learning* were taken as the main pertinent theoretical concepts. These are presented below since they are central to the conception of multicultural dimensions in the vocational programme and learning transformations as perceived by the participants of the study. A truly multicultural angle in education should provide students with as fair and impartial learning opportunities as possible; thus, enhancing free debate and dialogue in favour of conflict resolution that power imbalances may have precluded in overt and covert ways throughout the long and untraceable historical becoming of human education and social structures. Such a critical stance is one of the main axes that helped structure this study; and some of its underpinnings adjacent to inspiring questions about ethnic and minority groups in education at large are important due to their potential of revealing important principles of inclusive pedagogy.

Preliminary approaches to classroom diversity and the ensuing pedagogy could focus on *a) disadvantage*, in which non-mainstream groups' features that do not resemble the dominant group's are benchmarked (e.g. acculturation, segregation, stigmatisation); *b) enrichment*, in which non-mainstream groups are cherished due to its contribution to the larger dominant group; and *c) collective cultural equality*, emphasising a pluralistic outlook of social groups and conceiving diversity as an asset in classrooms, institutions and/or individuals. These three pedagogical orientations also help complement an account for multicultural elements in such diversity featured by the population discussed in this chapter.

## 2.1 THEORY

One of the main tenets in the Multicultural Education (ME) theoretical framework is that sectors of society with the greatest social, political, and economic power are the ones that get to determine 'valid' knowledge; and by exerting such power, they legitimise their epistemology and blur the visibility of its non-dominant counterparts (Banks, 2002, p22). The idea of an egalitarian strive in pedagogy fosters several activities in order to settle power disproportion; for instance, it addresses and deconstruct stereotypes and draws on peers-to-facilitator and peer-to-peer dynamics that awaken students' critical awareness about frames of reference that restrain empowerment of the learner as they move towards democratic participation (Grant & Sleeter, 2007).

The underlying maxim of raising awareness of power structures has been an essential interest to other scholarly critical works, *e.g.*, Freire (2005) in South America and Giroux (1983) in North America; and the emancipation potential of education has been highlighted by Inglis (1997) as a key to bring about positive social change. Nonetheless, the multicultural elements, in turn, present a transversal inquiry axis to examine education, so that imbalances, if they exist, are revealed in a different light. Whether the discussion addresses resistance that defends language rights, or aspiring student populations who wonder why they have to face fossilised difficulties in a system that seems to make their access to education more difficult than for others in dominant groups, this theory provides a framework to assess if an education is indeed 'multicultural'. Banks (1993, p. 5-7) puts forth 5 dimensions of ME that can guarantee fairness to all participants if tailored adequately.

- Content integration: the extent to which materials that represent a wide culture variety are used.
- Knowledge construction: the scientists' procedures applied to create knowledge along with the reflection about the biases involved
- Prejudice reduction: the critical examination of attitudes and stereotypes that helps achieve more democratic values
- Equity pedagogy: the rich variation of teaching methods that tries to favour all student profiles in order to help them achieve their educational goals
- Empowerment and social structures: the restructuration of the school that creates and keeps educational equality and cultural empowerment

Due to the mindful revision of their own marginalisation, if any, learners may develop a subsequent drive to participate in the making of the surrounding society, and eventually engage in social change. This shift of paradigm in one's consciousness could be explained by the notions of awakening of *critical consciousness* (Freire, 2005) and *transformational learning* (Mezirow, 1997). Education *per se* is a transformation; and if it unfolds in a multicultural and multilingual environment, reflection in favour of mutual understanding seemingly happens more easily. Be it after cultural shock or trial-and-error problem solving, reflective phases are triggered in trying to grasp new meanings and communicative nuances. It is unmistakable to say that the entire concept of change is embedded in autonomous thinking in a way that it offers learners a break from everyday activities to reflect about divergence from several viewpoints, especially when examining their immediate surroundings. Thus, it builds empowerment through the strengthening of their skills; and ultimately, for



improvement of their own life situations. Such reflective function of critical adult education is defined by Mezirow (1981, p. 20) as “helping adults construe experience in a way in which they may more clearly understand the reasons for their problems and understand the options open to them so that they may assume responsibility for decision making [...]”. Accordingly, reaching this state of autonomous critical consciousness through transformative learning will gradually promote advancement in a step-by-step reconstruction of social justice.

## 2.2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

The main research question focusses on students’ descriptive accounts after completion of their education and successful job placement, and can be summarised as follows:

What is the students’ perception of the VET programme’s activities as they relate to the five of ME dimensions (Banks, 1993) and, if any, to their own transformational learning (Mezirow, 1997)?

This study used a qualitative research design to approach this question. The five ME dimensions have been used to explore the perceptions of a purposeful sample of students aged 25-35 in semi-structured interviews. The access to the respondents was mainly gained through a snowball strategy, deriving from a small network of hispanophones who participated in another study carried out in the spring of 2016. The participants were found first and foremost in the social and occupational circles of those who made part of that initial study. Although all of them say they are regular users of Swedish, English with varying proficiency degrees, they decided to respond to the questions in Spanish,

the language that they felt most comfortable speaking for the interview. After all interviews had been conducted, the recorded audio was transcribed verbatim and later translated into English, keeping the informal, conversational style of the original. For coding the resulting information, content analysis was applied to the transcribed interviews and the results were organised according to the questions that pertain to each of the concepts of the ME dimensions and of transformational learning.

All respondents involved in this study expressed their consent in writing through a digitally scanned signed form; and they considered the topic to be an interesting and current question that, in their own words, gets little attention from the mainstream media they have frequent access to. Taking their accessibility to participate in consideration, an interview guide was prepared for the online conversations. According to Kvale (1997), “stories and conversations are considered essential for gaining knowledge about the social world,” (p. 16); and respondents were generally given open-ended questions, so that they could elaborate on their answers. Besides, guidelines of good research practice suggested by the Swedish Research Council were observed during all the stages in order to protect respondents’ integrity and anonymity; and for this reason, abbreviations instead of names are used in the sections below.

All adult learners in Table 1 were born in a Latin-American country and identify themselves as being part of a global Hispanic Latino population, whose native language is Spanish. One of the participants was born in Belo Horizonte, but she also reports ethnic belonging in the same group; and the Colombian participant first moved to Barcelona before settling in Stockholm. In any case, both learners’ heritage language is also Latin-American Spanish.

Code name	Place of birth	Temporary residence	Gender	Age	Swedish as a 2 <sup>nd</sup> language	VET edu. length	VET provider type	VET programme	Current occupation
F-ar	Argentina		Fem.	29	SFI	1 yr	komvux	hair stylist	beauty therapist
M-ch	Chile		Mal.	33	SFI+SAS	2 yr	yrkeshögs.	cook/confec-tioner	foodtruck owner
F-cu	Cuba		Fem.	26	SVAComb	1 yr	folkhögs.	child caregiver	preschool caregiver
M-pe	Peru		Mal.	33	SFI	2 yr	folkhögs.	leisure coordinator	leisure advisor in music
F-me	Mexico		Fem.	27	SFI	10 m	komvux	cook	school canteen manager
M-bo	Bolivia		Mal.	26	SFx	10 m	komvux	lorry driver	polisher/welder
F-br	Brazil	Nicaragua	Fem.	37	SFI	2 yr	komvux	social caregiver	home nursing caregiver
M-co	Colombia	Spain	Mal.	35	SFI+SAS	1 yr	komvux	assistant nurse	assistant nurse

Table 1. Participants of the study

In the hopes that the study would yield the diversity within this group, and at the same time, reveal any common elements, the scope of the population sample includes those who completed VET programmes in the 2015-2018 period and are currently employed in an area that has to do with their education or previous work experience. We already mentioned that the language and culture are mutually dependant and decisive for the integration of other key skills; thus, one of the initial presuppositions was that the perception of learners may vary depending on the experience they had with the Swedish as a second language modality they attended. This is why, special attention was paid to CLIL episodes featured in the programme. The fact is that the language component can be accessed through different learning paths; namely, *i*) a parallel unrelated SAS course with a different teacher and learning group, *ii*) a Swedish-VET combination course, or *iii*) an SFX course that is intended to swiftly bridge the transition into the labour market. The SFI courses are most usually a prerequisite for VET enrolment, which means that the probability to find respondents who underwent such a language introduction programme was nearly ubiquitous; but as the chart shows, there are other pathways that are possible based on availability and what the learner considered to be a more effective process to meet the language requirement.

### 3 RESULTS

In order to have more background information about each participant, a short profile of each individual is presented below. A pseudonym has been put in place instead of the real name of the participant in order to comply with GDPR regulations.

### 3.1 SUMMARISED LEARNER PROFILES

**F-ar**, beauty therapist, attended the programme for hair stylists at an municipal adult education centre in the South of Stockholm, where she and her native Spanish-speaking partner from Venezuela live together. Her sentimental relationship was her reason for moving to Europe. She reports having been interested in the occupation since her teenage years, but never thought she would go to school for that matter. Once relocated, reconsidered the programme due to the accessibility she noticed. At her workplace, she has expanded her vocational knowledge with makeup artist skills and skin therapy.

**M-ch**, foodtruck owner, completed the programme for cooks and confectioners at a higher vocational education school, where he became interested in start-up courses during his second VET year. His native Swedish-speaking spouse and children were born in Stockholm, which means it is likely that he has had contact with Swedish-speaking social circles more frequently and has enjoyed access to that cultural capital through his family. Once feeling established in the host country and having worked in the catering sector, he decided to start a sole-trader business and open his own restaurant.

**F-cu**, preschool caregiver, attained her qualifications through a child caregiver programme combined with Swedish classes at a central Stockholm folk high school. She used to have informal job positions as a nanny and met her native Romanian-speaking spouse 1 year before relocation. She takes care of 12 4-year-olds in a suburban area of Stockholm and seems highly interested in

the knowledge provided by the early childhood pedagogues at the daycare, which is why she is considering a university career.

**M-pe**, leisure school advisor, complemented his vocational knowledge in music by enrolling in the programme for leisure coordinators at a folk high school. Before relocation he used to play and teach music. He discovered that popular adult education offered artistic courses and recording equipment options, and that motivated him to find out more information about it and enrol in the programme.

**F-me**, school canteen cook, achieved her qualification through the cooking programme at an adult education centre in the Haninge municipality in the South of the Greater Stockholm region. When moving abroad, he had the idea of working as a bartender, but found job opportunities in dishwashing and the information he received at his workplace at the time led him to apply. Currently, he works at a middle school as the canteen manager and lives with his Swedish-speaking partner, who is an administrative employee at a university.

**M-bo**, polisher/welder, had lorry driver qualifications before applying for an SFX course, which he perceives gave him the necessary tools to study vocabulary and make friends. He found his current job position through contact with peers attending the same course. Although he is a construction worker, he describes that his driving skills are applied on a daily basis because he needs to take machines to construction sites and to be able to operate them.

**F-br**, home nursing caregiver, finished a programme for social caregivers at an adult education centre in the Täby municipality. She moved to Nicaragua when she was very young, and finally moved to the North of Stockholm to reunite with her mother. After relocation, she established a sentimental relationship with her current native Swedish-speaking partner. She has worked in assisted-living homes, palliative care centres and private homes.

**M-co**, assistant nurse, pursued the programme at the same central adult education centre as F-ar. Just like M-ch, he values the access to knowledge gained through the contact with Swedish-speaking people thanks to his native Swedish-speaking spouse and Stockholm-born children; and additionally, reports that this benefit is mutual. They met in Spain and also have common friends there; that is to say, that his partner also learned Spanish with his help. Finally, he perceives a special sense of empowerment at the workplace because his colleagues, even if with three times as longer experience, have roughly comparable status to him.

### 3.2 MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION DIMENSIONS

One of the aspects that can be discussed before analysing the findings is the heterogeneous composition of the groups. All the participants' accounts described the learner's groups as culturally diverse in relatively low proportion, where some most usually Arabic and Asian countries were the second biggest groups and to a lesser extent African ones. The only exception to this is M-bo, whose majority of classmates were from Spain, Poland, the United States and Estonia.

In terms of how many ethnically non-Swedish teachers took part in the teaching teams, the Colombian nurse, the Argentinian hair stylist and the Peruvian musician stand out as unique with an African, a Russian and Cuban teacher, respectively. This is of special relevance because it complements the multicultural angle across several ME dimensions; especially knowledge construction and prejudice reduction and empowerment. In other words, teachers can represent an additional incentive and be an example of successful integration. All participants value highly to have both types of teachers. The ones, who did not have this cultural mosaïque present in the VET teaching team, also admire the Swedish teaching staff that has international ethnic backgrounds, something they imagine implies a long trajectory before becoming teachers. For instance, the Peruvian leisure school advisor regards highly informal meetings with his Cuban fellow musician and teacher, since he helped him navigate bureaucratic errands, rehearsal space booking procedures, and the meetings protocols with the employment office.

*Content integration.* How much is cultural diversity represented in the VET materials is certainly difficult to measure; yet the absence of this representation would be relatively easy to notice. Predominantly, respondents seem not to have developed substantial awareness in this regard or have stumbled upon the sheer thought of questioning if teaching material showed international diversity or not.

Now that I think about it, some names of clients were German and Finnish, but nobody reacted to that, so I actually thought they were Swedish at first. Only until much later would I realise that it represents some cultural diversity. (F-ar)



Both caregivers made part of didactic simulation exercises. The Brazilian one reports only Swedish actors in the material during a course in health and social care. Upon brief reflection during the response, she confirms that it does not show a realistic picture of the situations the guild encounters during practicum and work experience out there. Additionally, she considers that such a homogeneous picture of society only exists on those recordings.

In the context of a lesson in conceptualization of human value (*människosynsätt* in the original Swedish lesson plan), the other caregiver reported that the lessons were made up by : videos, in which patients were shown, and questions of clinical evaluation were made after the screenings. In the corresponding explanations, the learner has the impression that teachers repeatedly took pride in the official status the 5 minorities have in the national territory. He recalls recurring discussions what the school policy would term linguistic rights from a historical point of view.

Teachers usually seemed proud to show how Sweden has integrated minorities... the Sámi people, for example, the Romani and the Jews. The European Union declared that their rights are recognised; but as far as integrating cultures of the world go, I only heard that kids at school can choose to learn Spanish, German, or French (M-co)

*Knowledge construction.* From what they considered, the vocational knowing instilled in the programmes was mostly unilateral when it comes to facilitator-peer interaction. All learners evaluate that everybody was receptive to whatever teachers shared and no objections or change in dynamics were ever ini-

tiated. A hypothesis is drawn by M-co, who terms its cause as *a sort of shared fear of the immigrant* that makes them prone to behave extremely acquiescent in lessons. The belief seems to be that students are there to comply and learn as fast as possible.

On the contrary, peer-peer interchange happened often after class, or during informal chatting during breaks. For instance, M-ch reports disputing in friendly ways how to best prepare a ceviche recipe. This sea food dish has different local interpretations along the Pacific coast of South America. The learner perceives that such a dialogue fulfilled a multiple role for all his colleagues involved. He estimates that his classmates learned his recipe version, along with the technique to serve it in a cup instead of on a dish; and simultaneously, he learned the versions others had eaten in the past.

F-cu strongly criticised the position of indifferent teachers who, in her opinion, did not really care about the learning process of learners. She speculates that, from her teacher's age, the cause for this lack of interest must have been her proximity to retirement. She perceives that classmates were comfortable with not studying hard, but still were getting passing grades. This means that there was equal treatment for all in a dysfunctional way during knowledge construction, and a passive learner role was incentivised. Seemingly, it is a unique unfortunate anomaly, and all participants seem satisfied with teacher diligence and readiness to explain and help.

The teacher sometimes said that we would really learn out there, from facing real people with real problems instead.

(F-cu)

*Prejudice reduction.* Fighting stereotypes and harmful clichés in class can be a difficult task. Paradoxically enough, a stereotype was present in the respondents' accounts and was used for a positive effect. It has to do with friendly banter as a helpful element for a student to determine who could be trusted. Specifically, F-me cited an inside joke that a little group in their class used along with moves for greeting each other. It consisted of the Spanish word '*vino*' and, either bringing your hand near your mouth as if holding a glass or waving towards yourself as if you invite a person to come closer. The gesture is grounded on the coincidence of the Spanish equivalents for '*wine*' and '*he/she/somebody came here*', which happen to be the same word. Although not really of CLIL pedagogical validity, the word has some relation to cooking since it is the word for wine and may acquire multicultural relevance for non-Spanish-speaking peers.

If taken further, classmates' funny remarks filtered through popular culture and television programmes can have a powerful effect, especially when more than one language is combined.

...the classic silly order-a-beer-at-the-bar-in-Spanish-by-yelling joke or 80's Miami gunmen lines from TV series. I consider it now to be an ice breaker. (M-co)

A more straightforward moment is probably more representative for this dimension. This learner uses the phrase 'think out of context'. This could refer to some sort of multicultural awareness that allows the person to 'suspend' one's own belief system and try to empathise with others from their perspective; in other words, 'put oneself in someone's shoes', or shift focus from tem-

porary adversary circumstances to a person's intrinsic inherent value. In any case, it is has to do with VET skills in the area of social care.

We got an African teacher. She inspired me because she often proposed reflection about... resilience; and how much people who escaped from terrible wars had to stand up again and forget much of their past. She promoted respect towards them, and a few times asked us directly to envision ...and think out of context.

*Equity pedagogy.* The elements in the programme that could aim at presenting learners with egalitarian opportunities are understood in different ways. Some of the interviewed learners outline equity as a similar and comparable starting point. Meanwhile, others perceive that equity has to do with how promptly the social systems compensate for any eventual drawback that is not your fault.

I just kept thinking; she used to say, 'if I could, you can' (F-ar)

One of the caregivers talks about an opportunity to favour equity for her peers. She considers that her previous qualification attempt furnished competences for her to use during her VET programme and land at a standing of relative advantage. She is critical about the distribution of big classes and would have profited better from the tuition in smaller groups that contain more homogeneous profiles, guided by several mentors or advisors. In other contexts, such an initiative would be deemed impractical and segregatory, and hence, unfavourable if the main objective is to achieve smoother integration.

I feel I had additional tools. I did three university semesters in a veterinary programme in Brazil but did not graduate. They should adapt classes according to cultural similarity and migrant document status. Maybe these groupings are fairer and would represent a more levelled outset. (F-br)

*Empowerment and social structures.* Change in frames of mind is what participants identify as a boost of the school culture and learning atmosphere in the VET education system. Some establish a clear connection of the popular adult education school-form and flexibility in favour of each individual's particular life phases; that is to say, the 2 former folk high school students attached unparalleled value to how the tradition of non-profit associations, voluntary and free-time associations, civil society associations permeated the school atmosphere and students' mentality.

We had the school premises available for study circles almost anytime; and if you wanted, you could spend the whole day from meeting to meeting... the Eritrean Choir... the Senior Citizen Jazzband, the Feminist Latino dancers.... Anyway, there was a 'förening' for everything; and they got to choose when to meet, even online. (M-pe)

On the other hand, academic writing skill transfer and formal language register is also perceived to have high value, inasmuch as it may function as a social marker of an individual who attends school as opposed to vernacular or colloquial alternatives. The latter ones are classified by one participant as less sophisticated, and she reports having felt empowered when she could make an

informed decision as to which words to use as tools for showing off some sort of *cultured* language

I think everyone that completes Swedish courses at an adult education centre would agree on this: they taught us a type of language that is not used in the streets. For example, to spell the word they as 'dem' instead of 'dom'. I felt that my Swedish teacher often chose elegant words, so that we would not be mistaken for uneducated people from the street when talking in real life after class. I even had to correct what non-migrants wrote the notes down... (F-br)

Finally, the CLIL moments of anatomy and human morphology lessons constituted a confidence boost when specialised vocabulary with clearly identifiable Latin etymology and are associated with the positioning of the learner as an advantaged vocational knower. He reports guessing or recognising many names of muscles and bones more easily than his peers. He perceives such linguistic proximity gave him the courage to help others memorise or remind them of these names.

Now that we have briefly reported parts of respondents' accounts as distributed in the 5 areas of ME theory, we can analyse some transversal aspects that could be considered important from a pedagogical stance.

#### **4 ANALYSIS**

A pertinent issue for this study in terms of effectiveness of VET programmes is to establish in what ways the favourable ME elements present in each of its dimensions contributed to what

learners perceive truly multicultural. This is to say, when academic activities were perceived to resemble that ideal balance described by the corresponding theoretical ME dimension, that particular multicultural angle was deemed to follow the multicultural guidelines. Otherwise, it was categorised as a monocultural enactment of the dimension in question. Besides, whenever participants reported an internal transformation or perspective shift triggered in themselves deriving from teachers' pedagogical decisions, such content was categorised under the transformative learning category.

A important manifestation of multicultural balance has to do, for instance, with faith in the learner's ability to succeed. The caregivers, the beauty therapist and the construction worker highlight the fact that the connections they were able to make during activities after class strengthened the peer group's cohesion and friendship bonds; and even F-br appreciated how the group cared for her emotional well-being, too. She became friends with one of her teachers; and to her surprise, it became an additional bridge into the profession.

Since the general opinion about the CLIL elements, and how they are integrated into the vocational programme differs amongst all interviewees, it is difficult to generalise; but what is certain is that their accounts show that language clarification : was briefly and effectively done on the spot without resorting to English as a lingua franca. Bearing in mind that nobody identifies any policy or methodical use of CLIL lessons, it might be of interest to explore the possibility for regulations in order to standardise the linguistic component of Swedish as second language learning with syllabi or general guidelines, even a bank of lesson plans for each vocational knowing domain. Gougoulakis &

Lagercrantz All (2020, p.165) disclose that regular SFI learners land onto SFX groups, and that establishing an identity for SFX as a separate form of education might constitute a pedagogical hub leveraging the Greater Stockholm municipality agreement (KSL, 2012). On a similar note, all respondents agree on a perceived unsystematic placement and administration of the initial language introduction phases and a *drop-in session* access strategy before starting the VET specialisation; Nevertheless, that is the period they report as the educational experience that is the richest multiculturally. The findings seem to suggest that the social networks they build during that period overlap with the ones that emerge during the vocational programme, and that they might acquire job placement relevance later on. It is natural to assume that during later stages they seem to become more selective once they have developed competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships as internal transformation happens (King & Heuer, 2009, p. 174; Meyer, 2009, p. 218; Mezirow, 2009, p. 19).

#### 4.1 TRANSFORMATIONAL LEARNING

If within the scope of constructivistic learning theories, it is commonplace to account for how an individual constructs meaning instead of engaging in passive information intake, in the transformational realm the process of effecting change happens in a learner when experiences alter any present paradigm of the individual knowledge and perception. According to Mezirow (1997), the mind frames and assumptions learners use are transformed towards better justification for a belief, an action and sense-making processes. Without exception, the research partic-



ipants say they have undergone multiple transformations, and here we can cite a few.

I feel I contribute to society and consider that being able to trigger patients' smiles by cracking a simple joke from time to time makes them cope with unbearable health conditions in better ways. (M-co)

We already cited M-co's awareness (see *prejudice reduction* above) about his teacher's reflective advice to foster empathy by imagining circumstances from another person's point of view. This resonates with Mezirow's (2000, p. 21) expansion of his original theory to accommodate transformation of habits of mind and emotional maturity. In a similar educational setting, this time with a classmate instead of a teacher, the female caregiver reports in awe how a female student from her group even defended oppressive religious attitudes coming from her male counterparts of the same age.

As regards the *fear of the immigrant* theme (see *Knowledge construction* above), we can add that F-br perceives that VET practicum stages may implicate some risks seeing that the foreign-born apprentice or newly employed is prone to do more than one's best and take overwhelming workloads due to ignorance of the mission of unions, or possible threats of getting fired. Additionally, the practicum colleagues from other backgrounds other than Swedish shared that they had been affected by dismissive behaviour, but she attributes that to patients' senile dementia or trainees' low linguistic proficiency. To this respect the transformational learning theory outlines two in a total of 10 stages (Kitchenham, 2008) that directly connect to that.

- 2) self examination with feelings of fear, anger guilt or shame [...]
- 4) recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation is shared

To avoid ill-treatment by employers and arbitrariness, maybe it would also be important to draft legal framework guidelines that include VET education apprenticeship and practicum's linguistic guides that concern leaves, allocation of hours and service providers protocols. Participants appraise in relief that the VET subjects in health and social care, preschool care and lorry freight and transport offered legal vocabulary lessons before placement in order to avoid legal problems. This CLIL element is definitely something to stipulate closely since national laws may differ dramatically; especially when, for example, the Napoleonic legal tradition is contrasted against the Muslim one.

During the technical (sic) programme there was no focus on citizen rights as applied to relationships with employers, contracts, or sick and maternal leave; People talked about 'vabba' and 'pappaledig', which I came to realise make part of everyday conversations between colleagues and, dare I say now, general culture. (F-me)

Coming from a country that has conventionally observed a different legal system has pedagogical implications for learners that look forward to workplaces effective integration in public institutions, and some of those divergence points can be relatively harmonised by standard terminology lists.

To conclude this section is it worth noting that according to Skolverket (2019), the specialisation in care and nursing domi-

nate in the adult education sector. This is partially replicated in the sample because two of the participants belong in this VET area. Focussing on knowledge areas that belong in the VET system and its percentage representation in the different language groups is something that, albeit pertinent for ME theory and CLIL elements in adult education, falls out of the scope of this study.

## 5 DISCUSSION

The legal framework that regulates adult education has been recently citing the migratory crisis (Eurostat, 2016) as one of the urgent matters of integration policy for adult migrants in Sweden. Let us not forget that asylum applicants from Venezuela represent almost 17% of the total migratory group that was granted protection status in the EU during 2020 (Eurostat, 2021), and it is reasonable to believe that decision-making entities have in mind, first and foremost, the big migratory wave due to its urgency. This seems to suggest that Spanish-speaking minorities also make considerable part of the recent humanitarian mobility; and some of the policy decision could be tailored to tackle integration better not only in terms of numbers but also qualitatively adjusted to the sections of the target population sector. This gives some further justification to make the case of this chapter not only based on the communities represented by the interviewees, but also because the OECD and European Commission recommends that the Swedish government should follow up on vocational education packages, so that rapid and unexpected changes are taken into account as far as new migratory waves and skill shortage are concerned (Kuczera & Jeon, 2019).

As far as CLIL is concerned, one should be looking at the teacher training models that mainstream the didactics of VET-related content and how they are intensified for SFI and SFX courses, apart from how cross-linguistic learning principles of communication-related content are deepened in the pedagogy of the VET field. Notwithstanding the mandatory prerequisite for national official teaching credentials, this problematic VET-linguodidactics nexus could be attributed to the absence of a formal requirement for qualification to specifically teach vocational knowing in Sweden – it would be interesting to see how much these dual professional profiles are the norm in VET teacher networks (*folkbildning, komvux, yrkeshögskolor* and *upper-secondary schools*).

In contrast to vocationally-oriented adult education, which is combined with SFI and Swedish as a second language and is part of regional vocational adult education (*yrkesvux*), SFX is not vocational training, nor is it a combination education. It is an SFI language program aimed at vocational Swedish for new arrivals who already have a profession. So, whereas the aim of *yrkesvux* is to offer a wide range of programs corresponding with the needs in different regions, the aim of SFX is to bring to the labour market already existing competence. (Gougoulakis & Lagercrantz All, 2020, p. 171)

Even though all work toward a common goal, each has its nuances and from this study, an observation can be made. There seems to be little systematicity in the application of CLIL in adult education, and even less so, across these four divisions. Whereas probably the original SFX was idea as to put forth

a *deluxe* CLIL solution with multidisciplinary application across the VET palette, with the same proactive attitude, a Swedish-for-specific-purposes initiative in the world of VET permeating all relevant programmes in adult education could be something to strive for from now on.

The Ministry of Education recently reconfirmed regulations (Utbildningsdepartementet, 2019) that advocate for orientation courses in case students in the adult education centres need them.

This commission would like to emphasise that mother-tongue academic support and guidance for the adult education sector is an important aspects for principals to prioritise in favour of an increase in student completion and improvement of students' opportunities to successfully combine SFI with other courses. (p- 87)

This could present an opportunity for learners to articulate the know-how they already possess, and such support would just literally and figurative *translate* what they can do into a prospective Swedish labor context. As these lines are being written, the so-called *combination courses* – loosely described as SFI and VET courses administered by a single operator, either a folk high school, or the corresponding municipality – are being pumped exclusive funding (Utbildningsdepartementet, 2021). Soon, society will see how these differ from the regular paths described above.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This chapter has attempted to interlock conceptual pieces of education in multicultural societies like multicultural education, student transformations and content and language integration. The data has been retrieved from cases, in which participants satisfactorily completed their learning experiences and, in doing so, underwent different types of transformations that modified their views of the world usually in respect to other groups in favour of intercultural awareness. They make part of the labour market today and look back at the apprentice period with a sense of accomplishment. The groups of learners have been multicultural for years, and the ME dimensions of their programmes should heed multicultural aspects more. However, from their responses, they seem *not* to feel entitled to ask for more, nor expect an education system to adapt to migrants to the point locals' needs blur. They convey critical stances about what some of them term *solid* or *refined* teacher training and groupings of migrants. Mufic & Fejes (2020) converge with this when discussing the risk of labelling diversity in multicultural and multilingual groups of learners merely as 'heterogenous student groups' vs. 'homogeneous' ones.

From the results above, one can see that individuals in the culturally diverse groups face similar integration challenges but come from very different circumstances. If we take such nuances within the smaller groups that have similar linguistic challenges, we will most find diversity again. This chapter discusses only a small group of Spanish-speaking learners, the only common element an educationalist could warrant wise assumptions upon.

However, they come from different countries, which means that their learning trajectories are likely to be influenced in myriads of ways by prior school experience, which in turn is shaped by their local community frameworks. What policy makers and teachers know can help develop proficiency has already been described by contrastive grammars, multilingualism studies and sociolinguistics; that is to say, easily predictable learning challenges that pertain to other hispanophones. If this is so, the next logical question would be: why not apply that body of knowledge to the VET programmes in more strategic ways according to specialisation areas as they pay attention to the multicultural education nature it usually demands?

While one European recommendations for the period 2010-2020 included that countries should create connection with “vocational competences [...] broader key competences, including transversal competences” and promote active citizenship that articulates with voluntary activities (European Commission 2010, p.15), this study partially confirms that Sweden has used its massive adult-education democratic access apparatus to follow this guideline. By virtue of what participants talk about finishing programmes and going through its corresponding language proficiency component, one can attest to the availability of overarching learning paths.

Trying to expand their Swedish-speaking social circle and admitting they have not mastered the language yet, they ascertained that lifelong learning habits are key to language proficiency. Still, they report they have settled in and feel empowered as an integrated migrant after a series of transformations.

To conclude, possible future research ventures may include similar research designs in other cross-national language groups,

like Russian and Portuguese. International comparative studies could, indeed, give an informative account of the outcomes and cohorts of vocational-pedagogical programmes like ‘*Teach to Lead*’ in the American *Career and Technical Education framework* system, or ‘*Step Ahead*’ in the *Slovakian Stredná Odborná Škola* grid. Just like England, Sweden has no specific VET teaching certificate *per se*, so research in VET-CLIL applied didactics would also yield priceless tools for teacher training and curriculum design.

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# **PUBLISHING IN OUR RESEARCH BOOK SERIES**

## **1. ABOUT THE RESEARCH BOOK SERIES**

The research book series Emergent Issues in Research on Vocational Education and Training is a double-blind peer-reviewed publication. This research book series provides full open access to its content on the principle that making research freely and independently available to the science community and the public supports a greater global exchange of knowledge and the further development of expertise in the field of vocational education and training (VET). The research book series is independent from any non-scientific third-party funding and published with funding from the Department of Education, Stockholm University.

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The research book series *Emergent Issues in Research on Vocational Education and Training* is published by the research group Vocational Education & Training (VET), at Stockholm University in cooperation with the European Research Network in Vocational Education and Training (VETNET) (umbrella organization: EERA European Educational Research Association).

#### **SCOPE**

*Emergent Issues in Research on Vocational Education and Training* covers all topics of VET-related research from pre-vocational education (PVE), initial vocational education and training (IVET), professional education and training (PET) and continuing vocational education and training (CVET). Some themes within these areas are as follows:

- Comparison of VET cultures and governance of VET systems
- Qualifications frameworks, competence-based education and training, and competence assessment
- Work-based learning, skills matching and apprenticeship
- Teachers' and trainers' professional development
- VET careers, school-to-work transitions, vocational guidance and counseling
- Green skills, green jobs, greening TVET and sustainable development
- Social issues in VET and social impact of VET
- Transversal skills and transferable skills
- Pedagogic and didactics in VET
- Digitalisation of work and learning, industry 4.0 and industrial internet of things
- Permeability of the education system, hybrid qualifications & dual studies
- History of VET

## FREE AND INVITED SUBMISSION

Free chapter submission: Emergent Issues in Research on Vocational Education and Training accepts literature reviews, empirical studies, theoretical chapters, methodological chapters and case studies. A chapter should be about 6.000 to 8.000 words in length. Manuscript submissions are welcome following calls' deadlines. See guidelines for authors in a separated section.

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One or two volumes per year. Authors receive a printed copy. Print on demand available.

Why considering *Emergent Issues in Research on Vocational Education and Training* as a venue for your work?

- The research book series is connected to an international community of researchers and it is therefore highly appreciated within the international research community.
- The research book series is fully open access. Publication is 100% free of costs (also no hidden costs).
- Authors retain copyright.
- Chapters undergo a rigorous double-blind peer-review.
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## **2. REVIEW PROCESS AND CRITERIA**

### **A-PRE-SUBMISSION**

Potential contributors should first submit an abstract that is reviewed by the editorial board as first acceptance step before submission of full contributions. Send your proposal via e-mail: [vetbookseries@edu.su.se](mailto:vetbookseries@edu.su.se)

### **B-SUBMISSION**

The submission criteria are as follows:

- The submission has not been previously published, nor is it under simultaneous consideration by another book series.
- The abstract contains (a) context/purpose, (b) approach/methods, (c) findings/results and (d) conclusion/key message.
- The instructions in the Guidelines for Authors have been followed.
- Citations and references are in APA style (American Psychological Association referencing style)
- The author's(s') name(s) have been deleted from the text and do not appear in the file properties, to ensure a blind peer-review.
- The submission file is in Microsoft Word format.
- C-Integrity and originality check

Each submitted chapter undergoes first an academic integrity and originality check. For example PlagScan.

The extent to which a submission matches already published sources is indicated via percentages. The percentage is calculated by PlagScan. The decision after the integrity check is based on the following specific limits:

- 5% – 10% match: manuscript will be sent back to the author to revise the manuscript.
- 10% match: manuscript will be rejected.

#### **D-INITIAL SCREENING**

- Each submitted chapter undergoes after the integrity check an initial screening by the editors. Screening criteria are as follows:
- Chapter is within the scope of the research book series
- Author has ensured the integrity of a blind review
- Theory, methods and results are ready for the blind review
- The book series guidelines were followed (e.g. compliance with APA Style, 7th Edition)
- The chapter is suitable to address an international audience (e.g. grammar, style/clarity)
- Chapters that do not meet these requirements are rejected after screening.

#### **E-DOUBLE BLIND PEER-REVIEW**

Anonymized papers suitable for review are forwarded from the editorial office to at least two external reviewers. Review criteria are as follows:

- Ethics: The author has met research and publication ethics requirements.
- Relevance: The chapter is within the scope of the research book series.
- Framework: The theoretical/conceptual/empirical framework is clearly presented and explained.
- Problem statement: The problem statement is clearly presented and explained.
- Research questions: The research questions are clearly presented and explained.
- Research methods: The research methods are appropriate and clearly presented.
- Results/findings/conclusions: The results/findings/conclusions are adequately and clearly presented and discussed.

The reviewers recommend with an overall rating:

- Accept
- Minor revisions needed (neither accept nor reject)
- Major revisions needed (neither accept nor reject)
- Reject

## F-FINAL DECISION

A third reviewer will be involved if the recommendations of the first two reviews are contradictory. The final decision is made by the editors.

### 3. GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS

Chapters that do not comply with these guidelines cannot be accepted for review.

#### TWO CHAPTER VERSIONS

Please note that two chapter versions have to be submitted:

- The first version has to ensure a blind peer review, this means: (1) The author(s) name(s) must not appear in the whole chapter including references. We suggest to replace the names by “author”. (2) The address and biographical notes must be erased.
- The second version has to be complete with all names appearing in the text and references. Please attach the second version as a supplementary file in the submission process named “non-blind version”. The non-blind version should include an additional title page. The title page should include besides the title, (1) the name(s) of the author(s), (2) the E-mail address(es), mailing address(es) and affiliation(s), (3) a brief professional biography of not more than 100 words for each named author, (4) indication of the corresponding author.

Additionally, all figures (charts, diagrams, line drawings, photographic images, etc.) should be submitted as supplementary files with at least 300 dpi (therefore additional to the embedded figures in the submitted versions).

## ENSURE A BLIND REVIEW

To ensure the integrity of the blind peer-review for submission to this book series book series Emergent Issues in Research on Vocational Education and Training, every effort should be made to prevent the identities of the authors and reviewers from being known to each other. This involves the authors, editors, and reviewers (who upload documents as part of their review) checking to see if the following steps have been taken with regard to the text and the file properties:

The authors of the document have deleted their names from the text, using “Author” and year used in the references and footnotes, instead of the author’s name, chapter title, etc. In case of several authors, please make sure that no author can be identified during the blind review process.

With Microsoft Office documents, author identification should also be removed from the properties for the file (see under File in Word), by clicking on the following, beginning with File on the main menu of the Microsoft application: File > Save As > Tools (or Options with a Mac) > Security > Remove personal information from file properties on save > Save.

## REQUIREMENTS

### General requirements:

Language: Chapters which are not in proper English will not be accepted and the chapter will not be forwarded to the reviewers. If English is not your native language, we recommend a professional proofreading prior submission.

APA, 7th Edition: In-text citations and references have to be in APA style, 7th Edition.

Lengths: A chapter should be about 6.000 to 8.000 words in length.

Format: The Chapter has to be submitted in Word format. Use a normal font (e.g., 11-point Times Roman).

## CHAPTER-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

- Title: Please select an informative and specific title.  
In an international context, this usually means that the wider research context (region(s), country(ies)) should be mentioned.
- Abstract: An abstract should comprise 300-400 words.  
Important: The abstract has to be structured in four parts: (1) “context” or “purpose”, (2) “approach” or “methods”, (3) “findings” or “results”, (4) “conclusion” or “key message”.
- Keywords: Please choose and name 3-5 keywords. Carefully selecting the most appropriate keywords will enhance the ability of others to find your chapters. Please use keywords from “A guide to VOCEDplus subjects and keywords”
- Headings: The maximum number of levels is three.
- Figures and Tables: (1) All Figures have to be of high quality (> 300 dpi), legible and numbered consecutively. (2) All illustrations, figures, and tables should be placed within the text at the appropriate points. (2) All illustrations, figures, and tables should be numbered and should have a title. (3) The title of a table should be above the table and the title of a figure should be below the figure.

(4) All illustrations, figures, and tables should be cited in the text and should be explained. (5) References should be put in the legend.

- Abbreviations: If you use abbreviations, please define them. If the abbreviation is the name of an organisation, it should be written in full once.
- Footnotes and acknowledgements: You can use footnotes (but no endnotes) for additional information but not for the citation of a reference or for bibliographic details of a reference. A footnote should not contain figures or tables. Acknowledgments of grants, funds, etc. should be mentioned in a footnote at the beginning of your chapter.
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- The authors' names have been deleted from the text and do not appear in the file properties to ensure a blind peer-review.

Abstract is structured in four parts comprising 300-400 words:

- context (alternative term: purpose)
- approach (alternative term: methods)
- findings (alternative term: results)
- conclusions (no alternative term)
- Keywords: 3-5 keywords. Carefully selecting the most appropriate keywords will enhance the ability of others to find your chapters.
- In-text citations and references are in APA 7th style.
- The submission file is in Microsoft Word format.

## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

### **PUBLICATION ETHICS AND MALPRACTICE STATEMENT:**

The editorial team follows the guidelines of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) and COPE guidelines for best practice.

### **PRIVACY POLICY.**

Our research book series follows the privacy policy of Stockholm University Press. Further information available at: <https://www.stockholmiversitypress.se/site/privacy-policy/>