

Chapter 12

‘Analysis of Policies Supporting Teachers to Tackle Linguistic and Cultural Diversity and Facilitate Inclusion from the Perspectives of Iceland and the Faroe Islands’



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Abstract In today's fast changing multicultural societies, governments and organisations must use their agency to ensure the contribution and inclusion of all cultures and ethnicities. A key factor for enabling this is ensuring education plays a leading role in facilitating the creation of an inclusive society. In this context, the education of teachers must be a priority given the reach and impact teachers have on a society. Therefore, teacher education with its role in preparing pre-service teachers for teaching in a multicultural setting is uniquely placed to enable focus on and engender a foundation for enabling inclusivity, equality and social justice in education. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the policy framework needed for preparing preservice teachers to work with learners from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The aim is to gain knowledge and understanding of how the concepts of inclusion and culturally responsive pedagogy are reflected in teacher education policy in the island nations of Iceland and the Faroe Islands.

Keywords Inclusive pedagogy · Culturally responsive pedagogy · Diversity · Inclusion · Teacher professional development

12.1 Introduction

In today's fast changing multicultural societies, governments and organisations must use their agency to ensure the contribution and inclusion of all cultures and ethnicities. A key factor for enabling this is ensuring education plays a leading role in facilitating the creation of an inclusive society. In this context, the education of teachers must be a priority given the reach and impact teachers have on a society. Therefore, teacher education with its role in preparing pre-service teachers for teaching in a multicultural setting is uniquely placed to enable focus on and engender a foundation for enabling inclusivity, equality and social justice in education.

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the policy framework needed for preparing preservice teachers to work with learners from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The aim is to gain knowledge and understanding of how the concepts of inclusion and culturally responsive pedagogy are reflected in teacher education policy in the island nations of Iceland and the Faroe Islands. Inclusive education is fundamentally grounded in the ideologies of social justice, democracy, human rights, and full participation of all (Black-Hawkins, 2017; Florian, 2009). Culturally responsive pedagogy is a pedagogical approach that aims to achieve student inclusion through focus on their culture, language and experiences (Nieto

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et al., 2008). To that end, we analyse relevant policy documents that influence teacher education to elicit how current policy is guiding the field. The question we aim to answer is: *How does current educational policy influence the development of inclusive and culturally responsive pedagogy in teacher education?*

12.1.1 Why Are We Writing Together?

We met for the first time in Joensuu, Finland, in the UArctic teacher education work group where we discussed the writing of this book. Given our familiarity with each other's cultures and the professional cooperation between the universities, it seemed ideal to jointly write this chapter. The ease with which we could communicate and our interest in the issue made it possible for us to have the conviction that it would be mutually beneficial and interesting for others to have insight into the story of our nations on this topic.

12.1.2 The Differences and Similarities of the Two Nations

The Faroe Islands, nestled in the tempestuous North Atlantic, are a part of the Danish kingdom with self-rule and share much in common with the Danish mainland in educational ethos. Iceland is situated a bit more to the northwest from the Faroe Islands. Iceland used to be a part of the Danish regime but peacefully gained its independence in 1944 and is now a constitutional republic.

In many ways, the Faroe Islands and Iceland are similar given that both are seafaring nations, and our histories are shaped by struggles against nature and survival in the harsh northern climate. Both were settled by the Nordic Vikings mixed with Irish and Scottish blood. Our languages are similar and share the same origin but are today more alike in the written form than in the spoken one. Icelandic and Faroese are the official languages respectively, with Danish being an added official language in The Faroe Islands.

While both countries would fall into the category of being small nation states, Iceland has around 367.000 inhabitants and the Faroe Islands around 52.000 inhabitants. Both nations have through history been monocultural with a homogenous population, but in the last couple of decades this has changed, and immigrants now comprise about 15% of the total Icelandic population (Statistics Iceland, 2020) and 11% of the Faroese population (Statistics Faroe Islands, 2021). This is significant for education and has drawn attention to how schools and teachers can cope with the increased diversity of learners and how teacher education is supporting teachers in working with multiple languages and cultures in their classrooms.

12.1.3 Teacher Education in the Faroe Islands

Teacher education is the oldest course of study in the university and the only one in The Faroe Islands. It celebrated the 150th anniversary of its inception in October 2020. Teacher education is popular in the country, and in recent years has attracted the largest number of applicants with 2020–21 being no exception (setur.fo).

The Faroese teacher education is a four-year 240 ECTS bachelor's degree. It has a three-pronged curriculum as per the course profile for "Bachelor of Education (B. Ed.) in Primary and Lower Secondary Education" valid from 2016 (Kunngerð nr. 140, 2009). It comprises general didactics and pedagogy, specialised subject qualification to facilitate teaching of the subjects in primary and lower secondary school only and a practicum that is about a third of the course to be completed in the islands or abroad.

12.1.4 Teacher Education in Iceland

Comprehensive teacher education in Iceland is currently provided at two universities: University of Iceland and University of Akureyri. Since 2008, a 180 ECTS bachelor's degree and a 120 ECTS master's degree is required by law to gain a licence to teach in preschools, grade schools and upper-secondary schools in Iceland. The teacher education program has no centrally defined compulsory core subjects. The teacher education institutions set their own curriculum guidelines for study lines in initial teacher education and determine content areas, competences and learning outcomes. A recent Act on the education, competences and employment of teachers and school administrators includes a specification of the general and specialized knowledge, skills and competences that teachers and school administrators must possess (Lög um menntun 95/2019). This means that the teacher education universities are now in the process of reviewing their programs in accordance with the requirements laid out in the Act.

Looking at the teacher education in both countries, there are similarities and differences as can be expected. The main difference is that the Faroese qualification calls for a Bachelor's degree, while in Iceland, a Master's degree is required for teacher credentials. The Faroese degree qualifies for teaching preschool through to tenth grade, but in Iceland, the degree gives the right to apply for teaching positions at all school levels, from preschool to upper secondary schools.

Given the current demographic composition in both countries, it is useful to explore how educational policy supports inclusive education and culturally responsive pedagogy for equity in education. The aim of this chapter is to investigate how inclusive and culturally responsive pedagogy are reflected in teacher education policies in Iceland and the Faroe Islands.

12.2 Literature Review

Globally, societies are showing a trend towards patterns of multiculturalism and multilingualism. As a response to this diversity, inclusive education has internationally been viewed as a means to promote social cohesion, citizenship and the creation of a more equitable society (Guðjónsdóttir & Óskarsdóttir, 2019).

The emphasis of inclusion in education has moved to meeting the needs of all learners, with all their diversity and differences (Hick & Thomas, 2008). Inclusive education, in this sense, encompasses all learners and places particular focus on those who may be subject to exclusion or marginalisation in schools. It is fundamentally grounded in the ideologies of social justice, democracy, human rights, and full participation of all (Black-Hawkins, 2017; Florian, 2009). This means that inclusive education can be seen broadly as a social justice issue, with a view on the intersectionality of human diversities in relation to ability, gender and sexuality as well as culture, language and socio-economic background. It is grounded in the premise that quality education is a democratic right for all (Crowther et al., 2001; Pantić & Florian, 2015; Reay, 2012).

Social justice in education involves the following four dimensions – educational perspectives from within the context of eliminating structural inequalities for families and communities, developing a community of education through building relationships with various stakeholders, efficacy in teaching to achieve high academic levels, and importantly, creating a foundation on the premise of individual student identity based on culture, languages and experiences to facilitate the creation of an inclusive curriculum (Sleeter, 2015).

Culturally responsive pedagogy is seen as an approach to achieve inclusion and student engagement through a focus on culture, language and experiences (Hersi & Watkinson, 2012; Nieto et al., 2008; Santamaria, 2009; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). The strategies that comprise this approach include using student cultural and linguistic resources as enablers rather than barriers to learning. Personal experiences and interests are incorporated to facilitate learning and building on student cultural, linguistic and racial experiences as a basis for interactive and collaborative teaching methods.

Language is key to accessing learning in schools. For immigrant learners, apart from their heritage language, functional proficiency in the majority language is essential for most learning processes, acquiring language skills and interaction with teachers and peers (Nehr, 2001). Florian (2009) identifies that one clear challenge in providing educational equity lies in preparing teachers to cope with teaching diverse learners. Given this difficulty, it would contribute to teacher efficacy to focus on competence building in the areas that may help teachers by both creating awareness and providing pedagogical tools. Howard (2003) explains that a teacher's ability and openness to exploring his or her own attitudes toward diverse students can underpin the commitment to knowledge of one's students and interest in their academic achievement and personal emotional well-being.

Teachers' cultural perspectives and belief systems significantly impact pedagogical approach and decisions (Knopp & Smith, 2005). As purveyors of the dominant culture, teachers may have a perspective that is different from that of their students. Research indicates that one of the challenges in schools is that teacher groups are not as ethnically, linguistically and religiously diverse as student groups (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2001; Ragnarsdóttir & Blöndal, 2007). In this context, teachers with immigrant backgrounds may have knowledge and experience of various cultures and understanding of the needs of a diverse group of students. They may be able to create the inclusive space, where immigrant experiences provide a platform for building critical perspectives, respect and regard for what the teacher and student bring to learning (Rodríguez-Valls & Ponce, 2013). Where teachers are from the dominant culture, they may benefit from working with teachers from diverse backgrounds to gain an understanding and awareness of immigrant experience and the importance of an inclusive approach to teaching. Gay (2010) is convinced that the power of caring is one of the fundamental features of culturally responsive teaching as evidenced by teacher attitudes, expectations and their behaviour towards students. So, teacher contribution to creating a culture of respect and acceptance may encourage students' sense of belonging and security in the learning environment, thereby promoting learning.

There is an agreement among educators that the aim of teacher education is to eliminate educational inequalities among people with various socio-economic backgrounds and ethnic identities (Zeichner, 2010). Teacher education needs to include promoting an understanding of the macrocosmic social forces that lead to exclusion and inequality (Slee, 2010). To inculcate this spirit, proper guidance, support and knowledge must be woven into the very ethos of teacher education by providing the necessary tools to transfer theory into praxis. The way forward for teacher education is then to entrench the values of equity, inclusion and social justice in educational discourse and action for their pre-service teachers.

12.3 Methodology

Given the situation in both the countries, it is relevant to explore what policies and frameworks exist and have to be developed to ensure that education benefits all learners, including those of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. To gain a deeper understanding of the situation, we analysed relevant official documents in the two countries to get an insight into how current policy is guiding praxis in inclusive education. Documents can provide a way of tracing developments and change (Bowen, 2009), as well as assist with detecting meaning, develop deeper understanding, and uncover new insights into the research problem (Merriam, 2009). The data were selected using a systematic procedure for reviewing various forms of printed or electronic documents.

When choosing the documents for review, it was first of all important for us to consider the difference in the number of documents available between the countries

(Bowen, 2009). In order to give a comparable account, we needed to match the documents and choose those that have similar roles in each country regarding teacher education. These documents give an overview of the government policy discussing the matter of how pre-service teachers are prepared to work with learners with diverse language and cultural backgrounds. In the case of The Faroe Islands, personal verbal and written communication with stakeholders, who hold key positions as dean in the Faculty of Faroese at The University of The Faroe Islands and the Head for Child and Youth Affairs in the Torshavn Municipality respectively, are included where formal documentation is unavailable. Table 12.1 gives an account of the documents selected for analysis, how they are referred to in the text and the criteria for choosing them.

Table 12.1 Overview of documents selected for analysis

Country	Type of document	Document	Criteria for choosing
The Faroe Islands	Legal acts	The Faroese Education Act of 1997- revised in 2005 and 2019 – Referenced as (Løgtingslóg nr. 125 fólkaskúlan, 1997)	Selected as they provide the policy frame within which schools and teachers operate.
	Executive order	Executive order no.140 for The University of The Faroe Islands with specific reference to Faculty of Education from Nov 2009 – referenced as (Kunngerð nr. 140, 2009)	Selected as they provide the policy frame within which the university faculty operates.
	Executive order	Executive order no.144 on Teaching Faroese as a second language and Heritage Teaching Oct 2020 – referenced as (Kunngerð nr. 144, 2020)	Selected as they provide the policy frame within which schools and teachers operate for teaching Faroese as a second language.
Iceland	Legal acts	The compulsory school Act – Referenced in text as (Lög um grunnskóla, 2008) Act on the education, competences and employment of teachers and principals at pre-school, compulsory and upper-secondary schools - referenced as (Lög um menntun, 2019)	Selected as they provide the policy frame within which schools and teachers operate.
	Draft policy	Draft policy for the education of children and youth with diverse linguistic and cultural background - referenced in text as (Mennta- og menningamálaráðuneyti, 2020)	Information about the policy vision on education of learners with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.
	National curriculum	The national curriculum, 2011. referenced as (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2011)	Selected as it provides the policy frame within which schools and teachers operate.

The analytical process of document analysing involves finding, selecting, making sense of and synthesising the data that each document contains. Document analysis generates data that are organised into major themes and categories (Labuschagne, 2003). As we started our document analysis, we skimmed the documents selected for the study and marked the content that was related to our research question. This was a collaborative study, but as we began our analysis, we needed to do the first round individually as the documents were only available in either Faroese or Icelandic. After this first round of reading, we compared our markings and developed the categories and themes that emerged from the data. Our next step was carefully reading the documents in our respective languages, taking every marking for discussion and examination, interpreting and organising the information into categories related to our question. These categories will be introduced in the section on findings.

The study covers the policies influencing teacher education in Iceland and Faroe Islands. The intention is to explore if and how the policy environment in each country is geared towards supporting pre-service teachers for working with learners with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

12.4 Findings from the Document Analysis

Findings reveal differences in the policy approach to inclusive education between the two countries. The following sections are organised by country with the themes applicable to them. The different policy stances reflect political will, commitment and focus of the two nations.

12.4.1 Policy Findings from the Faroe Islands

The two themes for The Faroe Islands comprise status of policies on inclusive education and teacher preparation for inclusive education. Firstly, status of policies discusses the overall educational framework for the nation and secondly, for the Faculty of Education. The preparation of teachers for working with diversity deals with the policy on facilitation of teaching Faroese as a second language and access for immigrant children to heritage language teaching.

12.4.1.1 The Status of Policies

At first glance, the policy stance for education outlined in the Act (Løgtingslóg nr. 125 fólkaskúlan, 1997) appears to be unequivocal in acknowledging that all children have a right to education. It clearly states that education is for every single student from pre-school, primary to secondary levels. On perusing this Act for the

phrase “inclusive education” or the inherent concepts with a view to identifying policy stance, it becomes evident that these find no mention. The inclusion of students with special needs came in with the 2005 modification of this act.

Subsequent modifications to the Act (Løgtingslóg nr. 125 fólkaskúlan, 1997) in 2019 indicate that only non-ethnic Faroese pre-school children are declared to have the right to Faroese teaching, but this is yet to be practised (B. Hovgaard, personal communication, Nov 24, 2020). This document does not include strategic focus on diversity or inclusion in the context of immigrant students in the compulsory schools or any other group.

Intensive reading of the executive order for policy governing teacher education (Kunngerð nr. 140, 2009), revealed no overt mention of inclusive education. In § 6: 2, it is specified that pre-service teachers should acquire competence to teach in a manner that ensures individual students develop given their personal circumstances. In § 6.3, it is mentioned that pre-service teachers must be taught to cooperate with everyone who has responsibility for the development of all children in school in a changing society. This is perhaps the closest the document comes to acknowledging individual value and worth of students. This executive order lacks key terms and insight into concepts like diversity, inclusion or focus on preparing pre-service teachers for an inclusive approach to teaching.

With regard to status of policies, it would be fair and correct to say that educational policy does not exhibit an awareness of the important facets of inclusive education. This is evidenced by the lack of reference to it in the documents, and thereby, may indicate a lack of awareness of the need to prioritise inclusive education through informed and clear guidelines. Therefore, the policies may be categorised as being in the nascent stage, see definition in K. Vijayarathan Chap. 1 of this book, as the assumption is that these issues may be given due importance once the law on integration has been passed.

12.4.1.2 Teacher Preparation for Working with Diversity

With regard to teacher education, the executive order for Teaching Faroese as a second language and heritage language teaching (Kunngerð nr. 144, 2020) states in section §3.4 that teachers of Faroese as a second language should have experience in teaching in this field and a high degree of competence in Faroese and English or other foreign languages as appropriate for the linguistic background of the children they will be teaching.

The University has now been tasked with creating a course for in-service teachers on teaching of Faroese as a second language by qualifying them in second language learning and teaching (B.D. Hansen, personal communication, Nov 9, 2020). At the time of writing, formal documentation is being formulated and a working group has commenced designing the course. As funding issues too are undecided, currently one can say a plan is in the pipeline for designing a 60 ECTS course divided into four sessions of 15 ECTS for in-service teachers to commence in autumn of 2021 (B.D. Hansen, personal communication, Jan 13, 2021).

This executive order (Kunngerð nr.144, 2020) makes no mention of the word ‘inclusive’ education in schooling and focuses on schooling children in Faroese and Faroese culture. As discussed in Chap. 1, it does mention access to heritage language teaching for immigrant students. They could be exempted from other subjects, except Faroese and Mathematics, to have classes in heritage language and knowledge of heritage culture. This makes it the only government policy to date that deals with inclusion of non-ethnic students in the compulsory school. Crucially, it acknowledges that in-service teachers must be qualified and experienced specifically to teach this target group or be in the process of doing so.

There is an inherent contradiction in demanding experienced teachers in the foreign language teaching field and accepting teachers who are in the process of acquiring this qualification, especially because the course for teachers on teaching Faroese as a second language is yet to be designed. As mentioned in Chap. 1, the course is set to commence in the autumn of 2021. The teacher ‘upgrading’ referred to in the document appears unrealistic given the short time frame, justifiably raising concerns regarding its efficacy.

As the executive order (Kunngerð nr.144, 2020) allows immigrant students to be taught in their heritage language, it has set in place a policy that has been decided at the strategic level, i.e., the political level. In contrast to the detailed account of how schools can organise the teaching of Faroese as a second language, there are no operational plans for teacher preparation or pedagogical instructions on how to implement heritage language teaching of over 50 different languages currently represented in the islands.

12.4.2 Policy Findings from Iceland

The two themes discussed for Iceland are the status of policies and teacher preparation. Within the category of status of policies, the issues of the right to learn Icelandic as a second language and the right to education in heritage languages is discussed. Under the theme teacher preparation, the issues of teacher education are discussed.

12.4.2.1 The Status of Policies

The main educational policy in Iceland is inclusion rather than segregation, as stated in official policies since 2008. According to the laws that govern different educational levels, all students are entitled to an equal education at the preschool, compulsory, and upper secondary school levels (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2011). Schools are expected to provide all students with access to appropriate teaching and learning regardless of their physical or mental capabilities, emotional or social situation or linguistic development. The recent policy draft for the education of children and youth with diverse linguistic and cultural

background emphasises that multicultural education, which celebrates diversity and is based on the resources and strengths of children and young people, should be the hallmark of the school system in future education policy (Mennta og menningamálaráðuneyti, 2020).

The documents analysed for the purpose of this study all emphasise the importance of achieving competence in Icelandic as a second or additional language for learners with immigrant backgrounds as a precondition for taking active part in the society, for acquiring knowledge in school and supporting further education and participation in workplaces (Lög um grunnskóla, 2008; Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2011; Mennta- og menningamálaráðuneyti, 2020). While the national curriculum guide has a section on Icelandic as an additional language that provides criteria for competence, there are no specific guidelines for teachers or schools as to how this should be carried out in practice. Research has shown that this lack of guidance for schools and teachers has led to a disparity between municipalities and schools in the quality and quantity of support this group of students receives (Daníelsdóttir & Skogland, 2018). One main root of this disparity is that financing policies are not the same in all municipalities and thus create different rules for how many hours are allocated for support, who is supported and for how long.

The national curriculum states that it is important to offer students with an immigrant background education in their own language so that they have an opportunity to learn their heritage language, its literature and culture (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2011). There are no guidelines provided on how to implement this vision, however the parents are mentioned as the key persons in making sure their children learn their heritage language and they should be encouraged and supported in 'emphasizing linguistic upbringing at home by nurturing the pupil's heritage language' (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2011, p. 105). Research has shown that immigrant students seem to have limited opportunities to use their languages in education and some have experienced negative attitudes towards its use in school (Einarsdóttir & Emilsson Peskova, 2019; Ragnarsdóttir & Hama, 2018; Tran & Lefever, 2018).

12.4.2.2 Teacher Preparation for Working with Diversity

According to the draft policy for the education of children and youth with a diverse language and cultural background, the Icelandic school system seems to have difficulty accommodating children and youth with a foreign linguistic and cultural background (Mennta- og menningamálaráðuneyti, 2020). Overall, their school outcomes are worse than their peers and the results from the 2015 PISA test underpin this (OECD, 2019). Other statistics show that there is cause for concern for this group of students as they are less likely to graduate from upper secondary school, have a poorer social status and feel worse at school (Ragnarsdóttir & Lefever, 2018). Furthermore, research has shown that many teachers consider themselves ill-equipped to teach this group of students and find it difficult to tailor schoolwork to their needs (Ólafsson, 2019).

The national curriculum guide describes the teachers' roles in teaching diverse groups of students in aspirational terms with an emphasis on meeting the needs of students, a focus on equity and employing diverse teaching and evaluation methods to accommodate students (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2011). Teachers have found it challenging to translate these terms into pedagogical praxis to fulfil curricular demands (Óskarsdóttir, 2017).

The draft policy suggests a new emphasis in the overall school policy to ensure that the pedagogy of teaching students with diverse language and cultural backgrounds is an intrinsic part of the basic education of all teachers and others working with children and youth (Mennta- og menningamálaráðuneytið, 2020). Furthermore, it is suggested that efforts should be made to systematically increase the number of pre-service teachers with an immigrant background (Mennta- og menningamálaráðuneytið, 2020) which could be problematic for some as the explicit requirement set forth in the act on teacher competences is that a basic competence for teachers is to have the ability to teach in Icelandic (Lög um menntun, 2019).

12.5 Discussions

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings and the policy framework needed for preparing preservice teachers to teach and work with learners with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds in Iceland and the Faroe Islands. This section is arranged in three parts. The first two focus respectively on the similarities and differences in the educational policy environment between the countries and the third on the implications for policy development in education for each country.

12.5.1 *Similarities*

The countries share a common perspective that appears to influence policy decision making. Both societies perceive their languages as being under threat of extinction, because of the vulnerability of being a small group of speakers with heavy influence of English (Iceland and The Faroe Islands) and Danish (The Faroe Islands), and therefore, the policy stance is reactionist and protectionist. This may be unwittingly contributing to the exclusion of meaningful participation of immigrants in society and their professional development. This may also have implications for the recruitment of pre-service teachers with immigrant backgrounds, teaching of the languages as additional languages and the role of heritage languages in education.

Currently, there is no provision for immigrant pre-service teachers to be able to teach if they do not pass Faroese in the teacher education course. The stipulation that teaching must be in Faroese, except in foreign language teaching, set out in the Education Act (Løgtingslóg nr. 125, 1997) is yet to be reviewed in the light of promoting inclusion or how this precludes immigrant pre-service teachers from

offering their competence to students in an inclusive setting. This implies that their knowledge of coping with linguistic and cultural diversity, and the challenges of learning a foreign language as immigrants cannot be used actively in the learning environment (Ladson-Billings, 2001). This situation is similar in Iceland, although steps have been taken to discuss *how* teacher students with immigrant background, not fully proficient in Icelandic, can acquire teacher education credentials.

In both countries, there is call for review of the curriculum so that guidelines on Icelandic or Faroese as a second language are similar to those provided for other language instruction. In this context, in the Faroe Islands, The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), is being used to design the course. As access to education and society is dependent on knowledge of the dominant language, every effort must be made to ensure functional proficiency in the language for immigrant students.

Our findings indicate that educational policy in both countries appears ill-equipped to support schools to work systematically with students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Culturally responsive pedagogy requires a focus on individual student culture, languages and experiences (Sleeter, 2015). Many teachers at the compulsory school level are insecure about allowing students to use their heritage language in school, especially as it is stated in the national curriculum guide for both countries that the official languages should be the language of instruction (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2011; Løgtingslóg nr. 125, 1997).

12.5.2 Difference in Emphasis Between Countries

The main difference in policy between the countries lies in the reference to inclusive education. In Iceland, the focus on inclusive education in policies is aimed at meeting the needs of all students in compulsory schools, while in the Faroe Islands, although it is also aimed at all students, the focus on 'inclusive' appears to be an addendum.

The fundamental lack of perspective of 'inclusive education' as including immigrants in policy documents in The Faroe Islands indicates that this crucial concept does not underpin educational policy design. This leads to a lack of awareness of how culturally responsive pedagogy can usefully inform the approach to teaching. The implementation stage of the policy is yet to commence. In Iceland, the emphasis on inclusive education has been visible in policy since 2008, but the implementation is still ongoing. Awareness of immigrant students is high in the policy documents, although the emphasis on culturally responsive pedagogy is not as clear. Efforts are being made to ensure that new policies include this focus.

12.5.3 Implications for Policy Development

A possible value exists in analysing the origin of policy making in heritage language teaching. In recent years, in both countries, discourse in the media about the importance of offering quality official language teaching to this target group has created pressure for policy making in the field. Policy creation appears to be a reactive response to a political development regarding integration of immigrants perceived as assimilation, rather than a focused, planned stance on education for second/foreign language learners.

The marked absence of the concept of culturally responsive pedagogy in both countries, and the lack of importance given to inclusive education, when it comes to immigrant students in the Faroese policy, suggest that policy has been formulated to ‘hit the ground running’, i.e., an operational goal without the underpinning strategic focus or tactical depth. This might be an indication of policy formulation and implementation being near simultaneous, which might potentially impact implementation.

If implementation is not planned, then according to Dyer (1999), it may not only lead to a resistance to the policies and have unforeseen results but promote *ad hoc* changes that may undermine the efficacy of the policies. The assurance for heritage language teaching for immigrant children expressed for both countries underplays logistic and resource challenges as the number of heritage languages represented in this group is high. Hope (2002) cautions that insufficient time for implementation, availability of resources, commitment from the top and motivation may pose significant barriers to policies being successful.

While the policies could be interpreted as accommodating immigrant education, the lack of focus on key factors related to this issue implies insufficient knowledge of and understanding of how to formulate overall pertinent policy. A well-planned, informed policy, with a realistic implementation time frame may serve speakers of other languages in learning Faroese/Icelandic and benefit them. It would provide the educational system time, and the wherewithal to be prepared for the fundamental changes involved.

12.6 Conclusions

The island nations of The Faroe Islands and Iceland have registered a marked surge in immigrant population, and their policy environment appears to be struggling to keep abreast of the developments. There are some indications that policies in both countries may be on the right track to support inclusion of students of immigrant origins. While implementation has commenced to some extent, enough has not been done to ensure that teachers can be supported for adopting the principles and approaches of inclusive and culturally responsive education. Iceland, with its larger population, has come further in policy development. This may provide The Faroe

Islands the opportunity to learn from Iceland, while mitigating the pitfalls Iceland has experienced in implementation.

The sensitivity in our countries about the perceived status of Faroese and Icelandic as endangered languages complicates issues. It undermines the value of heritage language teaching and leads to a lack of recognition of its vital contribution to the development of immigrant students. The policies focus on protecting the languages instead of understanding the value of heritage languages as meaningful resources for students. Perhaps, the latter attitude would contribute to the dynamism of both the languages to mirror the changes in society.

To ensure equity in education, teacher education policies need to have an explicit focus on inclusive education and culturally responsive pedagogy. This would prepare pre-service teachers for working in schools with diverse groups of students, no matter their origin or cultural background. Furthermore, the policies must consider the importance of bringing people with immigrant backgrounds into teacher education programs and find flexible means to offer accreditation to those already having teacher licences from other countries.

Socially just societies build on giving everyone a voice, equal access to education and respect for individual identity and ability (Sleeter, 2015). Given this perspective, the role of language is significant as a vehicle for having agency in society and a portal to learning and knowledge. Therefore, teacher education has a dual responsibility - firstly, to prepare the pre-service teachers to meet the requirements for inclusive education, and secondly, to offer quality teaching in the official language as pivotal for immigrant inclusion in society.

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