Nordisk tidsskrift for pedagogikk og kritikk
Volume 10 | No. 3 | 2024 | pp. 83–98

Peer-reviewed article

Challenging False Generosity Through Disruptive Pedagogy in Western Countries' Education Systems – The Case of Norway

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ABSTRACT
Language training programmes are an integral part of refugee integration and education policies in many Western destination countries. This article aims to explore the author's experiences in Norwegian language training programmes (LTPs) using an autoethnographic approach, addressing the research question: How can oppressive education policies and practices be challenged to empower refugees in destination countries? I employ a combination of Nordic colonialism, false generosity and disruptive pedagogy as a theoretical framework. The article challenges the benevolent self-image of Norwegian exceptionalism by unearthing the oppressive sides of Norwegian LTPs. In this article, I argue that the LTPs designed for refugees in Norway are characterised by false generosity and may further marginalise refugees by sustaining the status quo and rejecting disruptive pedagogy. In the absence of alternative, non-reductionist and disruptive LTPs that can facilitate the self-realisation of aspiring refugees through (higher) education, the problematisation of refugees for failing to integrate may be taken for granted.

Keywords: *counter-storytelling; disruptive pedagogy; Nordic coloniality; Nordic exceptionalism; refugees*

Received: August, 2023; Accepted: January, 2024; Published: March, 2024

Introduction

In March 2022, a video from inside the classroom of an adult education college (or centre) in Malmö, Sweden, went viral. The video showed a Swedish language teacher aggressively yelling at and coercing a female refugee student into saying male genitalia in Swedish. When another refugee student reacted by saying, "I am afraid" following the teacher's repeated yelling and table hitting, the teacher slammed the door shut and prevented the students from leaving the classroom (Fritze, 2022). Undoubtedly, refugees experience racism-motivated bullying in schools (Rutter, 2006) which is

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Citation: Abamosa, J. (2024). Challenging False Generosity Through Disruptive Pedagogy in Western Countries' Education Systems – The Case of Norway. Nordisk tidsskrift for pedagogikk og kritikk: Special Issue on Education and Coloniality in the Nordics, 10(3), 83–98. http://doi.org/10.23865/ntpk.v10.5887

"closely related to stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination" (McBrien, 2005, p. 350). In Nordic countries, refugees are commonly seen as colonial subjects and characterised, along with other minoritised groups, as "non-belonging, absent, criminal, and/or barbaric" (Groglopo & Suárez-Krabbe, 2023, p. 1). It is interesting that the video came to light in a context where the voices of refugee scholars who research their own lived experiences to challenge oppressive practices in ostensibly generous education systems are virtually absent from the literature (Arar, 2021).

Schools are the primary formal institutions through which many refugees encounter the nation states and begin "integration" in many destination countries (Guo et al., 2019). Moreover, as noted by Bigelow (2010), education (and language) policies "are created by school districts, among teaching staffs, and individual classrooms" (p. 123). Hence, without close-up accounts of micro-level lived experiences of refugees in language schools, it may become an uphill battle to challenge exclusionary and racist practices and inequalities resulting from such practices. This article aims to fill this gap by using autoethnography to explore my experiences related to language training programmes (henceforth LTPs) in Norway. To this end, I address the research question: How can oppressive education policies and practices be challenged to empower refugees in destination countries?

The Norwegian context: the definition of a refugee and the refugee settlement process

In Norway, a refugee is a person who is granted protection because of *either* (a genuine fear of) persecution for their ethnicity, pedigree, skin colour, religion, nationality, membership of a special social group, or political opinion *or* who is in real danger of being subject to the death penalty or inhumane treatment upon return to her home country (Parveen, 2020). Quota refugees are also included in the category of a refugees (Godøy, 2017). As of 1st January 2023, 5.1% of Norway's total population of 5.5 million had a refugee background (Statistics Norway, 2023). The main source countries over time include Vietnam, Somalia, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Russia (mainly from Chechnya), Eritrea, Myanmar (Burma), Kosovo (Bratsberg et al., 2016) and, more recently, Syria (Raanaas et al., 2019) and Ukraine (Hernes et al., 2022). Refugees are generally considered to be financial burdens on the Norwegian welfare state (Friberg & Midtbøen, 2018).

The refugee settlement process in Norway is state controlled; the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi), a central state agency, oversees the settlement process and assigns refugees to municipalities. The municipalities decide on the type and number of refugees they will help to settle (Andersen et al., 2023). While the quota refugees are settled directly in a municipality upon their arrival in Norway, those who have been granted asylum must wait at reception centres until they are assigned to municipalities if they need to receive financial assistance from the government (Adserà et al., 2022). Even though IMDi states that its goal is rapid settlement, many

refugees can wait for several months or even years to be settled in municipalities after they are granted refugee status (Weiss, 2020).

One of the hallmarks of the Norwegian refugee integration policies is a mandatory educational programme described as the "introduction programme." This full-time programme has been in effect since 2004 and includes "teaching in Norwegian language, Norwegian society and qualifications measures for work (such as internship) or education" (Adserà et al., 2022, p. 553). Refugees between the ages of 18 and 55 who have been settled in municipalities have an obligation and a right to participate in the programme (IMDi, 2021). The programme may run from three months to maximum of four years based on refugees' educational backgrounds and goals in Norway (Integration Act, 2020, Section 13). According to IMDi, the introduction programme's main goal is to prepare refugees for "participation in Norwegian working life" (IMDi, 2021, paragraph 1). Daniel et al. (2020) note that the introduction programme, though well-organised, is a top-down, little flexible arrangement which limits individual refugees' choices in some respects. Each refugee is assigned a caseworker or a contact person at the municipality in question during the introduction programme.

Literature review

Even though studies on refugee integration in destination nations have been emerging and gaining attention over the last decades (e.g., Djuve & Kavli, 2019), there is a lacuna in the literature regarding the experiences of refugees from inside the language classrooms. This gap is even significant if we consider research undertaken by refugee scholars about their experiences in education in general (Arar, 2021). In a postcolonial political and educational landscape, which often portrays refugees as "poor, uneducated, or dependent on social welfare" (Bigelow, 2010, p. 120), this gap, although it is not surprising, needs to be bridged. Moreover, the involvement of people with a forced displacement background in knowledge production may contribute to breaking "strong continuity between the colonial past and the (postcolonial) present" of scholarship on immigrant integration (Schinkel, 2017, p. 71).

Mastery of a destination country's language is often associated with several positive outcomes such as better employment opportunities and socialising (Tøge et al., 2022), better mental health services (Schouler-Ocak et al., 2020), easier communication with the local community and the development of "a voice that can be heard in the public domain" (Simpson & Whiteside, 2015, p. 4), and higher chances of academic success and overall "national integration" (Gren, 2020, p. 167). Indeed, acquiring the destination country's language is considered as a key to the integration of refugees in a multitude of situations (Tøge et al., 2022). From a political perspective, a language can be used as an immigration control tool. For example, Martin-Jones (2015) reflects that in the Netherlands and the UK, language is "employed as a means of restricting inmigration [sic]" (p. 260). Furthermore, forms of language

provision and assessment methods can be manipulated to serve the dominant political ideology in destination countries (Martin-Jones, 2015).

Refugees may also be forced, albeit in more subtle, systematic, and systemic ways, to attend LTPs designed for low-paid jobs rather than LTPs aimed at qualifications which have long-term benefits for refugees (e.g., see Gren, 2020, p. 168). Most refugees remain in the cycle of poorly paid jobs with long working hours and less opportunities to enhance their language skills, literacy, and career development (Duran, 2017). Refugees who, against all odds, gain proficiency in the host country's language may be "perceived as threats to their employers" (Koyama, 2015, p. 618). Within a wider political context, politicians may not be interested in financing better and sufficient LTPs for refugees because they may want refugees to fill the positions not wanted by others. A study from Australia (Lenette et al., 2019) found that the Australian Government "deliberately" puts in place policy instruments to close pathways to higher education for refugees by denying them opportunities to attain proficiency in English (p. 88). In another context, Gren (2020) underscores that refugees in Sweden – particularly those without advanced degrees – are not "seen as equals who have their own hopes and dreams of a good life" and hence are destined for blue-collar jobs (p. 168).

It has also been documented that language classrooms are used as arenas for othering refugees and training them to be submissive. Heinemann (2017) indicates that refugees in adult education centres in Germany and Austria feel coerced to assimilate, and the courses taught in the centres are designed to cultivate the Others – in this case refugees – who should "follow the rules and norms of the society that gave them refuge" (p. 191). However, some refugees resist malpractices and try to find alternative ways of realising their potential (Gren, 2020; McBrien, 2005). In fact, some LTPs encourage refugees to resist racism and discrimination by including various strategies for doing so in lesson plans (Doyle, 2015). However, as mentioned above, little is known about how oppressive education systems can be resisted; and this article deals with this issue in a Norwegian context, which is often portrayed as "benevolent and non-racist" (Eriksen & Stein, 2022, p. 224).

Theoretical framework

The article employs a combination – bricolage (Kincheloe et al., 2011) – of concepts as analytical framework, with *Nordic colonialism, false generosity* and *disruptive pedagogy* as key concepts. Nordic colonialism is a relevant lens to better understand the arrangements of LTPs for refugees, a group of people that are commonly constructed as colonial subjects in Nordic countries (Groglopo & Suárez-Krabbe, 2023). Moreover, Nordic colonialism "still influences policies and practices related to migration, gender, and ethnicity" (Höglund & Burnet, 2019, p. 7). Nordic colonialism concerns the history and legacy of Nordic countries' direct participation and/or complicity in colonial enterprises – both overseas and internally – for their

own commercial and political benefit and its impact on today's policies and practices (Höglund & Burnett, 2019). Integration of refugees – which is state controlled and part of welfare state policy – is one of the multitude of areas where such colonial ideas and practices manifest in Nordic countries (Mulinari et al., 2009). Groglopo and Suárez-Krabbe (2023) note that Nordic societies and various systems embedded therein are part of the coloniality of power in the sense that colonial subjects must go through predefined, Eurocentric-controlled policies and processes so that they "are shaped to fit the roles expected of their spaces, [and] to become integrated" (p. 10). This postulation effectively challenges the otherwise popular and benevolent notion of Nordic exceptionalism.

The Nordic exceptionalism model, a post World War II phenomenon, can be explained in many ways. Browning (2007) outlines three defining elements of Nordic exceptionalism: regional peace and prosperity, international solidarity for freedom and development, and egalitarian social democracy. More broadly, it propagates the self-perception ideas that Nordic countries are "global 'good citizens', peace-loving, conflict-resolution oriented" and the systems, including punitive ones, as more humane (Loftsdóttir & Jensen, 2016, p. 3). Even in comparison to other Western countries, Nordic countries claim to be free from the widespread prejudice and racism non-whites face in other countries (Palmberg, 2009, p. 35).

One critique directed towards the notion of Nordic exceptionalism is not on what it mentions as such, but rather on what it silences or ignores. Nordic exceptionalism disregards the colonial role Nordic countries play and the discrimination and racism minoritised groups such as Samis and non-Western immigrants face in those countries (Browning, 2007; Loftsdóttir & Jensen, 2016). Thus, in Norway, for example, "when minority people [sic] complain of local racism, the innocent self-image and the associated collective memory are at stake" (Gullestad, 2004, p. 182). This may well pave the way for ignoring and silencing the legitimate requests of refugees for better LPTs because the very request for improvement of the programmes is the antithesis of the exceptional self-image Norway and the other Nordic countries portray to the world. Therefore, Nordic exceptionalism not only legitimises the status quo, but it also silences the colonial subject. Hence, Nordic exceptionalism is inextricably linked to colonial ignorance, which refers to the structural conditions that silence the consequences of colonialism in order to maintain more acceptable and pleasant narratives (Danbolt & Pushaw, 2023).

One of the areas that needs close attention within this context is the ostensibly generous LTPs for refugees. How far the "free" provision of the language courses supports refugees' self-actualisation is not a straightforward issue. It is here that "false generosity" comes into the picture. Freire (1970/2000) describes false generosity as a mechanism used by the oppressors (or the powerful) "to preserve an unjust" order which enables them to continue their exploitation of the powerless (p. 146). In the same vein, Renkert (2022) states that false generosity is practiced to "maintain the oppressed in a situation of dependency" (p. 2). In the context of LTPs aimed at

refugees, this can be understood as the provision of free LTPs to refugees (the generous side), but at the same time ensuring that refugees do not get sufficient and relevant language training to prevent them from attaining high linguistic proficiency (e.g., Koyama, 2015; Lenette et al., 2019) (the false side). According to Paulo Freire (1970/2000), such practices constitute "violence."

> Any situation in which "A" objectively exploits "B" or hinders his and her pursuit of self-affirmation as a responsible person is one of oppression. Such a situation in itself constitutes violence, even when sweetened by false generosity, because it interferes with the individual's ontological and historical vocation to be more fully human. (p. 55)

It may not always be easy for refugees to challenge and overcome such oppressive practices due to certain underlying structures in destination countries. However, it is never impossible. Disruptive pedagogy is one approach to challenging oppressive educational systems through centring student agency. Disruptive pedagogy may be understood here, in line with Mills' (1997) definition, as "teaching practices which disrupt marginalising processes by encouraging students to identify and to challenge the assumptions inherent in, and the effects created by, discourses constructing categories of dominance and subservice within contemporary society" (p. 39). The key term "disruptive" is about challenging (and hence disrupting) the status quo and policies and practices of LTPs which are characterised by asymmetric power relations where refugees are framed as inferiors and people without any agency (Gren, 2020; Weis & Fine, 2001, p. 520). At micro level in classrooms, disruptive practices can come in the form of rearranged traditional teacher-student hierarchical relationships, redefinition of what constitutes knowledge, intensified collaboration, recognition of various ways of (co)constructing knowledge within racism and discrimination-free classrooms (Helmer, 2014; Riese et al., 2023).

Methodology

I adopted an autoethnography approach within a framework of counter-storytelling to unearth a highly educated refugee's experiences from inside the classroom of a Norwegian LTP. Counter-storytelling may be understood as "a method of telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told (i.e., those on the margins of society)" to expose oppressive systems and strengthen traditions of resistance to the systems (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 32). Autoethnography is one such method (Camangian et al., 2023). Reed-Danahay (1997) defines autoethnography as "a form of narrative that places the self within a social context" (p. 9). As a qualitative research method, autoethnography fits best for exploring researchers' sociocultural phenomena based on their personal experiences (Chang, 2008). Some of the ethical concerns and disadvantages of autoethnography are the vulnerability of the researchers and the "potentially self-injurious" acts researchers may do (Allen-Collinson,

2016, p. 218). I do acknowledge here that I may be subject to more discrimination or exclusion from opportunities in Norway. At the same time, I hope this article may lead to better policies and practices for LTPs for other refugees.

The data I used in this article are based on my experiences as a refugee in Norway. I present my experiences within the wider socio-cultural context of refugee integration in Norway. I attended two adult education centres and a university to learn the language. Nevertheless, in this article, I limit my experiences to adult education centres. This is not because my experiences at the university were problem free. Rather, almost all refugees attend adult education centres in Norway. Hence, it is more relevant to focus on the adult education centres than on the university. The experiences that I use in this article should be seen within a context of a self-conscious (Malott, 2010), goal-oriented, and hard-working refugee from a non-Western country who participated in language courses run by white teachers.

I documented most of my experiences – good and bad – in the form of email archives and personal diaries (Emerson et al., 2011). Moreover, I mined memories related to the experiences. In using memory as a data source, I began "with the activity of remembering, a working through and toward the past, making what has been absent come into presence" (Bochner & Ellis, 2016, p. 252). One of the critical aspects of memories and narratives is that they may not capture the full lived life because memories are often incomplete, and narratives can be selective versions of lived experiences (Lønning & Kohli, 2021). I tried my best to narrate the stories the way I documented and remembered them. Even so, some key moments might have been overlooked unintentionally. I narrated my stories in semi-chronological order and used thematic analysis to report the experiences in patterns (themes) (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To write up the "findings," I employed what Chang (2008) refers to as "analytical-interpretive writing" (p. 146). In this type of writing, the discussion is interwoven into the narrative or stories. Researchers combine storytelling and the interpretation of the stories within wider sociopolitical contexts to give contextual meaning to the stories (Chang, 2008).

Positionality:[1] mapping the researcher's position

I am writing this article from the perspective of a scholar or academic with a refugee background from an African country. Currently, I hold a tenured faculty position in a higher education institution in Norway. Before I came to Norway, I had earned a master's degree and worked as a university lecturer in my home country. After I had been granted a refugee status in Norway, I set myself short- and long-term goals: to achieve proficiency in Norwegian at B2 level and further my academic career respectively. After earning a master's degree, I worked temporarily as a programme

[1] This article may contain some data (personal experiences) that I have used in my PhD dissertation and other works.

adviser for newly arrived refugees participating in the introduction programme at a Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV) office where I found that it was not permissible to advise refugees on issues related to higher education. I raised this issue to concerned people in the organisation and challenged it, but in vain. Eventually, I had to leave NAV and went on to do a PhD.

Findings and discussion

Pre-language waiting and the wise utilisation of my time

After I was sent to an ordinary asylum reception centre, I realised that Norwegian language was key, not only to get admission to higher education institutions but also to communicate with locals. This early awareness about the role of Norwegian helped me to use every opportunity I got to learn the language. Even though asylum seekers could attend up to 250 hours of Norwegian tuition at that time, I was never offered a place. A few days after I had been granted refugee status (in the month of February – the same month I began to wait for settlement in a municipality), I applied to an adult education centre for a Norwegian LTP. An admission officer interviewed me (we did the interview in English) and told me to wait for a response. Finally, I gained admission to the adult education centre in June (after nearly four months of waiting), and I attended a beginner-level course for three weeks, after which the centre was closed for the summer vacation. The experience of waiting for decision on which I had no influence whatsoever was not positive. Notably, time in such contexts is not neutral. The authorities with decision making power can use time as a secret weapon to "infantilizing" asylum seekers and refugees to "a life of waiting and sleeping" (Stan, 2018, p. 796). However, refugees can take back a certain degree of control over time through various activities to overcome disempowerment and dehumanisation project envisioned by state actors for political gains (Webster & Abunaama, 2022). In my case, while waiting for the decision on admission to language courses, I applied for and received a library card from a local public library to borrow Norwegian language books. I used to read books written in "simple" Norwegian. In addition to this, I used to listen to Norwegian TV programmes and read some newspapers such as Klar Tale and Utrop online. I found these activities to be helpful in activating me and putting me on the right track. Refugees can also be hardworking and resourceful people (Choi & Najar, 2017), in contrast to how anti-immigrant political parties and medias try to portray them (Stevenson & Baker, 2018).

Denial of my rights and resistance to oppression

I had a fruitful summer vacation which I used for intensive self-study of the Norwegian language. After the vacation (in August), I began the "formal" Norwegian LTP at A1 level. The first two months went smoothly, and I easily passed the A1-level test administered at the adult education centre. I was glad that I finally had a real opportunity

to learn the language. However, this happiness would soon turn into an unpleasant experience. A few days after the results of the A1-level test had been announced, the teacher *asked* and *warned* the class (there were about 21 course participants) if anyone was ready to register for the A2-level test to be given under the auspices of *Folkeuniversitetet*. The teacher warned us not to waste our time preparing for the test because we could not pass it, as it was not as simple as the A1-level test. This is one of the most common challenges refugees encounter in host countries. Some language teachers treat refugees as inferiors and see them as incapable people without their own agency (Gren, 2020). These types of attitudes cannot be decoupled from the wider contemporary discriminatory power structures shaped by the history of colonialism (Astolfo & Allsopp, 2023).

I raised my hand and confirmed to the teacher that I was ready to take the test because I could pass. One of the reasons for my confidence was the self-study I did while waiting for admission and during the summer. However, the teacher did not take my response kindly. The teacher's warning and my resistance to the intimidation went back and forth for a couple of days. Finally, I told the teacher that it was my final decision and I would rather register before the deadline. I was the only person of the roughly 21 participants who registered for the A2-level test. Many of the course participants dropped their plan. At least three points can be drawn from this story. First, the teacher's approach to deny me to realise my goal of taking the test can be seen as symbolic "violence" (Freire, 1970/2000). Second, it indicates the importance of considering refugees as individuals rather than as homogenous groups or even global groups (Yilmaz & Smyser, 2021, p. 37). Finally, the teacher's decision to hinder me from taking the test was informed by conscious and calculated motives rather than "unconscious bias," a reason more than often used by racists to elude responsibility. Evidence for this was my repeated reminder to the teacher and the teacher's indifference to my pleas.

Unfortunately, the teacher became hostile towards me after I registered for the test. She would not give me any relevant assistance that would help me to pass the test. For example, she repeatedly ignored me during class activities such as "reading aloud" and vocabulary exercises and turned down my questions. I remarked for a couple of days that I had not been given an opportunity even though it was my turn. However, the teacher would say, "I forgot, now you can read two lines." Even when I took the initiative and tried to participate in the classroom, she would brush off my efforts with demotivating words[2] such as "yeah, everyone knows this," "that is too old," "that is irrelevant" and so on. Over time, I realised that the teacher did not want me to pass the test. From this, it is possible to understand a couple of points. First, the context in which refugees learn language is not neutral: it is characterised rather by the social positions of refugees and teachers as well as unequal power relations, which manifest through various forms (Court, 2017). For example, the language

[2] These words are estimated translations of the words the teacher used in Norwegian.

teachers can discriminate against refugees in the classroom by controlling key activities such as the "right to allocate turns, choosing who will speak and even deciding the length of time it will take" (Moutinho, 2014, p. 119). I also experienced the teacher as what I call a "mini dictator" who wanted to misuse her power to realise a self-fulfilling prophecy. In this case, she wanted to make sure that I could not pass the test in order to prove that the test was in fact difficult.

Second, the teacher might want to force me out of the classroom systematically by applying a principle of "keep alive, but in a state of injury," a common (neo)colonial practice (Lindberg, 2020, p. 88). This runs contrary to the nation-branding narratives of the Nordic countries as fertile grounds for tolerance, equality and justice both for individuals and groups (Groglopo & Suárez-Krabbe, 2023). A study from Germany (Heinemann, 2017), a non-Nordic context, indicates that teachers delivering state-sponsored language courses to refugees are "authoritative voices" and reflect the dominant ideology through various mechanisms such as verbal abuse and racist practices. Adult education centres, by harbouring such practices, become "undemocratic institutions that foster nationalism celebrating an imagined, but non-existing, monolingual nation state" (p. 192). This indicates that the Nordic countries, including Norway, are perhaps not exceptional when it comes to racism against non-white residents (Palmberg, 2009).

Anti-disruptive pedagogy and resistance to the status quo

I left the asylum reception centre and the adult education centre in May to resettle in a municipality where I was enrolled in an adult education centre to start the introduction programme for refugees after the summer vacation. Even though not as effective as the previous summer, I tried my best to use my time for self-study. The flashback from the harrowing experiences at the previous adult education centre were fresh. Hence, I had to take some rest. I began the Norwegian LTP in August and my main goal was to achieve B2-level within the shortest possible time. I was placed in a class where some participants had neither completed upper secondary school nor planned to pursue higher education. This may be understood as a cost reduction strategy employed by the adult education centre. The centre might want to cut costs by providing standardised, rather than tailored, LTPs to as many participants as possible, irrespective of their educational background, by using one classroom, the same teacher(s) and other common resources. Whatever the reason, this has deprived me of equal opportunity with my non-migrant Norwegian peers who have access to "quality language courses." Groglopo and Suárez-Krabbe (2023) note that non-Western migrants (and refugees) in the Nordic region are "targeted by policies that put on them different controls to the rest of their Nordic counterparts" (p. 10).

From the perspective of aspiring refugees, the practice of the adult education centre may constitute the process of deskilling, that is, an oppressive mechanism for misrecognising the previous qualifications of refugees (Carlbaum, 2021). It is the

devaluation of refugees' education resources and intellectual capacities to finally misrecognise them as equal human beings with ambition (Pihl et al., 2018). With the passage of time and in the absence of resistance, highly educated refugees may internalise an assumption of sameness, that is, they believe they deserve the same LTP as others who have not completed upper secondary school (see Valdez & Park, 2021). This practice diverges from the benevolent self-image Norway has as an "idealistic and overtly generous" country in educating so-called Global South citizens (Vicéntić, 2023, p. 94).

My placement in the class did not seem problematic to me at first, but as time went by, I found the teaching repetitive and the progress too slow. The book we used as the main textbook was also not particularly challenging. Based on these experiences, I raised my concerns with the teacher and informed her of my main immediate goal to pursue higher education after taking the Norwegian language test at the B2 level as soon as possible. Furthermore, I recommended alternative textbooks along with their respective workbooks that I found quite relevant for my level. As an aspiring refugee, I tried to participate in decisions (activities) that would influence my life to facilitate the process of my self-realisation, and I challenged "social structures that foster injustices and inequities in educational settings" (Jenlink, 2014, p. 344). The teacher's response was rather disappointing; I was told that it would be better for me to work as a cleaner in Norway so that I could make money rather than waste my time in pursuit of higher education. I took this "advice" as a clear signal that the LTP I was enrolled in was not for me and rejected it outright.

The adult education centre's unwillingness to accommodate disruptive pedagogy (Mills, 1997) – in the form of changing the progress of the language teaching process and using more challenging books – is an indication of maintaining the status quo, which in turn reinforces false generosity (Freire, 1970/2000). The false generosity in this case is the provision of "free Norwegian courses" to refugees with the predetermined objective of "qualifying" refugees for positions not wanted by others. Hence, the adult education centre as one of the state apparatuses used in the integration of refugees denies aspiring refugees the opportunity of self-realisation. This can be seen within the wider Norwegian integration policy which encourages municipalities – where adult education centres are located – to use refugees to do jobs "which are not done by others," that is, the non-refugee population (Abamosa et al., 2020). This is the epitome of Nordic colonialism which divides the labour force along racial lines to shape the colonial subjects to "fit the roles expected of their space" so that they become integrated (Groglopo & Suárez-Krabbe, 2023, p. 10).

In the end, I challenged "pedagogy which begins with the egoistic interests of the oppressors (an egoism cloaked in the false generosity of paternalism)" (Freire, 1970/2000, p. 54) by suggesting disruptive pedagogy. And in the process, I confirmed the true mission of "free Norwegian courses" at the adult education centres I went to. To liberate myself from the oppression, I had to be creative. Hence, I actively searched online for alternative LTPs. Finally, I found and enrolled in a fee-based

LTP at a university. This is a clear indication of the huge efforts refugees put into the integration process (Bonet, 2021). By extension, this indicates that problematising refugees and their children for failing to integrate – rather than pointing out the structural challenges they face in the integration systems in destination countries – is perhaps a misplaced accusation (Schinkel, 2018).

Conclusion

In this article, I addressed the research question: How can oppressive education policies and practices be challenged to empower refugees in destination countries? The reality of refugees' participation in Norwegian LTPs is somewhat full of challenges that require close attention. Accessing a free LTP does not necessarily lead to refugees' self-realisation. Indeed, LTPs may be used as effective tools to further marginalise refugees by indoctrinating them with "what is best for them," which are often low-paid positions. This is in line with Freire's false-generosity notion, which is embedded in colonial oppression systems. To overcome these oppressive policies and practices, my suggestion is that it is important to create awareness among language teachers about the importance of (at least for refugees) disruptive pedagogy in today's dynamic world. Refugees must also be given the opportunity to have their voices heard in key matters including textbook selection. Introducing and *implementing* restrictive measures aimed at racist teachers should also be part of the solution. Refugees must also get clear information on their right to challenge and report damaging pedagogical practices as early as possible. I also argue, based on the above analysis, that there must also be alternative, non-reductionist, disruptive LTPs aimed at empowering refugees to realise their potential, preferably at higher education institutions.

This research has several implications. First, it challenges the benignity of the current Norwegian LTPs and thereby invites debates and further research on the (in)compatibility of the LTPs with Nordic exceptionalism. Second, it highlights the importance of creating new LTPs with a focus on every refugee's goals rather than reducing refugees to a homogenous group which should be trained to fill unwanted vacancies. Finally, it indicates the importance of scrutinising the integration systems which might marginalise refugees rather than blaming refugees for any failed integration.

Author biography

Juhar Abamosa (PhD) is an associate professor in the Department of Pedagogy, Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences in Norway. His research interests include exploring the role of various institutions and policies in hindering or facilitating the social inclusion of refugees in higher education in Western destination countries, social inequalities created and sustained or reproduced by unjust social

systems and unequal power relationships, equity in educational opportunities to disadvantaged groups such as refugees, hidden – albeit intentional – prejudices that result in the exclusion of refugees from boundaries of opportunities in Western destination countries, the deskilling of non-Western refugees, epistemic injustice, and institutional racism.

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