

Dealing with social inclusion and leadership in Fredikstad

Report of the NAOS study visit November 2015

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1 Introduction

1.1 NAOS: background and goals

Countries face challenges in catering for the diverse needs of migrant students and narrowing the gaps in education outcomes between native students and immigrant students. (Inter)national evidence (OECD 2010 Reviews of Migrant Education) suggest that strategies to raise education outcomes for migrant students need to focus on school level and system level, such as:

- preparing school leaders and teachers to meet the needs of diverse student groups;
- increasing student opportunity to learn language (mother tongue as well as language of instruction) in regular school lessons;
- encouraging schools to build capacity in the area of dealing with diversity;
- making collaboration between school and community more effective.

The central topic in NAOS is professional capacity concerning dealing with diversity related to migration (in all its different forms). Professional capacity includes innovative forms of cooperation between educational professionals and other professionals dealing with children. Bender Sebring, Allensworth, Bryk, Easton and Luppescu (2006) who view professional capacity as one of the fundamentals of school improvement define it as follows:

“Professional capacity encompasses the quality of the faculty and staff recruited and maintained in a school, their base beliefs and values about responsibility for change, the quality of ongoing professional development focused on local improvement efforts, and the capacity of a staff to work together as a cohesive professional community focused on the core problems of improving teaching and learning.” (p. 12).

The objective of NAOS is to strengthen professional capacity in the partner countries and their respective schools. With the ultimate goal to increase educational attainment and reduce drop out and unemployment among groups of migrant children. NAOS is a star that refers to the fundament of a Greek building. By choosing this name, we emphasize the idea that professional capacity is the fundament of good quality education.

The OECD country reviews in “Closing the gap for immigrant students” (2010) shows that developing policies and curricular adaptations at the national level is not enough for closing the achievement gap between native and immigrant students. It also needs institutional changes, made within every school, including changes in school leadership, teaching methodologies and school-home co-operation. NAOS wants to take a deeper look at what kind of institutional changes inside schools are needed by looking at the professional capacity in schools.

NAOS is complementary to the SIRIUS policy network carried out from 2012 - 2014. SIRIUS has promoted and enhanced knowledge transfer among stakeholders in order to improve the education of children and youngsters from migrant background. One of the focal points in SIRIUS was professional capacity. The difference between the SIRIUS activities in this area and the NAOS activities concern the specific focus on pre- and in-service modules for professional development as well as the inclusion of schools in the network.

The current project partners (see below) have been chosen on the basis of complex migration histories (Netherlands and Belgium), language instruction (Estonia and Lithuania), a variety of strategies for building professional capacity (Norway and Lithuania), economic crisis in combination with educational issues (Portugal and Greece) and new EU-countries facing future immigrants and educational challenges (Croatia and Cyprus). All partners in the NAOS network are centres of expertise which will yield critical, theoretical and empirical contributions to the development of knowledge and practice on professional capacity. In each of the countries, the centre of expertise will connect to a set of schools and support the NAOS activities.

The NAOS partners:

Name of the Organisation
Risbo B.V.
Forum za slobodu odgoja
UNIVERSIDADE DO PORTO
Public Policy and Management Institute
Tartu Rahvusvaheline Kool Tartu International School MTÜ
PAIDAGOGIKO INSTITOUTO KYPROU - CYPRUS PEDAGOGICAL INSTITUTE
University of Patras
UNIVERSITEIT ANTWERPEN
Algemeen Pedagogisch Studiecentrum
HOGSKOLEN I OSTFOLD

1.1 The study visit: content and procedure

A review of the literature (Severiens, Wolff & Van Herpen, 2014) shows that strengthening professional capacity with the aim to stimulate school success among diverse groups of migrant students asks for expertise in five content areas.

1. Urban teachers (or teachers in classrooms with diverse student populations) should first of all know about language development in classes of pupils whose first language is not the language of instruction.
2. These teachers should be competent in using pedagogic and didactic resources that support the learning of all their pupils. Diverse classes need different didactic resources and different types of instruction than homogeneous classrooms. If schools and teachers are committed to encouraging the talents of all their pupils they should have knowledge of the use of teaching materials, methods and types of instruction designed for diverse classes.
3. Urban teachers should know about social psychology issues such as stereotyping, teacher expectations and ethnic-identity development issues.
4. Urban teachers that succeed in engaging the parents of their diverse pupils as well as
5. Cooperate with community organisations on a basis of equality will further support school achievement in their urban schools.

The review by Severiens et al concludes that if schools are committed to increasing achievement among migrant groups, and closing the achievement gap, they should facilitate high levels of professional capacity in these areas of expertise.

NAOS organizes ten study visits in a period of three years. The general aim of these study visits is to collect and exchange good practices between schools. These good practices concern one of the areas of expertise as described above. In this way, each area of expertise will be the topic of two separate study visits.

Each of the ten partners was asked to choose an area of expertise and indicate two schools with a good practice in this area. During the kick-off meeting the distribution of areas of expertise was made as follows:

Organizing Partner	Visiting partner 1 (writers)	Visiting partner 2	Theme
Belgium	Netherlands	Greece	School-community relationships/parent participation
Greece	Croatia	Norway	Social psychology
Norway	Netherlands	Cyprus	Language/pedagogy/social psychology
Croatia	Portugal	Lithuania	School - community relationships
Cyprus	Belgium	Netherlands	social psychology/School - community relationships
Estonia	Greece	Belgium	Pedagogy
Lithuania	Cyprus	Estonia	Language/pedagogy
Portugal	Estonia	Netherlands	School-community relationships/pedagogy
Netherlands	Lithuania	Croatia	School-community relationships/language
Netherlands	Norway	Portugal	Pedagogy

Some partners indicated that whereas the distinction in the five areas of expertise could be made on a conceptual level, in practice many schools combine different areas and conduct activities in several areas at the same time. For example, oftentimes parent participation and school-community relationships are combined, but other combinations are also possible. In the schedule above it becomes clear how the areas of expertise are combined in each of the study visits.

Procedure

The focus during the study visits is on the good practice itself, but especially on the in-service training or professional development activity that supported the development of the good practice. Two general questions guide the study visit:

1. What does the good practice entail?
2. How were the teachers prepared for this good practice?

In the first session of the study visit, these general questions are translated to more detailed questions that refer to the specific area(s) of expertise and are relevant given

the context of the study visit. In general, a distinction is made between questions regarding the context, the goals of the good practice, the activities, the results and the professional development activities.

This more specific set of questions guides the school visits as well as the reflection during the final session of the study visit. In paragraph 2.7 (as well as in the addendum) the questions that were used in the Study visit in Fredrikstad are phrased.

All participants take turns taking notes (observations and notes of interviews), which are shared with the partner responsible for writing the report. The writing partner analyses the notes and writes the report according to the general questions and the basic categories (context, goals, activities, results and professional development).

1.2 Participants in the Fredrikstad study visit

The study visit started with a presentation by the organizing partner (the Høgskolen i Østfold) on education in Fredrikstad, Norway and the diversity context of their city. The hosting partner organized and participated in the visit to two schools. The visiting partners were Cyprus and the Netherlands. In total, a group of six visiting participants took part in the study visit, among which were teachers, teacher educators, educational consultants and researchers, all with expertise in the area of education



Participants of the study visit: Fredrikstad.

1.3 *Content of this report*

This report will describe the fourth NAOS study visit that took place on 2 and 3 November 2015. Both the introduction as well the school visits will be described in separate chapters. The report will end with some general reflective notes.

2 Context

Fredrikstad

The fourth study visit was held in Fredrikstad, Norway. Fredrikstad is a city in the province of Østfold in the Southeast of Norway with approximately 78.000 inhabitants (01-01-2015). The city was founded in 1567 and came to final form in 1994 after nearby rural municipalities merged with Fredrikstad. Fredrikstad, when paired with neighboring Sarpsborg, is the fifth largest city in Norway. The combined municipalities have a total of 132.351 inhabitants.

Approximately 16 percent of the inhabitants of Fredrikstad are immigrants or Norwegian children of immigrants. The biggest immigrant groups are from Iraq (2.6% of the city's total population), Poland (1.7%), Somalia (1.4%) and Kosovo (1.0%).

Norwegian school system

The premises of the national school policy of Norway are formed by the Ministry of Education and Training and is executed and developed by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (NO: UDIR). UDIR is therefore responsible for the development and quality of kindergarten, primary and secondary education. This means that the development of education in Norway is to some degree influenced by the political context of a time period and the appointed Minister of Education and Training. The Minister decides over the national curriculum which determines the subjects that are taught in school. The curriculum however leaves room for interpretation and freedom for schools to define their own lessons. In November 2015 the national curriculum included the following topics: Norwegian, mathematics, social science, 'Christianity, religion and ethics education (CREE)', 'arts and crafts', natural science, English, foreign languages/language in-depth studies, 'food and health', music, physical education, student council work and an optional program subject.

The Norwegian school system can be divided in three parts: primary school (Barneskole, age 6 – 13), lower secondary school (Ungdomsskole, age 13-16) and higher secondary school (Videregående skole, age 16 – 19). Before children go to primary school they can enter pre-school. Pre-school in Norway is set up to accommodate children 0 -6 years old. Pre-school participation is not compulsory but is encouraged by the Norwegian government. To stimulate participation, costs are kept to a minimum. Approximately 90 percent of the children in Norway go to a pre-school facility.

In Norway all children have the right to be educated. Education is compulsory for children in the age of 6-13 years (primary school and lower secondary school). Homeschools and private schools are allowed. There are approximately 3,100 primary and secondary schools in Norway of which about 4.7 percent is a private school. These schools are attended by approximately 620.000 students of which about 2.2 percent in private schools.

An interesting feature is that during primary school students do not receive grades and cannot fail a class. As a result, all students pass school within the same (age) group. The same applies to lower secondary school, although students will receive grades for tests, they cannot fail a class and do not have to repeat classes. This creates different challenges for teachers, who have to be able to differentiate to ensure that all students will reach their

potential. At the end of lower secondary school, students will get a national exam. Students will take an exam in the Norwegian language and another course which is determined on the day of the exam (the student does not know beforehand what course and therefore must prepare for all courses).

After students have finished compulsory education, they have the possibility to enrol in higher secondary school (age 16 – 19). There are approximately 450 higher secondary schools in Norway of which 16 percent are private schools. Close to 190,000 students are enrolled for higher secondary education (approximately 6 percent in private schools). With a certificate from a higher secondary school a student can qualify for higher education (e.g. university). In higher secondary school different divisions are made based on the results of the exams in lower secondary school.

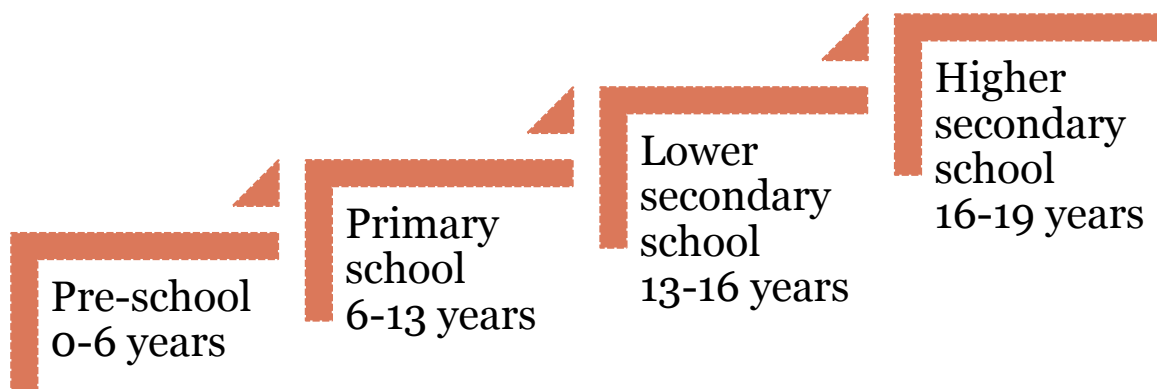


Figure 2.1: schematic overview of the Norwegian school system

To comprehend the Norwegian school system one should understand **the principle of the unity-school**. The Norwegian school is built on the concept of unity thinking. Unity thinking is based on the idea that every student in school/class must be included and is welcome. This means that all students, also those for example with a different mother tongue, have the same right to education. The way in which schools deal with the unity-principle differs. Some schools appoint a teacher (a so called ‘morsmåslærer’) that knows the mother tongue of foreign students and can assist a student. These special teachers are only available for some language groups.

The unity-school is not only an official policy with regard to cultural diverse classes, it is also an unwritten value, which influences many aspects of school life. While striving to include all students and promote equal opportunities, individual performance seems sometimes less stimulated. The so called ‘Janteloven’ (Law of Jante) is a sociological term to describe this mentality that de-emphasises individual effort and places all emphasis on the collective, while discouraging those who stand out as achievers (Avant & Knutsen, 1993).

3 *School visits*

The municipality of Fredrikstad has decided that children are to go to the school which is nearest to their house. This differs throughout Norway, in Oslo for instance, parents are free to choose the school their children attend. Because of this rule, the school population of the schools in Fredrikstad, are to a large extent formed by the location of the school and the surrounding neighborhoods. Parents can opt for their children to go to a private school. During this study visit, two schools were attended: Cicignon, a primary and lower secondary school and Kvernhuseter, a higher secondary school.

3.1 *School visit 1*



Left: Outside of Cicignon School. Right: Cicignon School Theatre

The first school visit took place on November 2nd at the Cicignon School, a primary and lower secondary school which provides education to 500 students in grades 1 – 10 (age 6 – 16). The school is located in the middle of Fredrikstad. Traditionally, the school's population were children from middle and upper class citizens. However, the last 10-20 years the background of the student population has changed, according to the staff. Nowadays there are more differences between students, both culturally and economically. Approximately 30 percent of the students have a foreign background. Over the last few years the percentage of students with a foreign background has increased and will probably keep increasing. The largest immigrant groups among school students are from Kurdistan, Poland and Somalia. Recently children from Syria have joined the school.

This school was selected because it features an introduction class in which students from foreign countries who live in the surroundings of Fredrikstad receive education until they can join the regular classes (at their own school). Main focus was the way in which the school handled social psychology issues. In addition, the school's language education and professional capacity building-tools were examined.

During the visit, the researchers spoke with the principal of the school, the deputy principal, two team leaders (grades 1-4 and grades 5-7) and two teachers who work in the introduction class.

3.1.1 Goals

The school identifies itself as a Unity school which in their own words means: a school where there is space and room for all students of all backgrounds. As a result, the school focusses on accommodating different cultures and ensuring that all children, regardless of the language they speak, receive education which will give them equal chances for a successful future in the (Norwegian) society. The following goals are formulated concerning social psychology:

- Cicignon wants to be a school where all students of all backgrounds feel welcome.
- Provide a safe place for students and parents.

3.1.2 Activities

During the visit it became clear that the school goes out of its way to achieve an inclusive climate for all students. In order to achieve the before formulated goals, different activities have been developed. In this paragraph these activities will be discussed with reference to the goals.

The school is housed in an old building which has been reconstructed in the period 2000-2009. The plans for the reconstruction were developed in cooperation with the teachers. One of the main premises of the reconstruction was to create an open and welcoming school. This is also evident from the school's open door policy. Every person can move freely within the building. Each classroom is different and most areas have an unorthodox and untraditional design. By creating an open environment the school strives to be as accessible as possible, this applies teacher-student contacts but also student-student contacts and interaction between school and parents.



Left and right: Classrooms in Cicignon School.

Besides creating a safe place which is physical, effort has been put in to create a safe school environment in which every student feels safe enough to express him- or herself. The school has a clear policy on bullying and is quick to respond when there is a possibility of racism. In case of an incident in which there is a suspicion of bullying, a teacher reports this to the principal. The teacher will describe the situation in a report. As a next step a social teacher will be involved and will advise which measures can be taken. The social teachers are teachers who had additional training to deal with social psychology issues. The appointment of social teachers are a key element in the way the schools in Norway deal with diversity and social issues. These teachers maintain contacts with parents in case of an issue which concerns their child, are aware of potential tensions that might exist or might arouse and teach students how to deal with different cultures and what kind of behaviour is acceptable. The principal decides how the situation will be dealt with, after which the parents of the involved students are informed. Teachers are reminded of this policy during staff meetings and will be addressed in case they don't follow the routine. Each year there is a training for all teachers in which coping with bullying is part of the program. Another way in which bullying is fought, is by ensuring that a teacher is never alone in class with the students. There are always multiple teachers present which helps teachers detect bullying and gives them the chance to react in case of an issue among students. This is another key element in the school system that offers more possibilities for teachers to react to social challenges because they can focus their attention on specific students when needed while the rest of the class can continue the regular programme.

The school also tries to prevent bullying as much as they can by being aware of group dynamics in school. In order to make an inclusive school in which every student feels welcome, older pupils are appointed as schoolyard directors. The appointment is only for a short time and changes regularly. During school breaks they stimulate students to interact with each other so no one will feel left out. They can be recognised by their orange vests (not pictured).

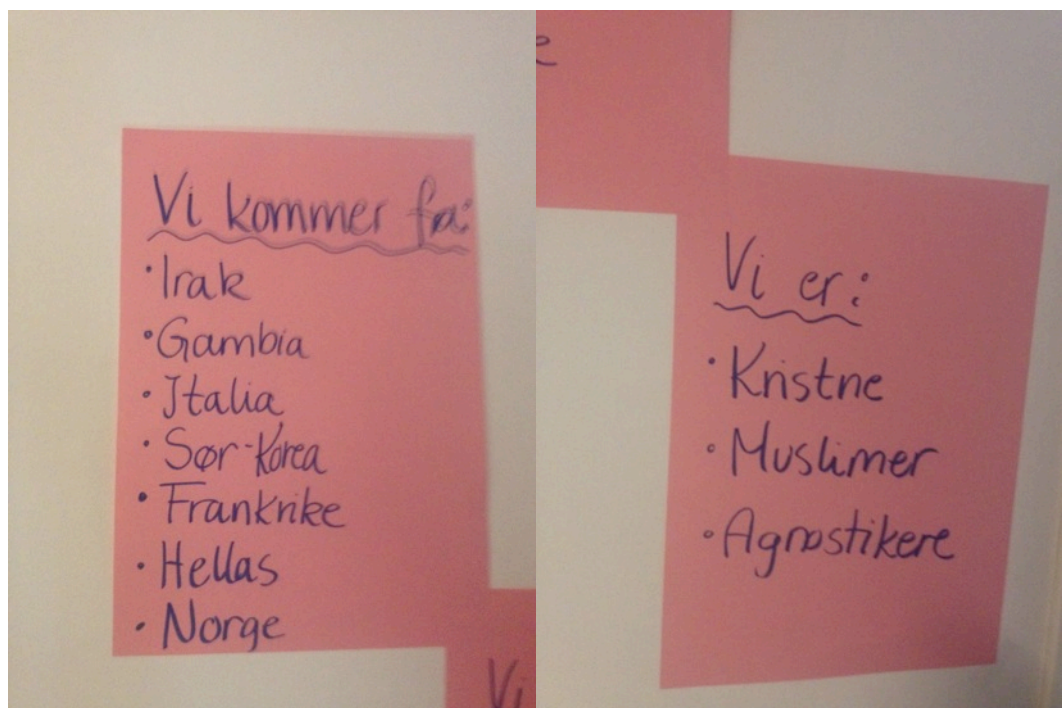


Cicignon schoolyard

Children of newcomers who enter Norway and live in (the surroundings of) Fredrikstad, will likely enter an introduction class at Cicignon School. In this class, children receive education with a special focus on learning Norwegian. Besides language training, the students also receive the same education as the other children but their language is held into account. After one or two years, when a student has the desired language proficiency, the student will return to the school in his neighbourhood and join the regular class for his or her age group. Goal of this approach is to have newcomers blend in with the regular classes as quickly as possible so they can fully be part of the (school) society.

The school takes account of different cultures by ensuring there are fitting accommodations for all students. At request of Muslim parents and students the school has created single showers where students can change after sport activities. All children (of all cultures) are allowed to use the single showers if they wish to. When the school organizes a field trip, the school ensures that Muslim girls will be home at the end of the day, even if this means that they have to be brought back the next day to continue the trip with the other students. In the cafeteria the school provides halal food.

One could argue that creating exemptions for different groups might lead to a school where differences are emphasized and that this conflicts with the unity principle. The school argues that this is not the case but that by showing respect for all cultures, no one feels left out and greater unity is achieved. The school sees added value in a multicultural community in which all are included.



Flyers in Cicignon School about the background of students (translation: 'we come from'/'we are')

The school has invested in creating awareness and understanding for students and their backgrounds. This is reflected by the unity-principle and other activities that are carried out in school. The school also makes sure teachers are aware of differences and stay up to date

about the different cultures that are represented in school.

During the visit the researchers spoke with teachers from the introduction class and asked them in what way education for newcomers differs from Norwegian students. One of the most important aspects of education for newcomers is to be able to connect to the perception of these students. The teachers go a long way in finding appropriate teaching material that suits the perception of newcomers. The teachers look for teaching materials that are connected to the perception of the students. E.g. when learning to count, the teachers will look for items the pupil knows from their background/culture and perform exercises with these items as examples. In order to do this, teachers must be aware of cultural practices and traditions. The teachers indicate that they have to be creative in order to achieve this and that it can be challenge. The materials that can be used could come from anywhere as long as it is linked to the perception of the student. In other words, the teaching method remains the same but the materials are adapted to the student.

A final way in which the school tries to ensure there's a safe environment with room for all cultures is through their personnel policy. During interviews with teacher-candidates the school explains their vision and asks the teachers if they support the school's vision on social psychology and teaching. In the past, teachers have been rejected for jobs or have decided not to take a position because of these factors. By ensuring that new teachers are a good fit, the school guards its values.

3.1.3 Results

Main topic during this school visit was the ways in which the school deal with social psychology issues. Over the last five years there have been very few incidents with relation to xenophobia or racism. The school principal attributes this to the school's commitment to preventive policy and awareness of the group dynamics. When incidents do occur, these are handled swiftly because the staff is aware of the policy on bullying. This is the result of recurring training and the school staying active on this subject.

The teachers of the introduction class indicate that when racism occurs, this is usually within the introduction class(es). Students from different backgrounds form the introduction class. This can lead to racially fuelled conflicts. The teachers believe that this might arise from insecurity of the new students.

The social teachers are an important part of the school in regards of the social environment. They are trained to act preventive and be sensitive for possible tensions. When incidents do occur the social teachers are always alerted and involved in devising measures and solutions. The social teachers are an important aspect of the school policy on how to battle social psychology issues. In combination with multiple teachers that stand in front of the class, the school has a lot of resources available to act against social problems.

The teachers that were spoken to during the study visit unanimously agree that few social psychology incidents occur and are proud to be part of the school and the environment they created. They do however indicate that being aware and actively busy with social psychology can lead to an increased workload. Over the last few years the minority groups at school have increased. This has not led to more incidents because teachers showed more

commitment and worked an extra step to deal with it. Teachers indicate that it requires commitment and dedication but that it is worth the hassle in the long run.

3.1.4 Professional development

Teachers have the possibility to work on their professional development in numerous ways, also on dealing with diversity themes. Every four weeks, teachers will get 45 to 90 minutes on professional development. During regular classes, teachers are always joined by other teachers. This allows them to give feedback to each other and ask questions when needed. The school has an open door policy and stimulates teachers to join each other's classes. A few times a year teachers are observed by other teachers who give feedback on the teaching methods and didactical skills. Finally, each year in August when the students have their holidays, the staff receives training. During this training, social psychology, in relation to diversity, is one of the main focuses. During the training, the teachers will practice situations by role-playing, intervision and discussing how to act in specific situations. Furthermore the school policies are discussed and if needed updated.

Teachers can choose to specialize themselves and become a social teacher. This requires comprehensive training. The social teachers are taught different strategies to cope with social tensions and are made aware of cultural differences and how these differences can lead to tensions (e.g. because of misunderstandings).

The school leaders are actively busy for teachers to keep evolving and improving their teaching skills. The school has set up an education program with this purpose. As a part of this program, teachers are linked to another teacher (from a different section and age group) and participate in peer-review sessions. Teachers can ask the peer-reviewer to focus on specific things or for general feedback. Topics that can be reviewed vary. E.g. leading the class, start of a lesson, maintaining order, how to reach teaching goals etc. Goal of the intervention is for teachers to master more teaching tools. By being able to speak about teaching with a peer, teachers can be more open and honest in comparison when they talk with the school leaders. This initiative was first met with resistance as it was implemented top-down. However, after a short while teachers saw the benefits and became enthusiastic about the method. Teachers indicate that the training prepares them for situations in the classroom that might occur and being prepared improves the teacher's confidence.

Teachers can also ask for additional training if they want, some teachers have however indicated that workload has increased which leaves less time for professional development.



Interview with the principal en co-principal of Cicignon School

3.2 *School visit 2*

The second visit took place on the 3rd of November at the Kvernhuset school, a higher secondary school which provides education to 500 students in grades 8 – 10 (age 6 – 16). The school is located between a social-economical upper and lower part of town. This is reflected in the school's population. Around 100 students are bilingual and have a foreign background. This is approximately 20 percent of the students. The biggest immigrant groups are from Kurdistan and Somalia. Over the last few years the percentage of students with a foreign background has increased.

During the visit, the researchers spoke with the co-principal of the school, two team leaders who teach as well and four teachers.



Left: interview with the co-principal of the Kvernhuset School.

Right: main hallway of Kvernhuset School

The school has a unique and award-winning design and is frequently visited by people from abroad to behold the way form and function are brought together. The design of the school was made in cooperation with teachers. The ground floor interior consists of different material and elements of nature. Inside the building, different parts are created by the use of nature-inspired themes. E.g. there is a yellow/sun section, a blue/water section and a green/plants section, etc. In these different parts of the school, different age groups are hosted. The themes not only define the interior of the school, they are also linked to elements in the curricula. E.g. the students are taught on the topics that are represented within the section of the school building they attend.



Interior of the Kvernhuset School

3.2.1 Goals

This school was selected because it emphasizes the importance of social teachers and has a clear vision on dealing with social psychology. The school wants to create an environment wherein all students feel welcome, safe and know how to act around each other by heart, not out of decency. The school also strives to make students feel responsible for their actions and the school.

The following school goals were formulated by the co-principal.

- Be a school where all students learn something new every day and are prepared for the future.
- Recognize differences and respect these differences.

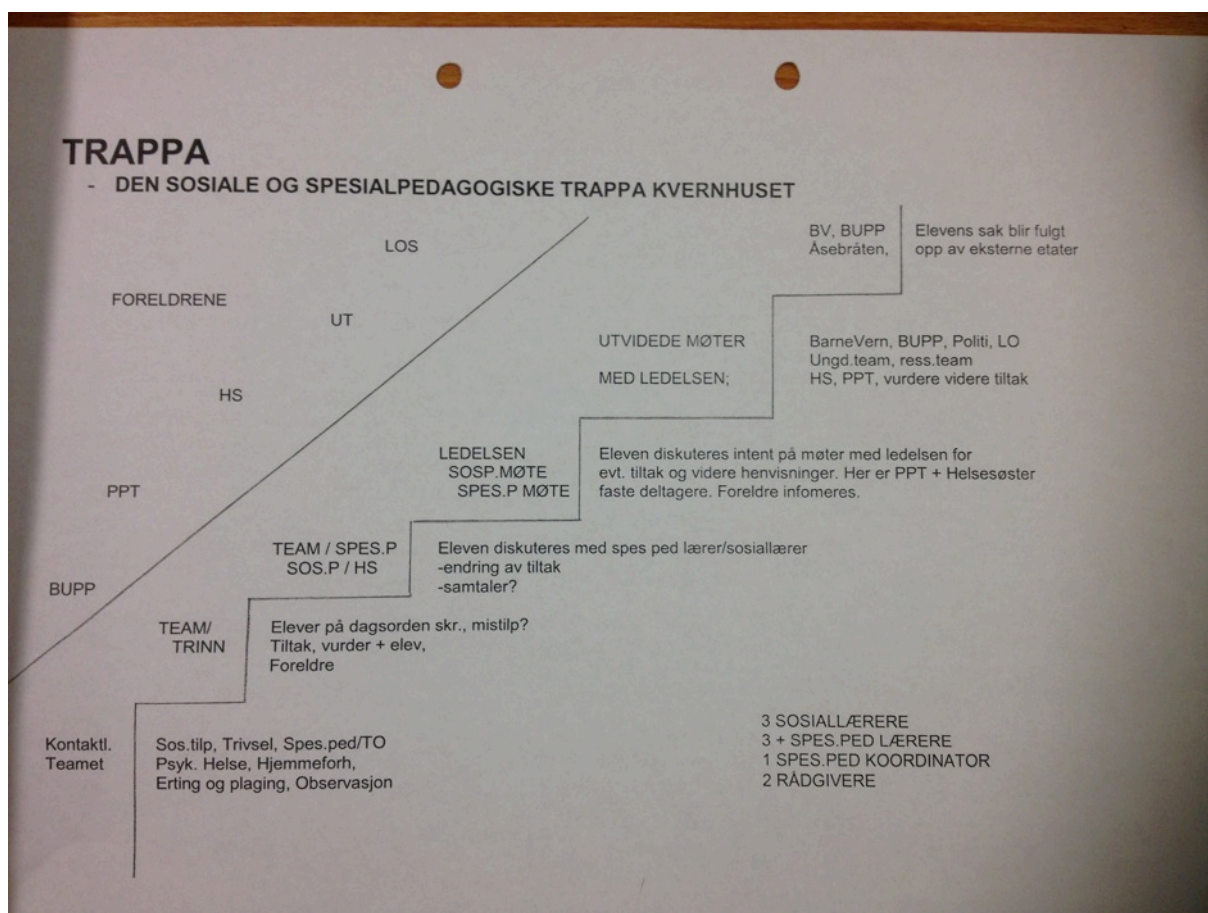
Kvernhuset strives to develop various competences and skills of their students: cognitive competences as well as more “soft” skills such as to take care of each other, contribute to a positive school climate and develop self-identity.

3.2.2 Activities

The appointment of three social teachers indicates the importance the school adheres to a healthy social environment. The social teachers are indispensable in the school's pursuit to create a surrounding in which everyone can be themselves, according to the principal. Normally a school the size of the Kvernhuset School would have one or two social teachers. The social teachers are teachers who had additional training to deal with social psychology issues. These teachers maintain contacts with parents in case of an issue which concerns their child, are aware of potential tensions that might exist or might arouse and teach students how to deal with different cultures and what kind of behaviour is acceptable. The principal puts it as providing the students with the tools for dealing with different social situations (which might arise from cultural differences). The social teachers are also part of the healthcare/ social team of the school (that furthermore consists of local healthcare institutions) in which problematic and alarming cases are discussed. During normal schooldays, social teachers visit classes, make observations, co-teach and talk to students in private if there are issues that need to be addressed.

The teachers stipulate that central values: 'safety' and 'communication' among pupils, staff and parents are integrated in the way they teach. They for example keep files for informing pupils and teachers. During the first week of the year they have an introductory week for the students and introduction meetings for the parents.

The school puts much effort to prevent bullying amongst their students. As mentioned before bullying issues can be discussed in the social team. Also the school nurse tries to build a safe environment and good relations amongst students. When bullying occurs, the school works according to their action plan, which consists of different (hierarchal) steps. One of the first steps is that the teachers inform the social and pedagogical team. As a next step, the social teacher informs the parents. This action plan is formalised in a document. All teachers are familiar with this action plan.



Kvernhuset action plan in case of social issues

The design of the building contributes to the 'safety' value as well. There are separate entrances for different classes to create a safe climate for all students and prevent bullying (in this case especially for the younger students).

To have the students interact with each other all students are served a hot meal for lunch made by other students. One day a year all students prepare food from their country of origin.

The co-principal states that pupils do not have problems with xenophobia or racism. However, some teachers find it difficult to handle situations in which for instance Muslims do not participate in gymnastics out of religious beliefs. The school handles these situation by creating conditions in which all students can participate in school (based on the principle of unity-thinking). E.g. the school appointed a swimming teacher specifically for Muslim girls. Like the Cicignon School, the Kvernhuset School tries to create room for all students. As we saw before, also at this school, separate single showers were built at the request of Muslim students/parents and the cafeteria the school provides halal food. However, not all requests are granted. A request for a prayer room was denied. Religious (visual) expressions are allowed in school, however active implementation of religious beliefs (e.g. praying) are not. The school teaches students about different religious movements.

Interviewees indicate that creating understanding and respect for each other is done via informal channels. Also humour is mentioned as an important tool to create understanding and deal with difficult situations. There are no classes solely dedicated to cultural differences

in the curriculum. The school strives to create understanding between students from within instead of top-down. This is tried to be achieved by creating a school environment in which everyone feels free to give their opinion, respect each other and where there is room for discussion. This requires teachers to be sensitive for certain situations in which social differences could play a role. In these cases teachers must be able to openly discuss topics with the students even if this means that the program that was planned for that day will have to be taught another day.

Inside the school, the students are made responsible for different tasks. E.g. answering phone calls, prepare food in the cafeteria, etc. Also when a student breaks some of the school property on purpose, he or she will have to reimburse the damage. By giving the students responsibility for the course of events in school, the students should learn taking responsibility and that their own actions can have effects on others. Through this way the school seeks to create a school climate in which all students feel responsible for the state of affairs inside the school.



A classroom during class at Kvernhuset School

Every school day begins with viewing and discussing the news of the day in class. The school does not discuss social psychology issues as a specific subject but it is a topic which is talked about by students during the review of the news. Social psychology issues are dealt with throughout the curriculum without emphasizing it as such. In this way, students are subconsciously taught about dealing with social differences. By entering in dialogue with each other, the school wishes to create awareness of the backgrounds of students. E.g. news covering the situation in Syria might help understand other students what a students from Syria has been through.

Students who have problems with the Norwegian language will receive special attention. The class is split up during Norwegian class. There are groups formed based on achievements, dyslexia and non-mother tongue speakers. By differentiating on different levels the school seeks to maximize each student's potential. Some students can get extra help of a mother

tongue teacher. This is a person (often from outside the school) that speaks the same mother tongue as a student and provides additional assistance to children that join regular classes after they finished the introduction classes for two hours a week. According to the teachers these two hours are often not sufficient.

In the spirit of the unity-thinking, the school offers the possibility to do home-work at school for 2 to 3 times a week for 2 to 3 hours. The school wants to give pupils who do not receive sufficient attention from their parents at home, the possibility to get support at school and thereby promote equality by offering all students a chance to make their homework.



Kvernhuset School library

3.2.3 Results

The school co-principal believes that there could be a lot of incidents at the school if one takes the school's population into consideration. In reality this is not the case. The co-principal attributes this to the school's culture and the pursuit of acceptance and understanding for all. Because these subjects are part of the school's vision and policy, staff and students are (unconsciously) aware of each other.

Incidents of racism that were mentioned, are mostly cases in which students with a foreign (non-Norwegian) background claim to be the victim of racism. In most of these cases, incidents derive from misunderstanding and racism is not really an issue, according to the staff.

The teachers stipulate that cultural diversity is seen as a benefit, not as a challenge.

The social teachers play a big role in guarding and creating an accepting environment for all. The social teachers supply the students with the tools so they know how to act in different social situations. The school stresses the importance of the social teachers by appointing more social teachers than they are officially required. This is because the school regards the social teachers as an important and effective instrument in guarding the social environment in school which in the long term also has a positive effect on all students.

In the nearby future, the school wishes to invest in parent involvement. The staff indicates that it is a challenge to involve parents from students with a non-Norwegian background. These parents are usually very traditional which can lead to students getting caught up in the middle between two worlds. On the one hand there is the school where students learn to be respectful and accepting towards other cultures. On the other hand there is the home situation where students often learn a more traditionalist approach to the world, which derived from their home country. The school wishes to address these issues and enter in dialogue with the parents so the children will not become torn up between these worlds.

3.2.4 Professional development

The school wants to promote communication and the exchange of knowledge amongst their staff. Teachers have the possibility to work on their professional development in numerous ways. They make use of peer-learning. Every Tuesday and Thursday the school organizes feedback sessions between teachers in a team setting. Many teachers have had training in coaching and coach new teachers. Because of the multicultural background and recent developments which meant an increase in newcomers to the school, social psychology issues are often spoken about during these peer-sessions.

Several teachers were offered the possibility to do an in-service training, during working hours. They were paid a full salary but worked 40 percent and followed courses in the time remaining. This could also be used for courses on dealing with diversity and other social psychology issues

The daily routine also contributes to the professional development. Every class has two teachers and assistants, who work closely together. During regular school days, the teacher share a classroom with two other teachers. There are many formal and informal opportunities for teachers to reflect and ask each other for feedback. On a digital platform teachers share teaching materials, approaches, etc.

The teachers are also expected to develop themselves with regard to diversity and social psychology. The school and teachers are aware of newcomers and create strategies on coping with specific situations. E.g. the arrival of Syrian refugees create new challenges for teachers. Teachers have to be aware of possible traumatic experiences of refugee students. The staff is trained and prepared for this through training and informal peer discussion.

To the teachers the vision of the principal – which is based on mutual trust, not on control, checking and report - is of great importance. His leadership-style and the organisational culture fuels their professional development. Teachers have a lot of flexibility to manage their own time. When a student (for example: a Somalian student that just arrived to Norway and therefore did not speak any Norwegian) needs more attention, teachers can easily decide to spend more hours with him/ her and reallocate time.

4 *Summary and remarkable observations*

- Both schools that were visited are examples of a Norwegian Unity-school. They work according to the concept of unity-thinking meaning that EVERY student must be included in the classroom. They focus on creating conditions in which all students can participate in education. The schools focus on accommodating different cultures and ensuring that all children, regardless of the language they speak, receive education. The school population of both schools consist of students of different cultural backgrounds.
Cultural diversity is seen as an asset not as a challenge. Both schools have adapted to certain specific wishes from students with a different background (e.g. separate showers, halal food) in order to include everyone and make sure all cultures feel welcome.
- Both schools strive for students to internalise the school's values on acceptance and unity. In general this is not done by formal classes dedicated to social environment but is achieved in an informal setting through dialogue. For the schools unity doesn't mean that all students have to be the same but that all students can be themselves.
- The Norwegian school system differs from other countries when we look at grading and differentiating (on achievement). During primary school students do not receive grades and cannot fail a class. All students pass school within the same (age) group. The same applies to lower secondary school, although students will receive grades for tests, they cannot fail a class and do not have to repeat classes. This means that teachers have to be able to differentiate between student levels. For students this means they will go through school with the same classmates which can stimulate unity and the feeling of belonging to a group.
- Both schools strive to create a safe environment, and have a clear policy on bullying. Teachers are expected to know and follow the policy as it is set out. At Cicignon School teachers receive recurring training on bullying-policy each August. Teachers stay up to date with the cultures that are represented within the schools.
- Both schools have a clear vision on the type of school they wish to be and put this into practice. The realisation of the school's vision is embedded into everyday school life.
- In the Kvernhuset School the students are made responsible for the course of events in the school. Idea behind this is that students will feel responsible, learn to cooperate and experience how their own actions can affect others. The school

strives for students to feel responsible for the social climate at school by making them part of the organization and give them responsibilities.

- Social teachers who work alongside regular teachers specifically focus on the development of social skills. The social teachers are also part of the social/ healthcare team of the school (that furthermore consists of local healthcare institutions) in which problematic and alarming cases are discussed. The social teachers in both schools are seen as an important reason of the healthy school climate that exists at both schools.
- Both schools promote professional development by e.g. promoting peer-learning amongst staff-members but also by creating a climate where informal knowledge exchange is promoted. This is even taken into account in the architectural design of the schools (e.g. no doors).
- Newcomers that live in the region of Fredrikstad receive education in a special introduction class at Cicignon School before they join a regular class which suits their age group. Before a student can join a regular class he/she needs to reach a certain level of language proficiency. Main focus in the introduction classes is on teaching Norwegian but other subjects are taught as well.
- At Kvernhuset School, immigrant students can receive special assistance from a mother tongue teacher if needed. During Norwegian class teachers split the group and newcomers receive special education suited to their needs.
- Teachers from both schools indicate to be proud to work at their school but at the same time state that accommodating all cultures can be a challenge. With the increasing minority groups in Fredrikstad, teachers say that their workload has slowly increased and they fear this will continue to do so the coming years as they expect the numbers of immigrants to further increase. However, teachers from both schools indicate that there are currently few social psychology issues and that the school climate is good.



Participants of the Study Visit

5 *References*

Avant, G., & Knutsen, K. (1993). UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL DIFFERENCES: Janteloven and Social Conformity in Norway. ETC: A Review of General Semantics, 50(4), 449-460. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42577494>

Appendices

Fredrikstad Questionnaire

Social Psychology, Language

Main focus: Professional Capacity Building

	TEACHERS	PRINCIPAL
CONTEXT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Have you in your school experienced any form for bullying, racism and/or other expressions of xenophobia amongst colleagues, students and/or parents? -How do you acknowledge racism in your school? -What is the context of your school/classroom? -What kind of group formation is made within school? (intercultural, homogeneous, etc) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How will you describe the school - What are the characteristics of the school? -How would you describe the school's student population? -Who are described as minority students? -How would you describe the local context of the school, such as the quality of living, employment/unemployment, among the students' parents, socio-economic conditions for parents and students? -What are the school's basic values (e.g. visions of the school)? -How may I recognize those values? -Have you in your school experienced any form for bullying, racism and/or other expressions of xenophobia amongst colleagues, students and/or parents? -What is the history of the school concerning (projects in the area of) social psychology and Language?
GOALS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -What is the general school approach/ vision to diversity? -How may I recognize those values? -What's the background of this approach -What are the goals of these practices? -Focus on process or progress? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -What is the general school approach/ vision to diversity? -How may I recognize those values? -What's the background of this approach -What are the goals of these practices? -Focus on process or progress?
ACTIVITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -How do you reach these goals? -What are the main activities? -Do you have any specific measures with regard to avoid racism and discrimination at school? -Specific methods of developing self-identity to students? - Are there any curricular topics/tools/methods addressing the topics about racism, acceptance, tolerance, diversity? -In what ways are teaching methods and materials used to make students aware of their attitudes towards each other and towards 'other' cultures, and to promote understanding and tolerance - How to you make use of examples and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -How do you reach these goals? -What are the main activities? -Do you have any specific measures with regard to avoid racism and discrimination at school? - How do they detect and minimize the reasons of social inequalities? -Specific methods of developing self-identity to students? - Are there any curricular topics/tools/methods addressing the topics about racism, acceptance, tolerance, diversity? -In what ways are teaching methods and materials used to make students aware of their attitudes towards each other and towards 'other' cultures, and to promote

	content from a variety of cultures in the school's curriculum	understanding and tolerance
RESULTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -To what extend do you reach the goals? -Do you feel satisfied with the activities? (teacher's perceptions). -Why/Why not? - In what ways do you consider minority students to be included? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -To what extend do you reach the goals? -Do you feel satisfied with the activities? (principal's perceptions) -Why/Why not? - In what ways do you consider minority students to be included? -Does school keep data of students' perspectives/attitudes about "otherness" (racism, acceptance, tolerance, diversity)?
PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -How do you acknowledge bullying, racism and/or other expressions of xenophobia at school? -Is there an explicit or implicit training program/ policy at school? -How are you as a teacher supported to understand, investigate, and to determine how cultural assumptions, frames of reference, perspectives and biases in the disciplines affect the construction of knowledge? -How do you get prepared for the activities? -How is the relationship between administrative tasks/ pedagogical tasks/ professionalization? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -What kind of preparation does the school offer to the teachers? -How do you support teachers to understand, investigate, and to determine how cultural assumptions, frames of reference, perspectives and biases in the disciplines affect the construction of knowledge? -How do teachers influence on decision making in daily work? - How do school leaders open up for teachers to influence? - How is the relationship between administrative tasks/ pedagogical tasks/ professionalization?

Language

- Any specific measures with regard to minority students with lack of elementary education from their country of origin?
- How do you deal with students that do not speak the Norwegian language well enough to follow the lessons? Do you place them in own groups? Or do you leave the students in the same classroom as the native Norwegian speakers?
- Does this school have specific tests to measure the Norwegian linguistic proficiency for minority students? If you have, what kind of tests do you use?
- Is there one among the staff, or a group of people, who has a specific responsibility regarding teaching and learning for minority students the Norwegian language?