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A home culture pedagogy? Problematising and developing the concept of intercultural education

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ABSTRACT

In this article, we take as our starting point the argument that intercultural theory and, above all, intercultural education often focuses on people's ideas, consciousness and attitudes. We argue that intercultural education has a bias towards cognitive structures as well as individualism. In parts of the intercultural research field, there is thus a lack of knowledge about how an intercultural dialogue can be understood based on interaction between people and the institutional and structural contexts in which they meet. The aim of this article is therefore to discuss how an intercultural dialogue can be understood from a social-psychological and sociological point of view. We argue that the dialogue in 'actual' meetings between people is not governed by ideas or attitudes, but by negotiations and interpretations that are situated. Furthermore, by introducing the concept of home culture, we discuss how this dialogue must also be put in relation to the present overall life situation, here and now, of all children/students, as well as to institutionally and socially active categorisations, routines and power relations, in order to develop fruitful, critical and relevant intercultural education.

Introduction

In his dissertation on masculinity and language in a secondary school located in a disadvantaged area on the outskirts of Stockholm, Sweden, Rikard Jonsson (2007) asks: What does a 'toost' signify? In a dialogue between two boys about whether they dare to approach a good-looking girl who has just gone past, one boy says, "You wouldn't dare!" whereupon the other boy replies, "Bet you one toost that I would!". Jonsson interrupts the boys to ask what 'toost' means, expecting it to be a vernacular term,

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but gets the following answer: "A sandwich, a grilled sandwich, you know!" Jonsson concludes that he knows what a *'toast'* is and that the boys have pronounced the word correctly, but that his ideas about the boys – as migrant boys situated in a deprived area – limit his perception and understanding. Jonsson expects the word to have a special meaning because the boys are *boys* living in a specific *problematised context*. Obviously though, sometimes a toast is just a toast – a simple toasted sandwich to be eaten during the school break.

In a self-critical manner, Jonsson discusses how societal stereotypes reduce his notions of young men in disadvantaged areas to a few characteristics. These young men are likely to be unreflectively categorised as 'migrants from a deprived neighbourhood' and attributed familiar and stereotypical characteristics linked to riots, gangster poses and the use of slang. The limiting talk about and one-sided representations of the neighbourhood and the people living there thus condition how these young people are understood. When a young person is depicted as a one-sided figure, a projection surface reduced to a few characteristics, his way of speaking is interpreted as an expression of who he is expected to be.

Reflexively raising awareness, as Jonsson does, of the reductive effects of one's own perceptions of the comprehension of the Other is a central component in the field known as intercultural education. Increasing globalisation and migration, as well as the expansion of the Internet, are among the components which have introduced greater heterogeneity and a wider range of experiences, conditions, power relations and influences into society. These developments have come to affect, among other things, children's and young people's everyday lives, living conditions and schooling. As a result, discussion about and theories on multiculturalism, internationalisation and intercultural perspectives has increased within the field of child and youth studies, not least in relation to research on children and young people's conditions in an increasingly globalised Swedish educational system.

Drawing from European, especially Nordic, and Anglo-Saxon literature on sociology and intercultural education, the overall aim of this article is to critically discuss how an intercultural approach can be developed by relating it to sociological and social-psychological theories about interactions between people in the institutional and structural contexts in which they are involved and the situations they encounter and experience. Intercultural education has an excessive focus on *thinking, consciousness* and *emotions*. We believe that this knowledge is valuable but also insufficient vis-à-vis an understanding of what an intercultural perspective could imply in practice. Our point of departure is the idea that dialogues between people are not primarily governed by ideas or attitudes, but by negotiations and interpretations that are contextual. Such dialogues must also be related to institutionally and socially active categorisations, power relations and structural violence, which, in turn, affect whether people are included in or excluded from opportunities for access, identification, belonging and social justice (Mikander et al., 2018; Tochon & Karaman, 2009). This article contributes new knowledge to an intercultural approach by relating the

concept of intercultural education to the fields of sociology and social psychology. Hence, the article nuances and develops a somewhat individualistic discourse on intercultural education that focuses on people's ideas, consciousness and attitudes.

Intercultural education as concept and policy

Both internationally and in Sweden, the concept of intercultural education, among several other concepts, has been used to highlight aspects of a multicultural/intercultural field of knowledge: interculturalism, multiculturalism, multilingualism, inclusion, globalisation and so on. What these concepts have in common, however, is the aim of conceptualising societal, cultural and ethnic diversity (Johansson, 2022; Lahdenperä, 2004; Mikander et al., 2018; Modood, 2021). The difference between multicultural and intercultural is that 'multi' signals quantity, state and position, whereas 'inter' is associated with action, interaction and movements between individuals (Lorentz & Bergstedt, 2016). Within the multicultural concept, relationships between people are thus not necessarily included, while the intercultural concept focuses on dynamics and influence in human relations (Lunneblad, 2018), although 'inter' has also been criticised for focusing on differences between various groups (Sunnemark, 2016). In relation to pedagogy, the term 'multicultural education' is usually used in the Anglo-Saxon world, while 'intercultural education' is more common in the rest of Europe and the Nordic countries (Portera, 2008). Interculturalism emerged as a critique of multiculturalism, and public discourse on multiculturalism has declined in recent decades. New *isms* have been offered instead, such as interculturalism. Some scholars, however, argue that interculturalism cannot replace multiculturalism, and instead suggest that they have many similarities, support each other and are complementary (Mansouri & Modood, 2021; Modood, 2021).

In recent years, norm-critical perspectives have been established within the field of child and youth studies. Such perspectives problematise power structures and norms that depict people as foreign and different. The point of departure is a radical critique of hegemonic structures about gender and sexuality, as well as previous forms of gender- and tolerance pedagogy. It also includes a critique of the ideas that have been part of intercultural and multicultural education (Martinsson & Reimers, 2008). The argument is that an education based on tolerance, self-reflection and the pursuit of dialogue underestimates the importance of different positions of power in society. Intercultural education thus risks becoming a form of training for students in how to learn to tolerate those who are considered alien or exotic (Martinsson & Reimers, 2008). A somewhat similar critique has been made of *multicultural* pedagogy or education. In this context, culture is primarily associated with 'the Others'; consequently, multicultural education is implicitly associated with education for the Others with a focus on, for example, bilingualism issues (Bunar, 2009). Furthermore, this education often focuses on challenges, problems and shortcomings, with the consequence that students are often singled out as victims (Portera, 2008). This focus on deficiency

suggests that some students and schools are special, different and problems in themselves, which makes it difficult for parallels to be drawn between the educational system and society's (re)production of unequal conditions (Bunar, 2009).

The opposite objection to intercultural education is made by the conservatively conditioned critique of the vision of the multicultural society. In this discourse, the notion of *Swedishness* and *cultural homogeneity* is increasingly linked to how refugees in Sweden are to be integrated into society (Johansson Heinö, 2011). Voices about the importance of common values, linked to a national identity, have become increasingly common as a result of this change. Allegations that migrants pose an imminent threat to Swedish, European and Western gender equality, for example, have been used as arguments to demand citizenship education and citizenship tests. Integration has thus increasingly come to signify national and cultural assimilation, in opposition to the purpose of intercultural education. Furthermore, since the turn of the millennium, a growing neoliberal discourse on education in the Nordic countries has contributed to a depoliticisation and diminution of issues concerning intercultural education and social justice, in favour of an increasingly entrenched discourse on efficiency and competition in education (Imsen et al., 2016).

In this article, we have chosen to limit the discussion to the conditions for an intercultural perspective in relation to the institutionalised activities that take place within organisations. The concepts of organisation and institution are complex and partly overlapping, and used in different ways in research (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991; Hacking, 2004). By 'organisation', we refer to an activity that is organised with the purpose of performing, conveying or producing something.

By 'institution', we refer to established ways of categorising events, people and situations that arise within the organisation. Institutionalisation thus creates a pattern of action and an expectation among participants about how a problem should be solved, who has the right to decide, which norms and values are considered legitimate, etc. (Jenkins, 2002). Research indicates that there is a sluggishness within institutions which means that the organisation of an activity is not personal but can continue with some stability over longer periods of time and in different places (Hacking, 2004).

Intercultural consciousness and competence

In recent decades, intercultural perspectives have been established in a number of different areas. Above all, perhaps, the approach has gained a foothold in the educational system, in which intercultural education has become a common concept. Intercultural education intends to highlight the impact of cultural factors on the individual's learning processes and development. It is through encounters and interactions between individuals with different cultural and/or ethnic backgrounds that intercultural learning and consciousness can be initiated (Lahdenperä, 2004; Lorentz & Bergstedt, 2016). Interculturality signifies cross-boundary processes through which democratic values such as mutual respect, tolerance, equality and social justice

develop. An intercultural education can contribute to highlighting how stereotypes, prejudices, normalisation, racism and discrimination affect people's lives, relationships, learning processes and development. It can also contribute to the development of young people's interest and involvement in international issues (Lahdenperä, 2004; Lorentz & Bergstedt, 2016).

One facet of intercultural perspectives specifically emphasises the importance of the individual becoming aware of personal prejudices and ethnocentric notions, or, in other words, the tendency to judge others by their own frame of cultural reference (Lorentz & Bergstedt, 2016). School staff must strive to develop intercultural competence: not only an understanding of other cultures, but above all turning one's gaze on one's own culture and becoming aware of how it influences one's own actions and attitudes. One's own culture is thus subject to scrutiny and is seen as one among several possible ways of living a life. By gradually developing one's knowledge, cognitive ability and awareness, one can achieve an increasingly sophisticated intercultural competence (Perry & Southwell, 2011). The first step involves developing an *intercultural recognition ability*; that is, the teacher develops an openness towards the students and their guardians and an interest in their experiences, cultural backgrounds and practices. When this ability to recognise is refined, step two – an *intercultural awareness* – can develop. Under such awareness, knowledge can be contextualised, different ways of relating to the outside world are developed, and one can gain an outsider's view of one's own culture. In a third and final step, the intercultural awareness is integrated into the person's actions and way of thinking, and an *intercultural competence* is developed. Through this process, the individual can move relatively smoothly between, and adapt to, different cultural contexts.

We are, of course, not criticising the ambition that people should think about their treatment of others and try to make themselves aware of how their own prejudices against other people have an impact. On the contrary, such awareness is a crucial part of the knowledge required to enable fruitful encounters between people. At the same time, we believe that this type of knowledge needs to be supplemented if we are to understand what an intercultural perspective may imply in practice. We believe that an overly one-sided emphasis on consciousness, attitudes, cognitive structures and emotions risks becoming too individualistic and idealistic and therefore needs to be put into dialogue with insights from sociology and social psychology. Hence, we want to shift the focus from a question of individuals' attitudes and values to include the practices through which perceptions of what is considered normal and desirable are reproduced. In the sections that follow, we explain this notion in more detail.

Situational adjustment and routines

A central aspect of human coexistence is that we often adjust our actions based on the expectations we have of the people we meet and the situations in which we are

put (Jenkins, 2002). We have learned to handle many of the situations in which we find ourselves on a daily basis so well that we no longer think about what we are doing. If we were asked to explain what we said last time we paid in the grocery store, we would probably struggle to do so in detail. Maybe we would answer that we just did what we usually do. Sociologists and social psychologists have described situational familiarity as routines and habits operating as resources in encounters with other people. Social interaction would be difficult, cumbersome and diffuse if we had to consciously consider and make decisions about what we should say and do in every situation (Goffman, 1974). We have probably all experienced situations where an embarrassing silence can occur. In such situations, it is also common for those participating in the conversation to help each other by presenting a topic that the participants can talk about without feeling insecure. Established routines and conversational repertoires on various topics thus constitute a resource in meetings between people (Goffman, 1974).

Let us take the example of a university lecture or business presentation. Such a situation usually features one person speaking in front of several others, who listen in silence. The content of the lecture can vary, and audience members may vary widely in age. The participants can be mostly women or predominantly men; perhaps some are non-binary persons. People can be born in different parts of the world and have different religious beliefs, views on life or sexual preferences. In short, there can be a great diversity among those who listen. Our experience of such situations, nonetheless, is that they are generally quite similar. The lecture can take place in Copenhagen, Tokyo or Denver and, regardless of whether the participants already know each other or it is the first time they have been in the same room, these situations usually unfold without any major conflicts or misunderstandings. We could say that the participants have a common definition of the situation in which they find themselves (Goffman, 1974). An hour or so later, these participants can leave the room; another lecturer and a new group of listeners take their seats, and the unfolding situation will be broadly similar to the previous one.

This process is what sociologists call an institutionalised situation. That is, the situation is repeated over time and in different places and by different individuals independently of each other. What we want to emphasise with this example is that it is not primarily the participants' individual beliefs, norms and values that regulate such situations (Hacking, 2004). Instead, the participants share knowledge about the expected behaviour in a specific situation. When the participants leave the lecture, they might move on to other activities and meet other people there. Perhaps one leaves to pick up his children from preschool, another goes to a boxing club to train, and another attends a tenant–owner association meeting. Not everyone who attended the lecture, however, may have the knowledge to make sense of these ensuing situations. It is likely that some of the participants from the lecture would feel both uncomfortable and different in these situations, as if they did not belong there (Goffman, 1974).

Social stratification and school

In modern societies, people participate in a variety of institutionalised situations, both at work and in their leisure time. Consequently, we believe that it is far too reductionist to regard people merely as part of a single culture, such as Swedish, European or Asian, as doing so leads to a one-sided focus on people's individual feelings and values. If we really want to comprehend people and their opportunities and actions in Swedish society, we should instead accentuate that we are all part of several different contexts. In some of these contexts, there may be overlapping norms and values and behavioural expectations. There might also, however, be major differences regarding what is considered a norm violation, depending on the situation and who is participating (Goffman, 1974; Jenkins, 2002). Different knowledge of what is expected of an individual in a specific context also creates different conditions. School is, perhaps, one of the most obvious examples. In families in which the parents have experience with and knowledge of the Swedish school system and what is expected of children as students, the approach taken at home is often in line with the expectations of the school. In contrast, in homes in which the parents do not, for various reasons, have the same approach or knowledge as the school, the children can encounter greater obstacles in getting help with their homework and tests. These parents also find it more difficult to help their children navigate the approach and culture of the school (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970/2008). However, such circumstances are often dismissed by those who have the good fortune to be born in a well-educated and supportive environment, who interpret their own circumstances as deserved. This is, as Sanders (2020) discusses, normalised by a meritocratic ideal in which access to higher education is viewed as something the individual has deserved, and failure in school is viewed as a result of the individual lacking the capacity to do his or her best. This ideal glosses over unequal life chances by interpreting success or failure as an individual responsibility.

Common to most of the contexts in which we, as individuals, are situated are already-established ways of using categorisations, values, attitudes, etc. (Jenkins, 2002). The child who starts school becomes a student and is thus covered by various laws aimed at individuals categorised as students. The child will also need to relate to the expectations about what it is considered normal to be able to do at a certain age and what is appropriate behaviour in a classroom. The child may raise doubts about these matters and resist. However, the individual child is not in a position to change what is considered a student or the school's mission (Hacking, 2004). Nor can a human being have an individual language (Goffman, 1974). A group of individuals may decide to call what we usually call a calendar a 'dog', but none of these individuals can go to a bookstore and ask what types of dogs they have for sale and expect to be shown a calendar. This example may be trivial, but it can disclose some basic conditions for human behaviour. Regardless of personal beliefs, an employee at the Migration Agency or the Employment Service, for example, is obliged to relate to the

categories, routines and measures that are part of the assignment. The risk of being accused of mismanaging the job is otherwise obvious (Hacking, 2004; Jenkins, 2002).

In recent decades, people in Sweden, as well as several other countries in Europe, have not only experienced a reduction in income but also an escalated residential segregation. A situation has thus arisen in which residents with the lowest incomes have increasingly been concentrated in specific areas. This situation obstructs residents with different living conditions and economic recourses from meeting and participating in the same situations and contexts. The social and economic position of the individual also affects the pattern of situations in which they feel at home (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970/2008). One may interpret this situation as individuals having different cultures, but we believe that these differences must be understood as principally socioeconomic in nature. Those who grow up in a residential area where the vast majority are financially secure and go to a school with high expectations of students will often have a different approach to education to that of children who grow up in underprivileged areas. Depending on the parents' financial circumstances, it is possible to talk about different childhoods. On the one hand are children who become part of collective experiences such as skiing holidays, language courses abroad, summer houses, having their own room, etc. On the other are children who grow up in areas where many families live with scarce financial resources and do not have the same opportunities to gain the experience and knowledge of children growing up in affluent areas.

In the long run, the middle-class child is conditioned through choice of education, leisure activities and social networks to attain middle-class work (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970/2008). We are not saying that everyone wants a middle-class job or considers it to be a means to achieve happiness in life. Nevertheless, it is evident that finances, housing, health and life expectancy are linked to different conditions and positions in the labour market. Given how this correlates with one's own and one's parents' level of education and income, it would be highly problematic to describe such conditions as distributed according to individuals' natural ability (Harju & Thorød, 2011). Hence, an important point of departure is that is not primarily culture which gives people the opportunity to gain the experience and knowledge required to participate in a specific context. On the contrary, we would like to underline that what makes it possible for people to participate and feel at home in different situations depends on the local conditions in which they grow up and on economic and social factors (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970/2008).

Obstacles to inclusion

Instead of thinking in terms of cultural encounters, we believe that state-financed activities should examine what it is, within such activities, which might prevent all residents from being able to benefit from them in the way they are entitled to. A central theme in this paper is that an understanding of culture should not be promoted

in terms of national and ethnic communities. However, we acknowledge that residents with a history of migration face challenges with which many residents born in Sweden never have to deal. Language is, of course, such a challenge. A medical doctor from any non-Swedish-speaking country may feel insecure as a patient at a Swedish health centre if it is difficult to take part in the communication. Challenges are also faced by migrants who have experienced social institutions such as pre-school, school and working life being organised in different ways than in Sweden (Hammarén, 2014; Lunneblad & Johansson, 2012). As mentioned above, intercultural education often emphasises that it is enriching to learn from people with different backgrounds and experiences. We share this view. However, it is not necessarily inclusive enough just to ask someone about food preferences or holiday celebrations in their country of origin.

Emphasis should primarily be laid on the rights of all residents to be able to participate in society on equal terms. For all people to be able to act equally as residents of a society, they must have knowledge of how the institutions work and must receive recognition as full participants when they come into contact with such institutions. Racism and discrimination are examples of factors that can lead to residents being deprived of the opportunity to maintain their dignity and status and have poorer conditions in society. In relation to schools, for example, laws and policy documents exist which aim to combat racism and ethnic discrimination, and everyone who works within a school must actively work for a democratic society. Nevertheless, schools, like many other social institutions, reproduce hierarchies among students based on their origins. Students risk facing racism in school, from obvious insults and violence to more subtle forms, such as exclusion or dismissive attitudes. Students who suffer from racism and discrimination in school not only risk failing there and thus having less opportunity to study further and establish themselves in the labour market and in society; they are also at risk of suffering from both physical and mental illness (Arneback & Jämte, 2017).

This risk requires that decision-makers, managers and professionals in different positions within widely differing activities in society must turn to their own organisation and critically examine the categories, routines, content and action measures that are part of their assignment. In a school, doing so means systematic and long-term work to promote equal rights and opportunities, as well as prevent behaviours such as discrimination. Moreover, an organisation which aims for participants from different backgrounds to participate in an activity may need to start thinking in new directions. The professionals in question can, for example, provide information on a website for those who are interested, but should then consider whether the information is accessible in languages other than the majority language and whether an activity will take place at a time and venue which will make it accessible to participants from different backgrounds. Additional questions may address whether activities are designed in such a way that they exclude participants who do not have previous experience of similar situations; whether there are unspoken norms and rules that allow

participants who do not have the same background as most of the other participants to participate without feeling uncomfortable and different; and how 'new ways' can be found in dialogue with the participants to define the situation so that more equal participation is possible.

A home culture pedagogy

We continue with an empirical example of how an intercultural approach can be shaped in pedagogical practice. The example is taken from the book *Den mångkulturella förskolan* [The multicultural preschool] (Lunneblad, 2018), which describes a Swedish preschool where about half the children's parents were foreign-born. The educators who worked at the preschool believed that it was important to make the cultural diversity in the children's groups visible; the question was how they should go about doing so. The analysis in the study demonstrates that, for several semesters, the educators tried to find ways to work so that the cultural diversity did indeed become visible. Interviews with the educators and observations of their work, however, showed that, despite their good intentions, it was difficult to make the plan work. When it was time to evaluate their work, the educators' self-evaluations indicated that they felt that they had failed. The reasons given were lack of time and the fact that they had not managed to include the diversity among the children in their daily work. The educators also felt that they had not received the positive response from parents that they had hoped for when they presented the objectivity of working with diversity, which left them feeling unmotivated.

However, based on the formulations stated in the curriculum for the Swedish preschool, these arguments can, of course, be questioned. It is not stated in the curriculum that if time is short, parts of the assignment can be left out or that some parts of the curriculum can be ignored if the caregivers show no interest in them. Let us put this consideration in parentheses and, instead, analyse the staff's difficulties based on their understanding of the concept of culture. We can then see that the work of making cultural diversity visible was directed at those children categorised as 'immigrant children'. To make these children visible, the staff tried to learn rhymes and songs in their mother tongue. However, it proved to be difficult for the staff to learn different rhymes and songs in languages such as Kurdish, Arabic and Persian. These difficulties resulted in a discussion that there was a risk of being unfair if the staff could not recite rhymes and songs in all the languages spoken in the children's families. There were also suggestions that the children's parents should be invited to sing and display objects from their culture at the preschool.

What these attempts have in common is that they are based on an understanding of cultural diversity as something represented by the 'immigrant children' and their families. The expressions of what came to be understood as culture were also limited to repertoires of songs, rhymes and 'cultural' objects. Transferred to 'Swedish culture', these might be songs such as 'Små grodorna' and the painted 'Dalahäst'.

Of course, songs about frogs and decoratively painted wooden horses can be considered part of Swedish culture. At the same time, we need to ask ourselves how accurate such representations are to preschool aged children in terms of a sense of identity and belonging. There was also a tendency among the staff to define beforehand what constituted an expression or representation of the families' cultural backgrounds before they actually contacted the families. What became a crucial turning point for the educators, regarding achieving their goal, was a change in their understanding of the concept of culture.

This shift in perspective meant that the educators turned to all the families in the children's group and asked the families themselves to define what were important cultural expressions for them. In the example below, Kerstin and Monica, educators at the preschool, describe this process.

Kerstin: It was like this: how are we going to include children's home culture, or something like that, the children's language and culture. We first called it the children's home language, because then we had not yet thought that we would call it home culture.

Monica: Yes, we could not figure out how to do it… But then we came up with it… After Christmas when we planned our work. That was when we got this idea.

Kerstin: Yes.

Monica: Everyone has a culture at home – a home culture.

Kerstin: Because earlier it was like, there is Ibrahim and he speaks a strange other language that no one understands and then we will let him bring things here to preschool to show how different he is. However, that is not the case. Everyone, all children, are part of a culture. Which they bring here and it should also be visible here. Existing… Culture means that there is something present.

Monica: Yeah, right… But it took a while before we figured it out.

Kerstin: Yes, as I said, then it became the same for everyone, because everyone has things they do at home.

Using the children's home cultures as a point of departure can thus be interpreted as a way of meeting the children while they live their lives *here* and *now*, that is, culture as something present. This means a change from a cultural concept that is based on *the Others* – the imagined stranger – to a concept of culture that is based on all the children's lived experiences, including those children categorised as belonging to the majority culture. Seeing culture as the home culture of *all children* can be related to a view of culture whereby it is the whole human life situation that is in focus. In this way, culture also becomes consistent with all the processes that constitute a person's identity (Mikander et al., 2018).

By defining the work with diversity as working with the home culture of all of the children, they included the entire group of children. An important argument is that everyone has a home culture: 'it will be equal for everyone'. Diversity is the common denominator, unlike the previous focus on 'culture', which only referred to the

'immigrant children'. Accordingly, when the teacher meets the group of children, they not only meet several individuals with different expectations and prerequisites but also each child's cultural background. The point is also that each child's cultural background is an important educational resource. A basic condition, however, is that the teachers teach the children to comprehend their own cultural background as a resource, and that this approach also has consequences for the activities and teaching conducted.

Discussion

We believe that the concept of intercultural education should be situated within the discussion of pedagogy as a social and norm-critical practice. We argue that it is this premise that best corresponds with the intentions of intercultural pedagogy, namely to counteract exclusion and prejudice. A norm-critical pedagogy recognises society and the education sector as an arena where not everyone is equal and never has been equal. This difference is not only related to ethnicity and origin, but also to, for example, gender, sexuality, class, lifestyle and age. This perspective problematises notions of homogeneous groups and essential understandings of culture and recognises differences *within* groups as well as similarities *between* groups (cf. Johansson, 2022).

The challenge for pedagogical practice is to be prepared to deal with both 'similarity' and 'difference' and to be able to oscillate between universal values (e.g., the importance of participation and respectful treatment) and particular values (the need for specific rules, e.g., mother tongue and second language teaching). It is therefore necessary to be sensitive and responsive to *all* people's different experiences and conditions. Every child and young person in preschool or school has a cultural background and family history as well as their own habits and way of thinking. Everyone thus has a personal history and narrative that need to be considered in pedagogical practice.

It is significant to acknowledge that not all 'homes' are happy homes, offering all children equal opportunities. Pedagogical practices based on the children's home culture should therefore not be confused with a relativistic point of view saying that all home conditions are equally good (Mikander et al., 2018; Portera, 2008). The rights of children and young people are linked to them as individuals, regardless of home culture. We believe that the starting point should be to offer equal opportunities for learning and development based on the children's individual experiences. The right to learn about religions, participate in music lessons, learn to play an instrument, participate in sports, have friends of different genders and with different sexual preferences, etc. should thus not be dependent on the home culture of the child. We are all cultural beings, situated in a context where different power structures (e.g., gender, class, ethnicity/'race') are constructed in relation to each other, giving people different positions in society and the educational system. The starting point is that culture affects us all and is changeable, contextual and intersectional.

We therefore want to argue for the importance of problematising power structures that enable an interpretation that culture is only relevant in relation to 'the Other'. Highlighting the complexity of people's identities and positions of power enables new and different ways of looking at the world to be developed. In this way, social power relations can be changed and greater equality developed.

Given that many educators have a similar background, there is a risk that the points of view they mediate to the children are permeated by a limited number of perspectives. Within the home culture pedagogy discussed here, it is therefore important that teachers are aware that they, like the children, are situated in a specific cultural context. By making one's own perceptions visible as an educator, other ways of thinking and acting can also be valued. Perhaps it is therefore also necessary to depart from the common and casual premise that *everyone should be treated equally* and, on the contrary, emphasise that *everyone should be treated differently* based on their experiences, knowledge and needs. In this way, we can create equal opportunities and conditions for all children and young people. Through knowledge of power relations, norms and stereotypes and their impact on education and society, teachers can change the situation for all children and help children understand and challenge oppressive structures. This knowledge also increases the possibility that the 'toast' presented in the introduction to this article will not be mistaken for anything but a grilled sandwich.

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