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## **Introductory note**

This report describes the results of a Sirius meeting for teachers from minority and migrant backgrounds.

First and foremost, we want to thank the teachers that took the trouble to travel to Brussels and share their experiences and stories with us. It has been a valuable and rich experience.

Secondly, we want to thank Ellen Rose Kambel of the Rutu foundation and Priscilla Boyce for chairing and taking notes of some of the sessions and providing us with valuable input.

Finally, we would like to thank the EU for providing the funds to organize this meeting.

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Sirius, November 2014

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 About Sirius

Sirius started in the beginning of 2012 as a network of thirteen countries. The main aim of Sirius is to contribute to closing the achievement gap between students from native and migrant backgrounds (Sirius position paper, 2012). Among the migrant students average dropout rates are higher, migrant students are over-represented in lower educational tracks and they show lower PISA scores in mathematics, science and language.

The position paper of Sirius describes Sirius as follows:

SIRIUS is a European platform for collaboration among policy makers, researchers and practitioners to facilitate exchange of ideas and transfer of information and knowledge. The network was established to promote development of national and EU policies that are based on evidence and tested in practice.

Sirius intends to develop “a powerful professional learning community across Europe to transform the education for children and youngsters from migrant background in the EU” (p. 5, Sirius position paper, 2012).

Three thematic areas are selected according to the original EU call for the Sirius network: policy implementation, schooling and educational support. Each thematic area has its own work package and activities. The current report is one of the results of an activity in work package 2 on Schooling.

This activity involved a focusgroup session among teachers from a migrant background on professional capacity in diverse classrooms. Professional capacity is one of main characteristics of effective schools and it refers to the quality of the staff and the extent to which schools are learning organisations. By focusing on this theme, WP2 aspires to contribute to the main aim of Sirius: closing the achievement gap between immigrant students and students from native backgrounds.

The topic of teacher capacity has received attention in the first and second Sirius year, but given the central role of teachers, we felt it was important to keep teachers on the agenda in 2014. In this third year, we intend to give migrant teachers a floor to voice their thoughts and ideas on recruiting and retaining teachers from migrant backgrounds as well as the necessary teacher competences and possible ways to prepare for teaching in diverse classrooms.

## 1.2 About the current report

This report describes the results of an activity with teachers from migrant and minority backgrounds. The intention was to elaborate on teacher competences in diverse classrooms.

We organized a focus group session in Brussels for teachers. The Sirius national partners invited teachers from migrant and minority backgrounds. In this session, the participants discussed two topics: 1) required teacher competences in diverse classrooms and 2) effective ways of supporting teachers to develop these competences.

The current report is intended to be a valuable source for teacher training institutes as well as professional development organizations from across Europe aiming to prepare teachers for diversity.

The following questions will be answered:

1. What does it mean to teach in diverse classrooms?
2. What works in diverse classrooms?
3. What are the areas of expertise needed in diverse classrooms?
4. How can teachers acquire this expertise?
5. How can we attract more teachers from migrant and minority backgrounds?

The reason to organize the focus group session and invite teachers from migrant and minority background only is that, given their own backgrounds, they may have a specific view on the topic. They may be in a better position to understand as well as tend to the needs of students from migrant and minority positions.

## 1.3 About the focus group session

Ten teachers in both primary and secondary education participated in the session.

From countries: two from Portugal, three from the Netherlands, two from Germany, two from Lithuania and one from Italy

The focus group session consisted of a variety of activities in small groups as well as in plenary sessions. The activities included a preparatory assignment (what does it mean to teach in diverse classrooms in your country) and assignments during the meeting (good practice description, rating the areas of expertise. Detailed minutes were made of all presentations and discussions.

In the current report the completed assignments and minutes are analysed to answer the questions posed in 1.2.

## 2. What does it mean to teach in diverse classrooms?

Before the actual meeting in Brussels, the teachers received a preparation assignment in which they were asked to describe their background in both professional terms (teaching experience) and personal terms (their migrant or minority background). They were also asked about their country's situation regarding migrant and minority groups and regarding integration and inequality. Furthermore, they were asked about their experiences in teaching in general and in classrooms with students from diverse backgrounds in particular. Finally we asked them how they were prepared (both in-service and pre-service) for teaching in diverse classrooms.

This chapter describes the answers per participating country.

### 2.1 Portugal

#### **Background of teachers**

Portuguese schools are organized in kindergarten (age 3 to 5) and primary school (age 5 to 9). Next are the middle schools, which have two levels, from age 9 to 11 and 12 to 14 years.

Liana teaches Biology to children age 9 to 11 years. She is from Brazil and lives in Portugal since 1995.

Ricardo has taught Physical Education at all levels in primary schools. He is originally from Guinea Bissau and moved to Portugal in 1986.

#### **Country specific information**

In the last three decades Portugal has become a country where immigration is a fact. There is an increased number of people from the European countries, Africa and Brazil. China can also be mentioned although with less significance. It is hard to say how many foreign people Portugal has, because there are people who did not immigrate legally and, therefore, do not have the necessary documents of registration / identity. It can be said that less than a million people are legally living in Portugal (they are particularly situated in Lisbon, Faro, Setúbal and Porto), most of them are Brazilians and Ukrainians.

Concerning integration and inequality, the teachers say that immigrants are warmly welcomed in Portugal. However, it depends somewhat on the country where they are from and on the people that already live in Portugal. For instance, African teenagers are not well liked in Lisbon because Portugal has experienced bad behaviour from them towards other people. As a consequence discrimination on skin colour is a fact. Regarding education and working conditions one can say that all the foreign people have the same privileges as Portuguese do. An exception concerns gypsies, who are discriminated because they sell in markets and do not pay any taxes. Also Romanians are discriminated because they are often seen near traffic lights approaching people when they are stopping cars to ask for money.

#### **Teaching experiences**

Children have different backgrounds and interpret situations with their own thoughts and behaviours. The classroom's diversity has increased; Liana said about teaching them: "I considered that the most important tool for teaching is being able to read their (street) knowledge".

Liana's own migrant background helps her to decode each student and to transform their common knowledge into scientific knowledge. But the organizational models of schools and teaching methods do not always fit with the types of students.

Ricardo experienced that because his background is similar to some of his students, it makes him a role model to follow, to admire and to respect. Consequently the active participation is high in his classroom. On language the rule is to speak Portuguese in order to become better integrated in society, children are forbidden to speak any kind of other languages during the classes. In his classes there are students from very different countries, such as Angola, Romania, Guinea Bissau, Pakistan, Cape Verde,... with different roots and ethnicities, but they all have to speak one language, Portuguese.

#### **Examples of changing practices in Portugal**

Teachers were asked to describe a situation in which they changed practices in order to adjust to students behaviours:

"I had a gypsy student who did not behave well in the class and he was almost the same age as I. Gypsies normally like music and this student entered my classes while dancing. I liked him very much but I had to call his attention for the fact that he could not enter in the classroom singing or dancing as he did. He simply did not accept what I told him. He practically ignored it. One day I asked him to dance Kuduro (a typical dance from the African people). I knew he liked to dance Kuduro so, I used this tactic to film him and in the end of it I just blackmailed him. I told him that if he dared to dance or sing in my classes again, I would be so kind and post that video I had just made of him on YouTube. He looked a bit worried about that and he never danced in my classes again. Moreover, he started to respect me and from that moment on he turned out to be the best student in my class".

#### **Preparation for teaching in diverse classroom**

Liana has a degree in Biology, but that was not fully recognized in Portugal. It took her several years to get a full degree. Let alone, a preparation for diverse groups was not available at all.

Ricardo felt a great pressure regarding the different situations of the students when he first started to teach. Situations which 'we did not know or learn about at the university.' They did not receive any kind of pedagogical orientation during their teaching- learning professional competences training at university.

Since he teaches children from Africa, Romania and Pakistan, he felt the need to do a course in Portuguese as a Foreign Language. Only after that, he started to understand the difficulties of the students better and he was able to meet their needs. He experienced that at first they need to adapt themselves to the language and only then will they succeed at school. In the language courses he learned about the different proficiency levels that a language has and students at different levels should be taught in a different way, using different methods and sources.



## 2.2 Germany

### Background of teachers

Peter was born in the Soviet-Union with ancestors from Germany. Since 1993 he lives in Germany where he had to start studying again, because his two diplomas and thirteen years of teaching were not recognized in Germany.

Since 2002 he is a teacher in a secondary school in Eschweiler next to Aachen where he teaches Music and German for migrant children between ten and eighteen years old. The children come from Africa, Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Poland, Russia, Italy, Kazakhstan, Romania, Macedonia, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Greece and so on. His ambition is not only to teach the children German, but also to integrate them as quickly as possible into society.

Ajda has a Turkish/Kurdish background and she migrated with her parents to Germany at a young age. She teaches in a vocational school, specializing in social careers like kindergarten teachers and technical careers like IT. She teaches English and Social Work, which also includes different subjects such as Sociology, Early Childhood Education, etc. to children and adults between 16 and 38 years old.

### Country specific information

Germany has a migration percentage around 20% which increases. A percentage of 50% is estimated in 2050. The largest groups are: Turkey (18%), Poland and Romania (13%), Former Yugoslavia (*unknown*), Greece (*unknown*), Russia (8%), Kazakhstan (6%) and Italy (5%). In the big cities migration proportion is much higher. In Peter's school it is already about 50%.

The state North-Rhine Westphalia, where Ajda lives, has the largest population of migrants with almost 2 million people.

Concerning integration and inequality, the teachers say that on the one hand Germany tries to integrate its people, on the other hand there is inequality. Articles in the news describe inequality cases when young adults try to find a job. People with a non-German name are seven times less often invited to an interview than those with a German name. In school, migrant parents are obliged to be involved in school activities and must understand the German school system. In school they try to create a climate where children with different backgrounds can get along with each other.

### Teaching experiences

The German teachers speak about several advantages having a migrant background. One is long years of teaching experience in another culture (Kazakhstan, Russia), it brings different learning methods and topics such as inclusion, individual support to the teachers' team and also into the classrooms.

A second advantage is to know by yourself how it is to attend classes in a different culture. Important is to put a great emphasis on *general knowledge*. It helps to quickly integrate into society.

A third is that having a migrant background helps children and parents being 'one of them'. It helps to break down the barriers between them and the teachers. Ajda sometimes acts as a kind of interpreter for other colleagues, not only language but also culture-wise.

### Example of changing practices in Germany

"Classes with a high proportion of migrant students have a lot of mutations. This means that the children come and go in the middle of a school year. The learning group is always different as well as the knowledge of German in that class. It means a practice change for the teacher and to focus and to give individual support. It also requires a lot of preparation time".

### Preparation for teaching in diverse classroom

Both teachers say that they took initiative by themselves to prepare for teaching in diverse classrooms:

*'I tried to make contact with respective people out of my own initiative'.*

Strategically Peter tries to prepare himself well before the class started: access to documents, read them, consultate other teachers who teach in this class. Also important is to *diagnose* students regarding their performance level in detail. On the basis of all this information he chooses his *learning method* (for example: group work, learning stations, cooperative learning, etc.).

There is an initiative network where migrant teachers meet for sharing teaching experiences with each other ("Project Lehrkräfte mit Zuwanderungsgeschichte").

## 2.3 The Netherlands

### Background of teachers

There were three teachers from the Netherlands.

Ferdinand originates from Syria, his family left in 1989. At home they speak Aramaic and Arabic. He teaches educational sciences and pedagogy at a teacher training institute. He also works at the university and has a lot of experience working on nine different elementary schools for five years in every age group.

Matilda is from Singapore and in 2005 she moved to the Netherlands with her Dutch partner and started working at an international school in Amsterdam. She teaches primary students (age 4 to 11 years) English at the Amsterdam International Community School for the last 8 years.

Monica was born in the Netherlands with a Moluccan background. Her parents had to come to the Netherlands in the 1950's because of the difficult political situation in the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia). Her work field is in primary and vocational education. In primary education she works with eight and nine year old children, but in previous years she also worked with younger ones. One day a week, she works in a school for vocational education, where she teaches students who are trained to support teachers. The subjects she teaches are Dutch, arithmetic, citizenship, pedagogy and didactics.

### Country specific information

In January 2013, the Netherlands counted 3.5 million 'foreigners' (migrants), 21.1% of the population. An estimated 11.7% is from non-western origin: Turkish, Moroccan, Surinam, Antillean and Aruban. The western 'migrants' come from EU countries and Indonesia.

Like many Western European countries the Netherlands became increasingly more multicultural after World War II. Particularly during the 1960s and 1970s the Netherlands attracted immigrants, mainly from Mediterranean countries like Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Turkey and Morocco and (former)

Dutch colonies, such as Surinam, the East Indies, the Moluccas and the Dutch Antilles. Most of these immigrants had a low educational background and immigrated mainly for economic and/or (in particular East Indies and Moluccas immigrants) political motivations.

Immigrants from the former Dutch colonies were usually more familiar with the Dutch system and language and as a group showed a greater variability in terms of social class.

During the last two decades the Netherlands has attracted refugees from Eastern Europe, Africa and the Middle East, in particular refugees from former Yugoslavia, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and Somalia.

Concerning integration and equality matters, there is still a gap between migrants and the “autochthones” (the native born Dutch population). Given the current economic crisis, in comparison to the native Dutch groups, minority groups seem to have difficulties catching up. Also cultural differences (language, ethnicity, religion) are still considered to have negative effects on the integration of minority groups. The system seemingly provides ethnic minorities with the same opportunities to move up the social ladder and therefore integrate within society. However, the discourses about minorities and integration within the media and education have become more racist, islamophobic and orientalist. These discourses have a negative influence on identity development of minority youth, which is intertwined with integration.

### **Teaching experiences**

The three teachers describe the significance of their migrant background in terms of their awareness level:

- as a role model for others with a migrant background;
- understanding the same (urban) language;
- understanding the ethnic and the urban culture;
- integrating literature on diverse cultures and beliefs;
- different cultures have different learning styles and different expectations for academic success;
- looking at a child as a unique person with educational and personal needs;
- an approach that is characterized by diversity and flexibility: to understand and guide the (migrant) students; understand how it is to grow up and live in another context, deal with cultural differences and adjust the educational context so that students feel a sense of belonging.

### **Examples of changing practices in the Netherlands**

1. "To include differentiated activities to different learning styles (visual, kinesthetic and auditory learners)"
2. "Two migrant students, in a group of twenty in my first year group of students at the MBO, talked with me about issues that are not known to other students: non-acceptance, being 'different', trying to fit in. Both students need to work extra hard; language deficit is something they have to deal with. So by differentiating in the instruction and support during the process of learning, the students get the attention they need".

### **Preparation for teaching in diverse classroom**

The teachers say that they learned teaching in diverse classrooms mostly by themselves, because in most teacher training programmes 'there was and is no real interest in diversity'. Some have attended workshops, but the big part of learning was actually *doing* it.

## **2.4 Lithuania**

### **Background of teachers**

Irma is from a mixed minority family: Jewish and Polish. Born in Lithuania, but at the time it was a part of the Soviet Union, so her mother tongue is Russian. She nowadays lives in Lithuania, and belongs to a national minority. She teaches English in primary education (with experience in secondary and higher grades) for pupils in the age 7-11 years old.

Irena spent all her childhood with her Polish grandmother, but they could also speak Lithuanian with each other. She has been studying in Japan for 3 years. She teaches English to 8-16 year old pupils and also runs a Japanese language and culture club.

### **Country specific information**

Lithuania has been a multinational state for centuries. People of 115 different nationalities live in Lithuania today. They account for about 15% of the country's population. The main minority groups in Lithuania are Poles (7%), Russian speakers (6%), Jews (around 2%), Byelorussians (1.2%), Ukrainians (0.5%) and others (Tartars, Karaites, Germans, Latvians, Karaims and Gypsies). Lithuania has a complicated situation, because these 'minorities' have lived on this territory for centuries as Lithuania was a part of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1569-1795, then a part of the tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union. Ethnic minorities were an important part of the social, cultural life of the state in 1918-1940. WWII events as well as Soviet occupation left a dramatic mark in the history of the country and its ethnic minorities. Many of them do not consider themselves migrants.

Concerning integration and equality matters, children of ethnic minorities in Lithuania get elementary, main, and high education at schools with their mother tongue as the language of instruction. Students originating from national minorities also have the possibility to learn their native language at schools where the language of instruction is Lithuanian.

There are 163 schools where the language of instruction is one of the several languages of ethnic minorities. Since 1 January 2010, the annual state allocation for an ethnic minority student has been 15 per cent higher than that for a student attending schools with Lithuanian as the language of instruction. National minorities in Lithuania can get news and information in their native languages. A number of periodical publications are printed in Russian, Polish and Yiddish. There are about 300 non-governmental organizations founded by national minorities of Lithuania. A wide spectrum of their cultural, educational, social projects gets state funding every year.

The most sensitive question at the moment is educational: there are practically no textbooks being published for minority schools and they switch for History, geography, Science and other textbooks to Lithuanian. The biggest problem is with textbooks of Lithuanian as pupils in Lithuanian schools and pupils in national minority schools use the same textbooks. These textbooks are mainly created for those whose mother tongue is Lithuanian.

### **Teaching experiences**

Irma describes how her minority background has taught her to be tolerant and to respect national and cultural diversity.

Irena teaches 14 students of non-Lithuanian origin. Since 2000 till 2014 she cooperated with 26 foreign countries' schools and teachers and they still keep in touch with the majority of them. She personally founded a Japanese language and culture club in collaboration with the Japanese Embassy in Lithuania. Every year they have many Japanese guests at school. They organize various activities in order to acquaint pupils with the traditions, customs and mentality of Japan. Some years ago as well as last year some Japanese students had home-stays in her pupils' families. They also have a Spanish language and culture club. Three young teachers from Spain and Turkey had an assistantship in her school. Her school works a lot to make students from different families interested in learning and feeling good together.

#### **Examples of changing practices in Lithuania.**

1. "Some years ago I had a Russian origin pupil who was my homeroom student as well. As a homeroom teacher I had to help the girl with the integration into the class and the school's community. At first it was rather difficult as the girl could not speak Lithuanian. First, all other kids were very interested in her and wanted to become friends with her, but as she could not speak Lithuanian they suddenly lost their interest because of a communication breakdown. They all were teenagers at that time, very tender period in their lives, when they feel being the most important people in the world (...). I had to speak with the Lithuanian kids a lot, so to explain that their assistance is of a great importance to let the girl get used to our school. We discussed a situation of a present society which becomes more and more multicultural and everyone should be ready to receive foreign people to their country. We told them that with the increase of Lithuanians emigrating to foreign countries, they could appear in the same situation as well.  
Another problem was with teachers. Our teachers are not ready to teach such students yet. Some of them wanted the Russian girl to learn history, geography and other subjects in Lithuanian right away. After half a year of her stay some teachers were very surprised that the girl still could not understand the content of the lesson well. However, in my opinion, her progress was really fast as her parents were very cooperative. They had a nanny at home who spoke only Lithuanian to her, so she

could get by with Lithuanian quickly. She also had one extra hour at school to learn Lithuanian. Nevertheless we all had some problems, the girl was very successful, and she finished her secondary education without any big problems. Now she is a student at Vilnius University”.

2. “This school year, three new Byelorussian origin pupils came to our school. I teach one of them. As an English teacher I do not have problems teaching her a foreign language. Contrary, it forces me to use more English she could understand the content of the lesson. It was interesting for me to follow her way of integration into the class and our school. I usually see her surrounded by her classmates; her homeroom teacher tells that she participates in all school trips or class parties, so it seems that this girl’s integration was successful. A big help to her was her Lithuanian classmate who could speak Russian. Most teachers thought that it was just great and their cooperation was very efficient, but we had to overcome another issue. The Lithuanian girl’s parents started to complain that their daughter’s attention is often distracted as she constantly had to explain everything to the Byelorussian girl. We all have been trying to find a solution to satisfy both sides, but it seems that we still have a lack of knowledge how to deal with such a situation”.

### **Preparation for teaching in diverse classrooms**

Irma states that she was not prepared in any way, because it was and is unfortunately not a part of the in-service or pre-service training.

Irena said that she too did not have any “official” in- or pre-service training. She learned a lot being involved in international collaboration for many years at her school meeting many foreign people. Of course this was not a teaching situation, thus she ‘learned’ it also in other contexts: she has both theoretical and practical knowledge on this topic as she studied intercultural communication in Japan. Being a foreigner she had to adapt to a different society, its customs and its people. Moreover, the theme of her Master’s thesis was “*Intercultural communication integration into English education*” for which she had explored this communication theme.

## **2.5 Italy**

### **Background of teacher**

One teacher from Italy (Ronaldo) joined the focus group session. He does not have a migrant/minority background but was interested in joining the meeting because of the increasing number of migrant students in his classes. We decided to include his information where relevant in our report because of this reason.

Ronaldo teaches in a lower secondary school to students in the age of 10/11 to 13/14 years old, mostly students with special needs. His subjects are Italian (language and literature), History and Geography.

### **Country specific information**

In 2011/2012 the Italian educational system (from pre-primary to secondary) has 8.4% students with a minority background. More than half of them originate from five countries:

- Romania 18.66%
- Albania 13.59%
- Morocco 12.69%
- China 4.51%
- Moldavia 3.06%

A recent statistical survey (*Indici di integrazione degli immigrati in Italia*, CNEL, Roma, 2013) says that the average level of social integration of migrants (which includes secondary instruction and language skills) is 51.14 on a scale 1 till 100. This is not very high and although this is a national average, Italy is still very far from reaching an acceptable level of integration. In the last ten years the immigration rate has almost grown ten times and with the economic crisis and the growing unemployment, Italian working/middle class people started to see migrants like 'job-thieves'. This feeling is fuelled by some political parties. Immigration is a relatively *new* occurrence in Italy.

### **Teaching experiences**

For his teaching to students with special needs, he has to change his practice of teaching every time, according to the situation. There is no blueprint. Usually he simplifies the language to explain theory and concepts.

### **Preparation for teaching in diverse classroom**

In Italy they do not have special preparation to teach in diverse classrooms, not in-service nor pre-service. So it is up to every single teacher to integrate his/her preparation into their lessons and to find out what works.

## 3. What works in diverse classrooms?

### 3.1 Introduction

When discussing Good Practices several issues need further attention, as there are different types of migrants, with different historical backgrounds that concern their relationship with the country. Migrants can be considered from structural and historical perspectives in relation to one country or belonging to recent waves of migrants. This has effects on how society, in general, deals symbolically with those migrants, having an impact on integration and inclusion in different contexts, such as in school context.

In everyday teaching practices we are still confronted with a homogeneous vision of the classroom, which is “naturally” diverse. This is more a result of a political vision on education that focuses on results. These understandings of what counts as education have a direct influence on how teachers deal with curriculum and how they organize their views and work with diversity in their classrooms.

Different types of minorities and migrants have different views on the value of school and school knowledge (Charlot, 2002). A system of translation would be needed in order to support understanding how they have access to knowledge and to what Young (2011) considers *powerful knowledge*, meaning the knowledge that is valued by the mainstream society, having an economic value (capital value). Having a distant relationship with this knowledge creates a gap that sometimes schools try to overcome by introducing alternative educational pathways to those pupils that will lead them, sometimes, to less valuable knowledge, causing more harm than good.

An understanding, in the first place, of why these children and young people become disengaged and less motivated might generate insights on what could work. A first step might be raising awareness about knowledge gaps in the school curriculum in which several world cultures are missing or misunderstood.

### 3.2 What works: how to engage and how to motivate students in diverse classrooms?

The teachers were asked to reflect on the question how to engage and motivate students in diverse classrooms. Below the answers are summarized:

1. Raising awareness among all actors that effective changes need to happen on both sides. Education for diversity is not only for diverse classrooms but for all.



2. Working to turn cultural differences into cultural capital.
3. Using new technologies and other strategies to make their potential more visible and to understand what they already know – leadership, curiosity, writing, dancing...
4. Making schools meaningful means understanding what is meaningful for children and young people (Bernstein, 1990).
5. Valuing peer group support
6. Developing of learning communities which means that teachers need to “go native”
7. Using diverse strategies in the same classroom, namely to promote interaction
8. Developing positive approaches through good examples.
9. Integrating cultures into *curriculum*, acknowledging gaps and making a critique of the curriculum
10. Using a narrative approach: Empowering young people using their own life, stories, raising awareness about their own culture stories, at the same time that they learn powerful and sharable knowledge. It is necessary to consider how to lead students to use their own knowledge into what they are learning, and lead them to become owners of knowledge. The narrative approach is also interesting methodologically as it allows for the experience of learning together and the development of their self-knowledge.
11. Working on Textbooks, such as rewriting history e.g., try to connect local history to the history of the country of origin of each student
12. Developing top down policies through leadership and school leaders, to guide school practices and *ethos*.
13. Improving parental involvement. This needs a closer link with local communities and continued work on the relationship between parents and school.

### 3.3 Good practices: voices from teachers

Teachers need to have the capacity to know children and young people well and to be aware of different world visions and standpoints (Haraway, 1998; Harding, 1986). They need to have the capacity to read the context and have a bigger view. When teacher training programmes include intercultural education and citizenship education, the ability to develop inclusive pedagogical work is developed.

Several examples were given that allow us to think that positive approaches and references to migrants' realities can work as powerful examples to change mentalities.

#### 3.3.1 Good practices

All teachers were asked to describe a good practice from their own experience, concerning their own classrooms. The descriptions were very brief and give an idea of general directions.

Matilda: Learning a foreign language (3 or 4<sup>th</sup> language) with success, by integrating cultural aspects from their cultural heritage in daily lessons and at the same time valuing the host country.

Irena: Collaborative work, namely peer support through the involvement of student volunteers, to help foreign students feeling safe, integrating them in a new educational environment. Integration of a newcomer student that does not speak the host country language is challenging. Learning the language is needed to be more integrated in the school and class environment. To feel safe before learning.

Ajda: Focused workshop on interculturality for pre-service kindergarten teachers, confronting them, through self-related tasks, with their own experience and knowledge on cultures and diversity.

Peter: Smooth integration of new foreign students in classroom routine activities. Avoiding creating a “special” moment to promote integration and conclusion can do more harm than good as the underlying message can be that a different culture or a different person needs moments separated from mainstream educational processes.

Irma: European Day of Languages: translating politeness sentences into different world languages. Students became aware of differences and similarities through the analysis of human interactions.

Liana: Creating a sense of ownership towards knowledge using pictures. The pupils’ relationship with school knowledge departs from their interpretations and understandings

Ricardo: Film documenting young people, considered as behaving badly, dancing in classroom and confronting them with appropriate or inappropriate behaviour in the classroom context.

Ferdinand: Using sports to promote school success

### 3.3.2 What makes a good practice?

The teachers were asked to share their good practices and reflect on them. What are the underlying dimensions of good practices?

A good practice is when we have a “genuine interest in implementing multiculturalism in a learning environment” (Matilda), to achieve what most of the teachers consider primarily important: school success. Teachers consider a practice to be good **when the learning process works**, when it is meaningful for their students and “they feel part of the process”, it is important to let students know that they are most important object in the learning teaching process (Liana). Meaningfulness can be because “students are learning the language and using it in authentic situations” (Matilda) or because

“students feel safe and valued in a community to learn the language” (Matilda). A good practice is also understood by its impact, immediate and more visible or medium and long-term impact. A given action related with a specific situation might change a student relationship with school (Ricardo).

A good practice depends on **continuity** as well and the capacity to make a practice last longer. The example of Irena in keeping the volunteer students involved in integrating new students in school is important to understand several obstacles and possible ways to overcome them. The transformation of a good idea in a good practice depends on the capacity to involve different actors in the development. It depends, for example, on the individual personality or on “how comprehensive parents are” (Irena). Conditions to learn need to be provided in advance making children and young people feel safe. Only if this is guaranteed, it is possible for students to become confident, curious about learning.

Working positively within educational contexts of diversity, requests professional **awareness** and deep knowledge about pupils’ contexts and including themselves in the analytical processes. Hence, it is important that teachers recognize “their knowledge, background and learned a bit about themselves and their neighbours” (Ajda) as is frequent that “problems around the community” influences schools environment (Ricardo). Therefore, the teacher’s ability to create a pedagogical environment that allows students to “connect the competences to their practical life” (Liana) is crucial. This can also be done through strategies that follow students’ interests, as sports (Ferdinand), integrating what is done and achieved in classroom work. Teachers’ closeness to students works successfully when the aim is to promote their interest in school and inclusiveness.

In an intercultural dialogue the teacher figure works as a **mediator** in the classroom or school context, and gives students the feeling of being welcome and that the teacher is **helpful** (Peter).

A good practice can be developed under the idea of the possibility of **translating** what is less known from another culture. As Irma mentioned, referring to religious differences, this strategy allows to “raise students awareness that mistrust and break in **communication** is often triggered by religious differences, lack of knowledge and contact to open up”. The act of translation will enable the awareness of the possibility to contribute to universal and shared values, enabling students involved in this type of activities to conclude that “however different nations are, they will share common values and they can live in peace and cooperate” (Irma). Knowledge and awareness about the Other (Ricardo) avoids structural and occasional fear that turns easily into educational and inclusion obstacles.

## **4. What are the relevant areas of expertise?**

### **4.1 Introduction: Five areas of expertise**

On the basis of a literature overview, Severiens, Wolff and van Herpen (2014) describe five areas of expertise that seem important for teaching in diverse classrooms. Urban teachers should first of all know about language development in classes of pupils whose first language is not the language of instruction. Secondly, urban teachers should be competent in using didactic resources that support the learning of all their pupils. Diverse classes need different pedagogical resources and different types of instruction than homogeneous classrooms. Thirdly, urban teachers should know about social psychology issues such as stereotyping, teacher expectations and ethnic-identity issues. And finally, urban teachers that succeed in engaging the parents of their diverse pupils as well as cooperate with community organisations on a basis of equality will further support school achievement in their urban schools.

During the session, these five areas of expertise were presented after which the teachers were asked to rate the importance of the five areas and elaborate their point of view. The teachers were also asked about a possible sixth area. Below, we first present their overall ratings and then we continue with their explanations. We end with a final paragraph on additional areas of expertise required in classrooms where student have diverse backgrounds.

### **4.2 Elaborating the areas of expertise**

The teachers were asked to rate the importance of each of the areas, Figure 4.1 shows the results of their answers.

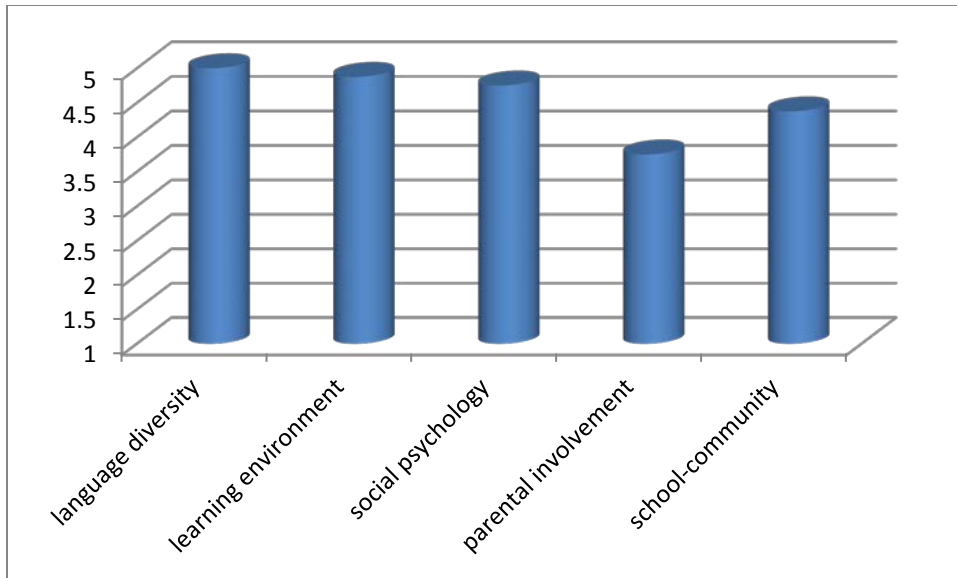


Figure 4.1. The importance of the five areas for teaching in diverse classrooms (from 1 not important to 5 very important)

Figure 4.1 shows that the first three areas (language diversity, learning environment and social psychology) are considered very important. Parental involvement and school-community relationships seem to be a little less important. The teachers explain their thoughts below.

#### 4.2.2 Language

Expertise on language includes knowing street language/urban language that kids use. But also knowing what it takes to learn in a language that is not your mother tongue. Every class should be a language class. Expertise includes: being able to design and use a variety of language instruction methods (mother tongue instruction, language instruction for newcomers, bilingual methods, second language instruction, content integrated language instruction).

All teachers agree that expertise on language is very important. Some emphasize the relevance of their own background in this: “(Language is) very important. I know the language they speak, the whole package.” One teacher said it helps to learn a second language yourself, in order to understand what children have to go through. Another teacher added that it also helps to learn a few words in the home languages of children in your classroom.

Some teachers describe how colleagues are often ill-prepared for dealing with language diversity: “Teachers should be aware that the classrooms will be different. Some kids will not be able to speak the native (state) language and (there will be) some communication problems, problems with relationships between kids in the classroom might appear because of different backgrounds. “

One teacher shares an example of a solution that was at the same time also problematic:

“A new girl from Russia came to our school and one of her classmates, who could speak Russian very well (...) helped her understand teachers’ instructions, she get through with homework etc. And the Lithuanian girl’s parents started complaining to the principle because the girl couldn’t concentrate on her own assignments because she had to divide her attention to teachers’ instructions, to her work and to assist the other Russian girl.”

### 4.2.3 Learning environment: Pedagogy

Gay (2000) is one of main researchers in this area of expertise. She describes how your own ideas about diversity determine how you teach in diverse classrooms. Teachers that are afraid of difference teach differently than teachers that are curious and without fear. Gay argues it is important to find out how you feel about diversity, in order to become a good teacher in diverse classrooms. One of the main skills in this area refers to differentiated instruction: Gay’s general advice is to vary and differentiate.

All teachers agree that being competent in pedagogy and organizing the learning environment in diverse classrooms is very important. In a situation where migration is increasing, a teacher notes the following: “sometimes some teachers complain all the time that they don’t know how to work with diversity with migrant children. They feel that they need some special strategies or techniques on how to deal with those kids so, I don’t know. Some teachers need training on how to deal with kids. It’s my experience that we don’t have many migrant kids, and we aren’t used to certain situations. Minority kids are completely different. They were brought up in Lithuania. Almost no problem with them except for the regular problems, but with migrant children, we don’t have so many, and some teachers are afraid. We need some training.”

Other teachers that have been teaching in diverse classes for longer periods wonder whether this area of expertise refers to a general area of expertise or to a specific one for diverse classrooms. One teachers wonders: “If you had 20, 30 Turkish children in your classroom, for math. And you had a group of German children, would you do the same kind of lesson or different because of their ethnic background?” He answers his own question: “I don’t think it’s an additional competence, but a basic competence of every teacher. The didactics I use within the university, I use also at vocational level (HBO) and at elementary school. Diversity in cognitive level and within classrooms, even when students are almost all white, within elementary school I have also worked at ethnic diverse classes, I use the same strategies.” Another teachers states: “In some groups I would use euros for a math problem and in others it would be apples and bananas. But in general it’s the same, the groups must learn the same things.”

Other teachers stress being flexible and personal. Dealing with diversity seems to be a matter of catering for individual students’ needs: “(if) the child doesn’t understand you (then) you have to differentiate the instructions”. It requires the capacity to diversify concepts. Another teacher claims she prepares a classroom in terms of points of what she wants to do, but then it depends on the class what actually

happens. Another teacher states: “my strategy is to see the pupils as personal, whether 10, 20, 30.... Personal.”

In conclusion, all teachers agree that this area is quite important, but this seems to be true for all classrooms, not for diverse classrooms only. Diverse classrooms do seem to ask for more flexibility and a personal approach.

#### **4.2.4 Social interaction and identity**

The third area of expertise includes competence in dealing with social interactions in group work, and phenomena that play a role such as stereotypes and expectations. Traditional teachers may have negative thoughts about students from migrant backgrounds, often associated with low expectations. If you have low expectations, chances are high your student’s do not achieve well. Nobody rises to low expectations. This area is also about identity development and what it means to have to combine different ethnic identities and different value systems.

The teachers all agree on the importance of this area. They present a variety of examples.

On identity development:

“I think that both for migrant children as well as for citizens the identity development is very important. Sometimes our Lithuanian kids have bias feelings about their identity. For example, these days there are pupils who had experience living abroad as their parents due to the economic situation of Lithuania had been employed in various foreign countries. Thus, if they had a better living there, they come back with a lost pride for their native country. When I noticed that for the first time, I was shocked, because we were always raised to be proud of being Lithuanian despite the economic hardships. Even in Soviet Union we always felt being a country on ourselves, not a part of the Soviet Union. I would also like to mention that this situation dramatically changed in the last couple years. I feel that it is very significant to show kids that much more important values, such as love of one’s country, should prevail the consuming world.”

When asked how she dealt with this example, the teacher replies: “I try to explain to my pupils that every country has its hard times or things we are not satisfied with. However, as its citizens we have to work hard trying to change the situation or the things we do not like. What is more, I point out that everywhere they will be living, they will be treated as Lithuanians, that means representatives of their country and according to their behaviour the iMatildae of the country will be developed. That shows how crucial is to have pride for their own country.”

One teacher refers to the role teachers themselves play in this area: “this is important when tolerance begins and when you love and accept yourself and be open to other cultures. Then you can be tolerant towards other types of persons. Teachers should help (migrant) students with their identity (also with aggression from other students). They can act better because it is visible (like aggression), but teachers also face symbolic violence in curriculum: that is for instance the way texts in history books tend to be

stereotyped: certain historian perspectives about colonies and what happened there is not mentioned. School is constructing their identity, but a teacher can make a difference.”

On negative images and stereotypes:

Regarding the question how to deal with issues happening outside the school regarding racism and negative views on migrants, one teachers answers “I think in the Netherlands, there are great opportunities to climb the social ladder, however ...Mass media and education is racist and it does effect the (identity) of children in some kind of way. Teachers don’t have the knowledge to understand those concepts and to design something ... those images that are portrayed about who they should be. But not who they are, so..”.

“... For example in textbooks, they talk about the slaves, but don’t talk about the enslaved people. So (teachers need) different theories e.g. decolonizing the mind, interaction education, anti-sexist education, those kinds of theories who analyse the discourse in media and education. And when you read those articles and you analyse the reality you see something else. It’s very complex to...”

Chair: “You’re saying teachers don’t have this knowledge and because they lack the knowledge they are unable to talk about with kids.”

Teacher: “Of course, because if you don’t see the structures you can’t talk about it so, as simple as that. The structure is very complex...”

On identity development:

“I have another example, of a year ago. Children with an Afro- Dutch background had to draw themselves. I sat beside a girl, she had black skin and afro hair and she portrayed herself as a white girl with blue eyes. And if you talk with a child about that, “why did you draw that”? If as a teacher you don’t have the knowledge of where this could come from then you have to have another talk with the child.” The teacher then asked her: “can I ask you something, Is this you?” “Why are her eyes blue, “I asked. “Because they are beautiful”, she said. “Why didn’t you make them brown like your skin? “Because white is beautiful “or something like that she responded. And I was shocked. I read a lot about these kinds of things, but it’s the first time I experienced it. “

“If you asked those children from Amsterdam south-east... A lot of afro Dutch people live there and if you ask them to name the negative stereotypes of the south- east are. The whole (chalk) board was full, they were able to mention them all, and those kids are like nine years old. Stereotypes are well known, little kids are aware. Is identity development important? Yes of course!”

In short, the teachers can provide many examples in this area of expertise and also show their expertise in dealing with issues in this area. Even though they do not relate their reactions to their own migrant backgrounds, it seems to have increased their sensitivity and understanding of these particular issues.



#### 4.2.5 Parent involvement

This area of expertise is based on research showing that parent involvement increases school effectiveness. The research also shows how difficult it can be to get parents involved, especially in poor urban areas.

This area of expertise is considered less important compared to the first three areas. Teachers discuss the definition of parental involvement and not a difference between involvement and participation. Involvement refers to caring for children and wanting what's best for them, participation has more to do with helping in the school. Even though some parents are not visible in the school, they are involved and supporting their children. These are the so-called invisible strategies. A teacher explains: "Within ethnic studies they have something like invisible strategies (that) parents use who cannot participate within the school because of whatever reason. But they love their children and they reserve all the money their children need and the children know that and they feel like their parents somehow are involved. "

Teachers also note that parental involvement may not be equally important in all levels of education. Research shows there is an optimum level of involvement at different ages. It is also possible to be too involved as a parent and "suffocate" the child. One teacher explains this is the reason why she thinks this area is not as important: "Parents need to sometimes take a step back and not suffocate them. Another thought that's very important (...) is that teachers are in charge. The knowledge and the information (comes from us). The parents can give us support but they have to be careful. (...) The parents have to let the children be going on their own steps." Another teachers agrees that "parental involvement is very important but parental participation is not so important. They may cook once a year if they like, I love that, (primary school) but the other things are my responsibility. I'm the teacher I take responsibility."

In secondary schools, peers and the learning environment become more important: "It's important in primary (education) for parents to be involved and participate in school and kids life. But in secondary, where I teach, the involvement is very important because they have to be supportive, but their participation is not very important. The peers are more important. The school environment becomes more important." Another teacher states however that the parents are still important in this age, because students can get in 'crisis' due to biological factors concerning age, but also in making choices for a future career.

A discussion evolves between the parents and teachers in the room. One teacher thinks the presence of parents in the school is not necessary for achieving the learning goals. Another teacher finds involvement not always to be cooperative, parents interfere a lot: "in Italy parents are criticizing the teachers all the time....and most of the time they are right". Another teacher points to the role of social background in this issue: "(For teenagers) Parents social background is very important as well. Because they want to be proud of their parents. It's very nice for a father to be a doctor and you invite him for a lesson or if he or she is an excellent cook. But with the mother and father of a lower social background kids don't want to have them at school. It's very tender. "

Lastly, it is noted that parental involvement is sometimes made more difficult by language issues: the teachers talk about experiences with parents who do not understand the language of instruction which makes it difficult to communicate.

The teachers acknowledge the research findings in this area, and seem to agree that parental support is important, but parental participation in terms of coming to school and helping teachers etc. is not necessary. Teachers are responsible for what happens in the classroom and parents, especially in secondary education, should give the children space (and responsibility) to develop with their peers and teachers. It is most important however that parents believe in the school system. In that way, some teachers said, it is not per se necessary that parents come to school as long as they push their children to go to school and have high expectations.

#### **4.2.6 Local community and school**

The fifth area of expertise refers to cooperation between local community and school. It is about being able to communicate with community organizations and collaboratively supporting development and school success of the children in the community. The starting point is the idea that “It takes a village to raise a child.” It also refers to the idea that school improvement is more effective when the whole community improves.

Teachers agree with these views and consider the area to be important, but again a little less important than the first three areas. They indicate that citizenship is an important topic and that it should be subject of a community orientated vision to discuss in diverse classrooms

One teacher talks about how she uses her science classes to try and connect to the community: “Talking about science, I always try in my class (...) to connect to what I teach them from their grandmother what they used to do, making cheese, yoghurt etc. (...) I try to show them that it is important in the environment that they are in. I try to connect (to) the knowledge from their lives. (...) You can’t only be at school, you have to see what is going in the surrounding area. I think when that is possible school will have more significance. (So) they will not leave the school.”

“It is about the kids understanding what’s going on in their environment. And what’s happening around, the values that they got from their grounds. It might help them to become grounded, to grow roots in their new country.” It is about science: “Because it’s the science there, when you make the wine, cheese and you prepare the land there is science there. It’s a natural process of where they get their knowledge, and from daily concepts there is a profound connection to science. And sometimes they don’t know a way in life and they think Portugal is not a good place for them to live.” The teacher explains that if immigrant students learn scientific concepts in their immediate surroundings, it could help them to root in their neighbourhoods and in Portugal. Another teacher adds that this is about obtaining local knowledge and “being proud of where they live and of who they are and their parents. “And I also thought of the school community relationships because as a school, you know where you’re at and you know the neighbourhood you know the community.”

Furthermore, teaching science in this way is not necessarily rural, for example in the city of Rotterdam

students investigate the water management in the local area of the school. The science teacher believes that in order for education to be successful, it is necessary to take an interest in your surroundings. You can have excellent teachers, with different kinds of skills. But the children have difficulty to take it in, “because they don’t have the link. They need to have a LINK. How to help them make a link: that is the big question for me in education. Whether they are minority or not. Sometimes being a mother helps, when I raised my children, many times I said find your link. That’s the way to feel secure and (then you will) feel strong to face the world.”

In short, the teachers agree on the importance of connecting schools and communities. They do not elaborate the communication between schools and community organizations, but relate this area to citizenship teaching as well as obtaining local knowledge and learning science concepts.

### 4.3 Other areas of expertise

The teachers were asked whether the five areas cover all necessary areas for teaching in diverse classrooms and if not, if they could indicate other areas of expertise. Below the additional areas that were mentioned, are described.

#### \*Expertise in migration histories

It is important for teachers to know about and teach about migration histories. This is an important part of history that is often left out in text books. How people with a certain background arrived in the Netherlands. These are important parts of history that shape different values and beliefs.

#### \*Conceptual teaching

Another 6<sup>th</sup> area that was mentioned concerned “conceptual learning and teaching”. Monica explains that conceptual teaching helps to break up entrenched contexts. It allows us to talk about concepts like ‘humanity’ and ‘slavery’, it results in interdisciplinary learning. Matilda supports this notion: when you use ‘big concepts’, you can more easily organize interdisciplinary or cross-curricula teaching: history, biology, geography (a reference is made to the works of Lynn Erickson).

The question remains, however, who decides what these concepts should be (referring to power positions). Another question that remains is why conceptual teaching (or concept-based instruction) would be especially effective in diverse student populations.

#### \*Diagnostic analysis of children

An important additional area of expertise refers to assessment and diagnostic expertise. This area asks for diagnostic skills beyond looking at grades, it is about “What is development from the pupils (point of views) and what time, how much time you have to invest in these dreams”. It is about how much the student can develop or not and about offering the needed support during the development process. One teachers offers an example: “the integration course offers the same curriculum for all pupils (regardless of their migration background). If you make your own diagnostic you can maybe adapt the curriculum.”

#### \*Curriculum critique and interpretation

The teachers discuss the so-called hidden curriculum. The curriculum presents an often implicit world vision, students are learning how the world works from a specific perspective. For students from migrant backgrounds this sometimes means they cannot connect with what they already know from a different perspective and curriculum. This is also true for textbooks, teachers need more autonomy to unpack textbooks and to re-word. This area of expertise refers to the question how teachers can rewrite and reinvent the curriculum so that they can include all the students. It would be a way to increase participation and raise awareness.

As one teacher put it “There is a hidden curriculum about violence, structures, positions in society and politics which is not told or only from a certain viewpoint (mainly benefitting the home-country itself). We should talk about structural changes. (...) We must gain relative autonomy for teachers: that is the space teachers should get to change the program or to interpret given texts differently / or to give alternative explanations to the given texts.”

#### Additional issues

Aside from these additional areas, the teachers brought a few additional issues that are relevant when considering teaching for diversity.

#### \*Differences between teacher’s view and the school view

What if you have higher expectations and what if you want to teach more challenging content to your students, when the school leader tells you to tone it down: “I’m a leader from this international class and my head- teacher asks me and says “why do you learn/ teach grammar? You must only teach them to integrate in their regular class. It’s not your job, you mustn’t do it. “

#### \*Psychological readiness

It is important to assess the teacher's readiness to teach in diverse classes. Teachers should be psychologically ready to teach in such kinds of (diverse) classrooms.

## 5. Professional development

The question in this chapter is on current and innovative possibilities for teachers to become competent teachers in diverse classrooms.

### 5.1 Provision

We first asked the teachers about the possibilities for professional development (PD) in the area of teaching for diversity. The general view is that there is little provision, this is true for teacher training programmes as well as for PD courses. PD on diversity is mostly organized by the teachers themselves. The exception is the German network for teachers from minority backgrounds that organizes PD and exchange meetings.

Below we present a short overview of answers in each country.

**GERMANY** There are programs organized by the school department especially for teachers in the migration programs. Every other month there are meetings with about 15-20 teachers. It is also a moment for exchanging our experiences. The teachers have no knowledge of provision during teacher training programs. There is a network for teachers with a migrant background that organizes different classes (on inclusion etc.). During the yearly meetings, two or three days with 40/50 people, different topics and classroom experiences are discussed. The network provides grants to student teachers from migrant backgrounds. And the network employs a train-the-trainer approach. The goal is establish direct contact between migrant teachers, exchange knowledge on interesting topics. The network is not a lobby group, it was set up and funded by the government of Nordrhein-Westfalen.

**LITHUANIA** There is PD provision regarding language diversity: special textbooks and methodology. However, the provision and use of this methodology has changed since the independence. Currently, teachers are left to decide how to employ these methods. Teacher training offers intercultural training but this is not specialized in migrants, it generally aims for teachers of foreign languages.

**PORTUGAL** Teacher training in Portugal takes a scientific approach which means that the training is more in the subject than in pedagogy. The trend is toward specialization in language, math or science. There is no specific training in diversity. If teachers want to learn more about teaching for diversity, they organize it themselves. With the exception of special educational needs.

**NETHERLANDS** Provision of PD in diversity depends on the school you work at. One of the teachers works at an international school that organizes conferences on diversity, the basic attitude is to embrace diversity. Another teacher works in an elementary school where study days are organized on for example special needs, but rarely on intercultural or ethnic topics. Aside from this, there is PD provision

on citizenship that focuses on migrants of interculturalism. There are a lot of possibilities in the Netherlands to study a variety of elective topics, but not many student teachers choose these topics (multiculturalism etc.). There used to be a network with a focus on multilingualism but it doesn't exist anymore.

ITALY The situation is similar to Portugal. Some universities offer courses on diversity but they are quite expensive.

## 5.2 Ideas for professional development

Aside from asking about the current provision, the teachers were also asked whether they had ideas on how to increase competence in teaching diverse classrooms in general. The teachers provided some ideas that are summarized below:

- It should start with government policies, politicians and policy makers need to make a decision to include courses on diversity in teacher training.
- Student teachers from migrant backgrounds need support with graduation, this can be offered in a network, or in the institute for teacher training
- The importance of embracing the mother tongue of migrant students should be emphasized, there should be PD provision on this topic.
- Set up a network of migrant teachers in each EU country, such a network should operate at the EU level as well as at the national levels. Some teachers think it should be for migrant teachers only: "The platform should be only for migrants to help with integration programs." Another quote from this point of view: "When you're in conversation with the dominant group it's a different interaction than when sharing information or stories with teachers who also have the same background as you." And another teacher says: "think you're more open and more willing to listen, because of a shared background it becomes a mutual idea."

However, other teachers seem to think it is important that the network is for all teachers that teach in diverse classrooms: "I know teachers (Dutch) who stand alone, teachers of migrant students." And another teacher says: Everybody should be ready to teach all diverse kids. Not only migrant teachers."

## 6. How to attract more migrant teachers into the profession?

In the final session of the meeting, the teachers were asked to reflect on the fact that there are few teachers with migrant backgrounds while at the same time numbers of students with migrant backgrounds are increasing. The questions the teachers addressed concerned the causes of underrepresentation and possible strategies to aim for representative numbers of migrant teachers.

### 6.1 Causes of underrepresentation

The teachers mention a variety of causes for underrepresentation.

First of all, teachers from minority backgrounds seem to face language issues. School leaders that are hiring new staff often seem to assume that teachers from migrant backgrounds do not sufficiently master the language of instruction. A teacher explains: “One of the big problems is the proficiency in the language, they do not consider you a native speaker. The language proficiency is perceived as if you’re a migrant teacher.”

Secondly, a lack of knowledge among migrant teachers regarding the educational system and a lack of possibilities for social integration may play a part in the underrepresentation. One teacher says: “Some might think they aren’t capable of becoming a teacher in that system. To become part of the system is a problem to enter the field. Migrant teachers find it hard to become a part of the system of native teachers.” Another teacher adds: “I was not the same as other people, not many student teachers think they can achieve.” And another teacher claims: “Social integration, feeling comfortable within the environment where you work and live, can present invisible obstacles. Feeling excluded is a cause for many immigrant students to drop out of their programme, due to discrimination.” Related to this reason is the possible lack of social network that might help to get hired in the first place: “Difficulty with not having a good social network may affect immigrant teachers, because there is a lack of information and social contacts that can help you get into the system.”

Finally, the recognition of foreign diplomas is a reason for underrepresentation as well. There are few organizations that organize special courses to complement foreign diplomas. Most teachers that completed their training in a different country have to go through the whole programme again.

### 6.2 Strategies to increase representation



It was noted first that schools should be inclusive and offer an enjoyable experience for students from migrant backgrounds for them to even want to come back to teach there. If migrant students have negative school experiences, chances are slim that they want to become teachers in the first place. It was also noted that it is important for school leaders to realize the cultural capital that migrant teachers bring with them (and migrant teachers should be aware of this themselves too).

The following ideas for strategies were brought up:

- scholarships for migrant students (is for example done by the German network for migrant teachers)
- role model projects (is also done by the German network: teachers were filmed presenting themselves as role models)
- raise awareness on cultural capital of migrant teachers, by distributing information online and through workshops, for students and teachers
- career education, starting in primary schools: teaching is a possible job for all children
- peer coaching for starting teachers from migrant backgrounds
- high schools should organize alumni projects, using ambassadors: “To talk about how much fun it is to be a teacher, to attract students. The school where students went to should offer jobs for future (migrant) teachers.

## 7. Conclusions and recommendations

In the final session of the meeting, the participating teachers summarized their main findings and conclusions and formulated general recommendations. In this chapter, we describe the results of this final session in concurrence with the conclusions that were drawn during former sessions of the meeting.

### 7.1 Some general remarks

During the different sessions, some recurring general remarks were made. These are described below.

The advantages of having a migrant background

The teachers recognized their own strengths being from a migrant background themselves. The awareness of the standpoint from where we act and think is relevant for any pedagogical action and avoids understanding education as being neutral (Haraway, 1988). Teachers' experience and reflection about it allows to be more close to similar experiences lived by students with similar backgrounds: *"Understanding the difficulties of learning another language made me more conscious of the expectations of the learning outcomes"* (Matilda) and as Peter refers *"I can remember my first time in Germany, how I felt"*. The teachers did not think, however, that it should only be migrant teachers to teach in diverse classes. It depends on the character of the teacher and the wish to teach those classes.

A dilemma

During the meeting, an important dilemma was explicated. Some of the teachers state that migrant children, just as children in general, have their individual problems. Others state that migrant children face very specific problems given their relatively low performance and high dropout rates etc. The question is: should or shouldn't these students be getting special attention? Framed differently: When do we pay attention to differences and how do we deal with difference? If these children need special attention, we need to define these needs. But migrant students are a heterogeneous group, we should provide ample space for diversity to emerge. This dilemma is not easily solved. At a certain point, one of the teachers noted that we should not see our migrant children as the centre of the class, but as part of the class. From that perspective it is important to recognize needs that may arise from a minority or migrant position, while at the same time recognizing the diversity among migrant children and the fact that they are part of your class as any other child.

### Who integrates with whom?

The teachers agreed that integration should not be a one-sided issue, it should not always be the minority group that has to change to accommodate the dominant group. Politicians in for example Lithuania, Italy and the Netherlands say that minorities should integrate into society. But many minorities or migrants were born in these countries. So what are they supposed to integrate into? They have acquired all the traditions of the local communities, they belong there already. The teachers suggested that perhaps it is time for the pupils who belong to the nation-state should start to learn to integrate into the diverse society.

This remark can be related to a remark that was made regarding “sense of belonging”. Some of the children, and also some of the teachers, need to have a sense of ownership and belonging. They need to know they own their place in the country. This has a huge impact on how young people have access to school, and *how* they have success in school.

### Feeling alone

A general feeling among the teachers was that they are alone in solving the issues, and they have little guidance or support. As Liana stated: “Migrant Teachers often stand alone, and so they need support, social and methodological, and (readymade) material”. The teachers agreed that at school, everything depends on the goodwill of the teachers. There is no support from the government, the same textbooks are used for everybody. It depends on the teacher, how much time he or she is willing to spend on adapting the textbooks.

Peter noted in this respect: “Teachers should be given training to be able to diagnose the problems. (...) Other professionals should be included into the network, we do not need to solve everything alone. Social educators e.g. encouraging teams to tackle the problems together, made up of the guidance counsellors etc.” In other words, it is important to include other professions in such a teacher network (for instance social educators). Also inside schools this is important: encourage teamwork in schools. We need other professions to diagnose children, not everything concerning children with a migrant background should be on the shoulders of teachers.

### Principles in good practices

The teachers deduced general principles in their good practices that refer to underlying concepts and characteristics on different levels. In summary, a good practice can be considered a good practice because:

- it reflects a genuine interest in multiculturalism
- the learning process works, the activities are meaningful for the students and they feel safe
- there is continuity and the capacity to make a practice last longer
- the different relevant actors are all involved in the development
- it reflects professional awareness and deep knowledge about pupils’ contexts

- the teachers act as mediators and are helpful
- it includes translation of cultural and religious practices
- there is explicit communication about differences

#### Areas of expertise

There seems to be a broad consensus on the five presented areas of expertise, especially regarding expertise in language diversity and didactics. With regard to the fifth area of expert on school and community relationship, one teacher has a very specific and interesting uptake. She argues that she takes the surrounding of the school into account, because it could help migrant children to root in society, to help them to know where they are.

When asked about possible other areas of expertise, the teachers mention the following areas: expertise in migration histories, in diagnostic analysis of children in curriculum critique and interpretation, and in conceptual teaching.

## 7.2 Recommendations

The teachers put forward three recommendations. These recommendations will help improve teacher expertise in diverse classrooms, and ultimately the educational positions of pupils from migrant backgrounds.

#### Set up a European network for teachers from migrant backgrounds

It was concluded that the teachers in the meeting have very similar problems, despite differences between countries and their migration histories, and despite differences between teachers and their personal migration histories. Because of the rich learning experiences during the meeting, the teachers suggested that it would be a good idea to create a European teacher network for teachers with migrant and minority backgrounds. This network could provide for an opportunity for teachers to share their experiences and learn from each other. This would account for the feelings of loneliness they all have experienced at some point, as well as a need for professional development in this particular area.

#### Provide more training on teaching in diverse classrooms

There is very little provision in PD or attention for teaching in diverse classrooms in teacher training programmes. It appears that adapting teaching practices to the needs of children in diverse classrooms is an informal issue. It only takes place if teachers are willing to do it. There are several countries

represented in the meeting, from southern to northern Europe, but none of them provide for an educational policy on diverse teaching. The big question is: can we leave this up to individual teachers? The general feeling during the meeting was that we need formal policies to support teachers in diverse classrooms.

More training is necessary. The recommendation is to provide structural attention in teacher training, in-service and pre-service and more provision for professional development. Teachers need more knowledge than their own subjects.

#### Increase representation

The teachers mention that the low rates of teachers from migrant backgrounds might be related to negative experiences during their own school careers. Thus, increasing rates starts with improving school experience of students from a migrant background.

Ideas to increase choices for the teaching profession in the group of migrant students include special scholarships, role model projects and career education for young children and high schools organizing alumni projects, using ambassadors.

Furthermore, we should organize projects that raise awareness of school leaders regarding cultural capital of migrant teachers. Finally, it was suggested that to retain beginning teachers from migrant backgrounds, it is important to organize peer coaching.

## 8. References

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