Uledsagede flygtningebørn - en stor opgave for folkeskolen

Unaccompanied refugee children - a major challenge for the schools

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Personal info

• My engagement in the field of educational developmental work and intercultural studies started for about 30 years ago (USSR-aid, Sida, UNICEF)

• The presentation is based mainly on my research and personal experience
Context and background

Sweden has less than 2% of Europe’s population but accepts over 20% of child refugees.
Child migration to Sweden

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>820</td>
<td>(was expected 300)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>1264</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>1510</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>2250</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2393</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>2657</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>3578</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>3852</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>7049</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td><strong>35369</strong></td>
<td>(23480-Afg., 3777-Syr., 2058-Som.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>2199</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

http://www.migrationsverket.se
Who is coming?

• Officially, over 50% are 16-17 years. *(Socially mature at home)*
• About 80 % are boys.
• Majority comes from Afghanistan, Somalia, Syria, Iraq, Morocco,
• Most have few years of formal schooling.
• But some are functional analphabets.
Why Sweden?

- Strong ethnic Diasporas. Presence of extended families.
- No age testing of incoming children (before May 2017)
- Favorable conditions for exile, living and education. Swedish state spends about 100,000 € per arriving refugee child per year (new rules from July 2017)
Economic framework for a refugee child ≈ 100 000€ per year

Main cost is accommodation. State pays about 200 € per day for logi (municipal or private) (about 150€ from 1/7-17)

Additionally, receiving municipality gets basic subsidy of 50000 € per child/year.

Good for economy of small/remote municipalities! (Over 1% of population)

Only about 10% of total minor-refugee budget (10k€) goes to schooling costs.

Many refugees need special education
## Costs for schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Costs</th>
<th>State subsidy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>82 700 kr</td>
<td>59 300 kr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special primary</td>
<td>320 100 kr</td>
<td>59 300 kr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>92 000 kr</td>
<td>67 200 kr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special high school</td>
<td>248 300 kr</td>
<td>67 200 kr</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Increase of State subsidy to \(\approx 100\ 000\ kr\) since 2017
Teacher preparedness

- Teacher students in Sweden have still few occasions of personal encounters with immigrants
- Teacher profession remains a field with few immigrants occupied (Popov, 2017, on-going study).
- Intercultural education is offered in TE only for teachers of Swedish as Second Language (SSL)
Identity is constructed in activities but through language and culture

Jin & Cortazzi (2002)

Complex links between language and culture
Research questions:

• How do unaccompanied immigrant children experience their meeting with the Swedish school system?

• How do prospective teachers conceptualise their professional roles in new cultural contexts of schools?

• What can be improved in the education of refugee minors?

(Popov & Sturesson, 2015)
Findings: Child reports

- Feeling of ‘social vacuum’ - limited possibilities for interaction with Swedish people (Bunar & Nilsson 2016)
- Longer previous schooling - more discontent with Swedish school: “in my country teacher helped me to understand, here I have to learn to understand by myself”.
- Mother tongue tutors time in school was considered absolutely insufficient.
- Contextual factors affecting socialisation – remoteness, darkness, cold
Pedagogical tensions

• ‘Guru tradition’ in home countries prof, validation and epistemology are based on authority of the teacher vs critical scientific thinking promoted in Sweden (Popov, 2016).

• Poor bilingual scaffolding for ‘school language’ / subject related concepts vs everyday language

• Developing ‘identity of excuse’ as response to the teachers’ expressed pity/compassion for minor-refugees
Teacher students’ perceptions

• Awareness about generic intercultural issues: Muslim girls – swimming lessons, school food, gender, religion and culture.

• No didactical issues related to difference in age, knowledge levels and cultural backgrounds within the immigrant group were raised (Popov & Sturesson, 2015)
Socio-political dimension

• **Education** of unaccompanied immigrant children is ‘in blind spot’ of political vision and heavily underfunded.

• The main focus of public (media) attention is on human rights and care-giving perspectives

• Age threshold of 18 years is paved with many problems for minors
Teacher education

• Inadequate pre- and in-service teacher training for educating refugee-children

• On-going Swedish national in-service teacher training project "Lärarlyftet" pays no attention to intercultural work.
Concluding remarks

• Educators need to avoid nurturing ‘identity of excuse’ among minor-refugees (Popov, Sturesson, 2015)

• Hard study, including home work, engagement in social responsibilities and clear school rules to follow are proven requirements for identity-building
• Bridging the gap between extended family/diaspora and school

• Focus on development of teacher professional competence to meet refugees of different ages, literacy levels and cultural backgrounds (multi-age classrooms, minority language scaffolding, apprenticeship models, etc)
References


