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# Educating Norwegian preservice teachers for the multicultural classroom – what knowledge do student teachers and mentor teachers express?

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## ABSTRACT

This study is a contribution to the global discussion on how to prepare preservice teachers for diversity. Analyses are based on responses from national samples of pre-service teachers in their 4<sup>th</sup> year of teacher education (N = 654), and of collaborating mentor teachers responsible for the supervision of preservice teachers during field practice (N = 340).

Each group responded to two questionnaire surveys sent out digitally which covered questions about their perceived competence and possibilities to learn about teaching in linguistically diverse classrooms.

Results indicate variation in possibilities to learn, as well as perceptions of competence needed among both groups. Based on our results, we propose questions essential for development in teacher education programme:

What do teachers need to learn about educational laws concerned with student's rights?

How can programs ensure that preservice teachers get experience from linguistically diverse classrooms?

How can teacher education programs ensure that preservice teachers develop critical reflection?

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Preservice teacher education; multicultural education; field practice

## 1. Introduction

Globalisation processes have wide-reaching consequences for individuals, groups, and most societal systems and institutions such as for instance legislation and education. Globalisation influences teacher education in three main areas (Paine, Aydarova, and Syahril 2017): (1) the implications of immigration and migration on the work of and challenges for teacher education, (2) globally circulating ideas about teaching and teacher education, and (3) the rise of tighter connections through new networks and new actors engaged in shaping teacher education globally.

The topic we will contribute to is concerned with the first issue mentioned by Paine et. al (above). Teachers in many countries report that they are not sufficiently prepared for

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multicultural and multilingual classrooms (Horst and Holeman 2007; Bravo-Moreno 2009; Kalckin-Fishman, Pitkanen and Verma 2002; Villegas et al. 2018; Tandon et al. 2017). As Paine et. al point out (2017) it is interesting that studies from countries with a long history of migration such as Israel and Canada, also report that teachers feel unprepared. This can indicate that teacher education programmes, have not incorporated recommendations from researchers in the area, or that teachers may have unrealistic expectations of the kinds of competencies that can be developed during teacher education. Regardless of why it might be so, the fact that so many teachers feel unprepared is a vital issue for teacher education and for the lifelong learning of teachers.

Feelings of being unprepared and wanting more knowledge and skills, are fairly common. What we question in this study is what kinds of knowledge and challenges student teachers and teacher educators in Norway experience related to teachers' work in linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms. This is especially important to gain insight into both (1) to strengthen Initial teacher education (ITE) if results indicate that goals are not met, and (2) to have some idea about areas of knowledge where newly qualified teachers might need special follow-up. Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in Norway has learning outcomes for student teachers (will be more detailed described later) related to cultural diversity and pupils learning Norwegian as a second language. There is, however, still not much research on how this topic is dealt with in teacher education, and what knowledge students and mentor teachers have.

The data we have analysed is based on a survey conducted among a national sample of preservice teachers and teacher educators (mentor teachers) in partner schools in Norway who answered questions about their perceived competences for multicultural education and what opportunities have been provided for preservice teachers to develop such competencies. This study is novel in the sense that, unlike much of the previous research in this field, it addresses questions of competence at a national level using survey data.

## **2. Research background and theoretical approach**

### ***2.1 Preparing teachers for multicultural education***

A report on Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications (European Commission DG Education and Culture 2005) has classified three broad areas of competence that are important for teachers to develop: working with others; working with knowledge, technology and information, and working in and with society. Competencies within the third area include the capacity to promote the development of students as European citizens with global responsibilities, encouraging dispositions and attitudes to cooperation and mobility, as well as intercultural dialogue and respect. Diversity is perceived as an asset for educators and for society in general (OECD 2010), and policy documents as well as research highlight the need to strengthen this understanding of diversity and teachers' capacity and attitudes to work with and promote diversity.

This perspective is central to theories of culturally responsive pedagogy and multicultural education. Culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay 2002; Taylor and Sobel 2011) is concerned with building learning on experiences all children bring to school. Multicultural education is defined by Banks (1993, 6) as 'a total school reform effort designed to increase educational equity for a range of cultural, ethnic and economic groups'. Most

ITE programs will probably have included some multicultural aspects, but according to Cochran-Smith et al. (2015, 118) only a few programs fundamentally challenge the current arrangement of social, economic and institutional power. The importance of critical dimensions in Teacher Education is therefore seen as important by many researchers worldwide (Vavrus 2017; May and Sleeter 2010; Howard and Aleman 2008 – among others). Problems or issues need to be discussed critically, not only on an individual level, but on a society level. Teachers also need to be able to see problems in relation to different power relations played out in society and education:

A structural analysis via critical multiculturalism frames culture in the context of how unequal power relations, lived out in daily interactions, contribute to its production, rather than framing it primarily as an artifact of the past. Culture and identity are understood here as multilayered, fluid, complex and encompassing multiple social categories, and at the same time as being continually reconstructed through participations in social situations (May and Sleeter 2010, 10).

The argument rooted in critical multiculturalism is that only a positive view on multicultural issues is not enough, one must always be aware of the power perspective and what may be potential discriminating discourses, both at system (or institutional level), and in our personal discourse. Howard and Aleman (2008) have summarised three points that they argue are essential for teaching in today's diverse classrooms: 'Subject matter and pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of effective practice about teaching in diverse settings and development of a critical consciousness'.

For preservice teachers, field placement is an important arena to develop practices and to study relationships between belief and practices. Akiba (2011) sees ITE as an arena to model multicultural education and also argues that field practice in diverse settings is important to develop knowledge for teaching. Even short field practice experiences and interventions can have an effect on students' knowledge for teaching (Bravo et al. 2014), and students conceptual understandings develop along with practical experience, for instance in a study by Mushi (2004) who found that pre-service teachers' definitions of multicultural and multicultural education became more descriptive and inclusive at the end of the final semester. A study from England about newly educated teachers found that they increased their knowledge about multicultural education when collaborating with colleagues – in some cases – building on awareness gained from their ITE (Cajkler and Hall 2012).

Miller and Mikulec (2014) designed a radical field experience for preservice teachers, which placed pre-service teachers in a school that both had an alternative pedagogy approach, and a very diverse pupil population. Based on data gathered, they identified four specific areas perceived as important for the preservice teachers' learning: relating to diverse students, demystifying diversity, finding value in a safe place for marginalised youth, and school structure. For many of the preservice teachers, this meeting with diverse students was a new experience and they valued the personal meetings and relations. Due to these meetings, they also experienced the more complex identities of the pupils as not only 'diverse', but also as pupils similar to others they had encountered in other field practice periods. The school was situated in a rather tough neighbourhood and they saw from their field experience how important school could be for many pupils. Miller and Mikulec (2014) encourage teacher educators to have field practice experiences

in diverse areas to challenge preservice teachers to refine their definition of diversity and teaching (Miller and Mikulec 2014, 23).

However, field practice has also been critiqued for solidifying preservice teachers' prejudice when prejudices are left unchallenged (Chang, Anagnostopoulos, and Omae 2011). This was also pointed out in 1998 by Zeichner et al. (1998) who found that when it comes to field practice, if the programme does not provide carefully planned experiences that explore socio-cultural diversity in schools and communities they can come to strengthen and reinforce stereotypes about 'the others' (Zeichner et al. 1998, 168).

Based on the above, there are certain knowledge and competence areas that stand out. Areas that are mentioned both in research and policy comprise the development of a professional stance which acknowledges and promotes diversity, models of teaching, subject matter knowledge of second language acquisition and pupil's rights. A critical stance in ITE can involve both being self-reflective and being able to analyse and critique systems with an intention to act for change or for social justice. An area that we find is lacking in the above research, is knowledge of actual laws and regulations that guide resources and teaching in schools. Teaching is regulated by laws and legislation is being developed to address global migration at different levels. This should be highly relevant for teachers, but we were unable to identify research on preservice teachers' knowledge in this area.

In teacher education, there are two groups of teacher educators: educators who mainly work on campus, and educators who work in schools and serve as mentors and supervisors for pre-service teachers during their field practice. In Norway, field practice is usually organised in intervals, i.e. students are in schools for three or six weeks without returning to campus until the whole period is completed. The mentor teachers play a vital role in developing pre-service teachers' practices. It is therefore of importance to know more about how mentor teachers perceive the possibilities for pre-service teachers to try out teaching in multilingual/multicultural classrooms during their field practice periods and what kinds of knowledge/competence are possible to develop.

## ***2.2. A short overview over Norwegian ITE with focus on goals for learning to teach for diversity***

Initial Teacher Education in Norway (ITE) for the compulsory school years (grades one through ten) is provided through two 4-year concurrent and integrated programmes (from 2017 they are both 5-year MA programmes) where one qualifies for grades 1–7 and the other qualifies for grades 5–10 (Munthe, Malmo and Rogne 2011). All preservice teachers must have minimum 60 ECTS Pedagogy. Students who chose ITE 1–7 must have both Maths and Norwegian as compulsory subjects (minimum 30 ECTS in each), but students who choose ITE 5–10 can choose freely among all school subjects. Most ITE 5–10 students have a choice of studying either Maths or Norwegian. Norwegian as a second language is usually taught within the subject area Norwegian, so the national policy for teacher education may lead to fewer 5–10 teachers having knowledge about language learning.

The Teacher Education Regulations (Ministry of Education 2010a §2.) stipulate that all preservice teachers must be prepared to teach in a diverse society, The multicultural

perspective is highlighted as one of nine perspectives that should characterise teacher education for the future (Ministry of Education 2010b, 8–9).

Pedagogy is described as a principal professional subject (Ministry of Education 2010b, 16). Furthermore, the core of the subject is described as: ‘how upbringing and education can contribute to all students’ academic, social, and personal learning and development’ (Ministry of Education and Research 2010 b, 16). The guidelines specify content for each year, and year 2 is especially interesting for our research since diversity is the main focus both for the subject of pedagogy and for field practice. However, the learning outcomes specified in the National guidelines are not very specific and leave lots of room for individual programmes to operationalise these as they see fit. For instance, one learning outcome for year 2 related to our topic is: “The preservice teacher has knowledge about students with multicultural and multilingual backgrounds “(Ministry of Education 2010b, 18). The guidelines do not specify what kinds of knowledge are needed, but there is a further explication in the next learning outcome (specific to ITE 1–7), which states that they should have knowledge about children’s language and conceptual development as a basis for developing basic skills. For ITE 5–10, knowledge about youth cultures is also a learning outcome, but this is not operationalised in any way and leaves lots of leeway for various interpretations of what kinds of knowledge or skills this would include. Another learning outcome for all ITE students is that they should be able to plan, conduct and assess teaching in multicultural learning environments. But what does this mean? And how is this assessed? With such general outcomes, it is possible that diversity and multicultural perspectives become what Lindboe and Skrefsrud (2015, 19, our translation) have described as more of a ‘perspective and an orientation . . . something overriding, but at the same time a little vague, something that newly qualified educators have at distance and can deal with’.

When it comes to the subject Norwegian Language, the multilingual perspective is emphasised (Ministry of Education 2010b, 29):

In a multilingual learning environment, good language – and broad knowledge of culture are important. (...) Norway is a multicultural society in change, and what is ‘Norwegian’ must continuously be defined in line with this development. Through language learning, Norwegian as a school subject plays an important role in the integration process of minority pupils, but the subject should also develop an understanding of culture that takes the multicultural reality seriously . . . ”

Norwegian Language is described through a multicultural lens, indicating a more dynamic view of the concept of culture, more in line with for instance Critical Multiculturalism (see e.g. May and Sleeter 2010). How it is understood and worked with in practice we know little about.

For this subject, it is also specifically mentioned that students should be able to ‘organize and carry out adapted reading and writing education – both for pupils with Norwegian as a first and as a second language’ (Ministry of Education 2010b, 29). Valuable knowledge for teaching multilingual students is thus provided within the subject Norwegian which is not mandatory for preservice teachers in ITE 5–10. Learning outcomes are also more precise or specific than for the subject Pedagogy.

Preservice teachers are also expected to have knowledge about the legal base and students’ different rights (Ministry of Education 2010a, §1). The legal rights for multilingual

children in the school system are stipulated in the Education Act §2.8. Pupils have a right to receive adapted Norwegian instruction up to a level where they can follow their class, they have a right to instruction in their first language and support in first language when learning other school subjects. A national curriculum plan has been developed specifically for children who are learning Norwegian (Basic Norwegian level), but it is not mandatory for the school districts to follow this curriculum. Studies indicate that there may be a lack of knowledge about this plan and its implementation (Rambøll, 2009). Preservice teachers are expected to have knowledge of the curriculum plan for Norwegian as a school subject, but the curriculum in basic Norwegian is not mentioned.

### **3.1 Research questions**

For this study, we have posed the following overarching question:

How is multiculturalism/multilingualism addressed in Norwegian 4-year concurrent programmes for grades 1–7 and 5–10?

This question is further operationalised into the following subset of questions:

- (1) How do preservice teachers perceive their own knowledge about multicultural education, and being prepared to teach in multilingual classes?
  - (a) Are there differences between students in ITE 1–7 and students in ITE 5–10?
- (2) How do mentor teachers in partner schools perceive their work in providing opportunities for learning to work in multicultural and multilingual classrooms?

### **3.2 Methods**

Two questionnaire surveys were sent out digitally to preservice teachers in 4-year concurrent Initial Teacher Education (ITE) (response time frame: 23 April – 6 June 2014), and to participating partner schools and mentor teachers responsible for supervising preservice teachers during their field practice (response time frame: 12 August – 4 November 2014). The total national number of fourth year students and partner schools made up the population, and participation was based on self-selection.

Pre-service teachers who participated were all fourth-year students, completing their final year, or who had opted for a five-year MA and were taking the fourth year as a first year of a 2-year MA programme. The total population of possible respondents was 1436 (The Panel for the teacher education reform, 2015), and the number of respondents was 654, a response rate of 45.5%. However, only 520 students answered all the questions related to the topics of multiculturalism and multilingualism. Therefore, the number of students included in our analyses is 520. Preservice teachers from all 17 HEIs in Norway took part, but the response rate from each HEI varied from 17.6% to 88.5%. The composition of the group of pre-service teachers' respondents is comparative with the total population concerning gender and is believed to be comparative on age as well. However, the distribution across age levels is not known for the total population at their fourth year due to the number of early leavers that may have changed the age profile of the group since they started in 2010. Slightly less than 70% of the students in the current study were below 26, while slightly more than 30% were above 26 years of age. When it comes to gender, 88.1% of the respondents in ITE 1–7 were female and 19.1% male. For

ITE 5–10 the distribution is 68.6% female respondents and 31.4% male. This is comparable to national statistics.

Obtaining a population number for the number of mentor teachers per HEI turned out to be an impossible task. ITE programmes initiate contracts with partner schools, and the principal of each school is responsible for making sure that there are qualified mentor teachers for each group of preservice teachers that has field practice at that school. What we have secured, from all but two HEIs, is the number of partner contracts per ITE programme. Based on this, the number of possible participating schools in this survey is estimated to be 554. The number of schools that took part is 288, a response rate of about 62%. The response rate per HEI varies from 37.5% to 100%. The survey went out to all teachers at the participating schools, but not all teachers at a partner school will be mentor teachers for a group of preservice teachers. They are all employed at a partner school, but only some teachers are actual mentors. Therefore, all teachers were requested to answer the first part of the survey, about 1/3 of the questions. After about 1/3, only those teachers who had been mentor teachers the past semester were asked to continue. About 1000 teachers answered the first part of the survey, and 340 teachers continued and completed the questionnaire. The questions we are concerned with here, were only answered by teachers who had been mentor teachers the past semester ( $N = 340$ ).

### **3.3 Data and analyses**

#### **3.3.1 Variables included for preservice teachers**

As shown in the review above, certain areas of knowledge and competence have been identified as important for teachers working in multicultural and multilingual schools and classrooms. These include preservice teachers' knowledge and capacity for addressing L2 learning, for working with diversity, culture, and identity, and their knowledge about children's rights and the municipalities' responsibilities. We have developed sum score variables to measure these three areas. The items included in each sum score variable were developed for this study and have not been used previously.

**Multilingualism and Norwegian as a second language.** To measure preservice teachers' perceptions of their own knowledge and competence in this area, the five items in table one was used (see Table 1). These items cover both knowledge about teaching L2, assessing language learning, and teaching in ways that promote learning in multilingual classrooms. In table one, we show the frequency distribution for all preservice teachers in percentages per value chosen on a scale from 1 to 6 where 1 = not at all and 6 = completely agree. Mean values and standard deviation for each item are also shown in table one.

Cronbach's alpha for the sum score variable is .89, reflecting internal consistency among the items included.

**Culture and identity.** Preservice teachers' awareness and capacity to work with diversity and identity issues in multicultural classrooms is also an area that is addressed through research and Framework plans for Norwegian teacher education. In this survey, the following items were included (see Table 2):



**Table 1.** Items included in the sum score variable '*Multilingualism and Norwegian as a Second Language*'. Frequency distribution in percentage for each value on a scale from 1 to 6 where 1 = not at all and 6 = completely agree. Mean value for each item and standard deviation. (N = 520).

	1(not at all)	2	3	4	5	6 (com. agree)	M	Sd
I know the difference between teaching of Norwegian as a Second Language and bilingual education	8,0	11,6	16,1	19,9	26,7	17,8	3,99	1,52
I know different tools to assess language competence	13,9	21,6	21,8	20,9	15,4	6,5	3,22	1,46
I know methods that increase learning opportunities for multilingual pupils	10,7	20,4	25,8	24,6	13,5	5,0	3,25	1,35
I know methods for organising teaching in multilingual groups	15,0	24,2	24,4	19,4	12,2	4,8	3,04	1,35
I know how I can adapt and use language to support learning in all subjects	6,1	11,5	23,1	32,3	21,4	5,7	3,69	1,26

**Table 2.** Items included in the sum score variable '*Culture and Identity*'. Frequency distribution in percentage for each value on a scale from 1 to 6 where 1 = not at all and 6 = completely agree. Mean value for each item and standard deviation. (N = 520).

	1(not at all)	2	3	4	5	6 (comp. agree)	M	Sd
I know methods that recognise pupils' language/religion/culture as a resource	5,5	13,9	21,5	29,1	20,7	9,3	3,74	1,33
I can promote pupils' awareness for the importance of cultural differences	8,4	12,6	24,8	28,0	20,6	5,7	3,57	1,33
I can stimulate identity processes of pupils that do not have Norwegian as their first language	5,7	14,0	27,1	28,8	19,0	5,3	3,57	1,25
I know how to use different views on knowledge in the classroom	5,1	12,6	25,3	30,7	19,6	6,7	3,67	1,26

As shown, four items were constructed to measure aspects of knowledge and capacity for working with culture and identity in multicultural classrooms. Cronbach's alpha for this sum score variable is computed to be .90, indicating internal consistency among the items.

**Rights and regulations.** Two items are included in the survey to measure pre-service teachers' knowledge about legal rights and regulations (see Table 3).

Cronbach's alpha is computed to be .85 for this sumscore variable.

### 3.3.2 Variables included for mentor teachers

We have chosen to use single items when we investigate mentor teachers' perceptions of their work with preservice teachers. This can be a weakness in the design as a sumscore variable can be regarded as a more developed conceptual construct, but there are several

**Table 3.** Items included in the sum score variable '*Rights and regulations*'. Frequency distribution in percentage for each value on a scale from 1 to 6 where 1 = not at all and 6 = completely agree. Mean value for each item and standard deviation. (N = 520).

	1(not at all)	2	3	4	5	6 (com. agree)	M	Sd
I am knowledgeable about the municipality's responsibilities towards multilingual pupils	15,2	21,2	22,5	19,5	15,0	6,6	3,18	1,48
I am knowledgeable about legal rights of multilingual pupils	12,1	21,3	21,4	22,4	15,7	7,0	3,29	1,45

**Table 4.** *Mentor teachers' reports on preservice teachers' opportunities for multicultural learning and their own competence. Single items, response scale from 1–6 where 1 = Not at all and 6 = very much. Frequencies, mean value for each item and standard deviation. N = 340.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	M	Sd
When preservice teachers have field practice in this school, they are given ample training in what it means to work in multicultural and multilingual classes	19,7	20,6	17,4	15,4	11,0	15,9	3,25	1,72
Preservice teachers learn methods to organise teaching in multilingual classes	28,9	24,5	15,1	12,0	7,0	9,6	2,73	1,61
Preservice teachers get to try out teaching that emphasises pupils' language/religion/culture as a resource	17,8	25,5	20,5	18,1	12,8	5,6	3,00	1,47
Preservice teachers learn about methods that increase learning outcomes for multilingual pupils	24,6	23,1	21,3	15,8	8,5	6,7	2,81	1,51
Preservice teachers get experience in using assessment tools to assess language difficulties	21,8	25,7	19,5	20,6	9,7	2,7	2,79	1,39
I have knowledge about multilingualism, multilingual practice and about learning Norwegian as a Second Language	11,0	21,5	22,4	23,5	12,2	9,3	3,32	1,46

studies that also indicate that single items can be equally valid and save time (see e.g. Drolet and Morrison 2001). Time is an issue when gathering data from teachers, and the items included in this study are (see Table 4):

As seen in Table 4, although we have used single items for the mentor teachers, the items span some of the same areas as preservice teachers have responded to. For instance, mentor teachers are asked whether preservice teachers are given the opportunity to learn about classroom organisation in multilingual classes, methods to increase learning outcomes for multilingual students, and teaching that emphasises language, religion, or culture as a resource. Furthermore, we have included a question about assessment tools to assess language difficulties. Since the items cannot make up the exact sum score variables as in the preservice teacher survey, we are keeping them at an item level.

We have also included a question of the mentor teachers' knowledge about multilingualism and Norwegian as a second language.

All responses are given on a 6-point scale from 1 to 6 where 1 = 'do not agree at all' and 6 = 'agree completely'.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 How do preservice teachers perceive their own competence?

Table 1, 2, and 3 provide an overview of how the total sample of preservice teachers report on their perceived competence and knowledge when using a 6-point scale. If we look at Table 1 first, it appears that preservice teachers fall into two groups with one group (about 50%) using the three highest values to describe their qualifications, and about 50% using the three lowest values to describe their competence. The highest mean value is computed for the item: I know the difference between teaching of Norwegian as a Second Language and bilingual education ( $M = 3.99$ ). However, the standard deviation for this item is also highest, indicating variance in how the group has responded (this is also shown in the frequency distribution).

For Table 2 and responses on competence within *Culture and Identity*, more students respond using the three highest values. Overall, we can describe the distribution as a 60–40 distribution with about 60% using the three highest values to indicate their

**Table 5.** T-tests for mean scores computed for sumscore variables *Multilingualism and NL2*, *Culture and Identity*, and *Rights and Regulations* for two groups: preservice teachers in ITE 1–7 and preservice teachers in ITE 5–10.

VARIABLE	ITE 1–7: M & s.d.	ITE 5–10: M & s.d.	P-value
Multilingualism and NL2	3.72 s.d. = 1.11	3.06 s.d. = 1.12	.000
Culture & Identity	3.79 s.d. = 1.15	3.42 s.d. = 1.10	.001
Rights & Regulations	3.51 s.d. = 1.32	2.92 s.d. = 1.35	.000

agreement. The highest mean score was computed for the item: I know methods that recognise pupils' language/religion/culture as a resource.

Concerning knowledge about rights and regulations, the pattern is more skewed to the left with closer to 60% using the three lowest values to describe their competence. The mean value is highest for the item: I am knowledgeable about legal rights of multilingual pupils.

#### ***Differences between ITE 1–7 and ITE 5–10***

As described above, students in ITE 1–7 have Norwegian as a compulsory subject, but ITE 5–10 students can choose this subject. However, fewer students have in fact chosen Norwegian compared to Maths, and this might have an effect on knowledge and competence for multicultural and multilingual education in schools that recruit ITE 5–10 teachers. It is important that we know more about the kinds of competence newly qualified teachers have – or perceive that they have. We have conducted t-test analyses to investigate differences in mean values between the two groups of respondents and find that much of the variation can be explained by differentiating between the two ITE programmes. On an overall basis, all three sumscore variables have higher mean scores among preservice teachers in ITE 1–7 compared to preservice teachers in ITE 5–10 (see Table 5), and all differences are statistically significant at the  $p < .001$  level.

The standard deviation for Rights and regulations is the highest in both groups, indicating that there is variation within the two groups, not just across groups. The standard deviation for the other two variables is also over 1.

#### ***4.2 How do mentor teachers in partner schools perceive their own work and knowledge in the field of multicultural classrooms?***

Table 4 shows the frequency distribution of item responses on a scale from 1 to 6. The responses provide a description of how a national sample of mentor teachers perceive their work and competence, and as with preservice teachers responses, we can see that the responses from mentor teachers also vary. About 60% of the mentor teachers use the three lowest values to indicate how they agree on the item: When preservice teachers have field practice in this school, they are getting good training in what it means to work in multicultural and multilingual classes. This can indicate that the schools are not regarded as multicultural, or that the work the mentor teachers do to provide such training is not perceived as good enough. About 75% of the teachers in partner schools

report that preservice teachers do not learn very much about how to organise teaching in multicultural classrooms (values 1–3), nor do students of teaching get to try methods that emphasise religion, language or culture as a resource. About 35% of the teachers use the three highest values to indicate their agreement on this item whereas about 65% use the three lowest. Closer to 70% of the mentor teachers report that preservice teachers do not get to learn much about how to enhance learning for multilingual pupils (values 1–3). It is also reflected in the responses that the mentor teachers are critical of their own knowledge and skills with about 55% using the three lowest values to indicate their agreement on the item: I have knowledge about multilingualism, multilingual practice and about learning Norwegian as a Second Language.

## 5. Discussion

The results presented indicate variation in perceptions in both groups of respondents. Nearly 50% of the preservice teachers report that they have low knowledge about the legal rights of pupils, whereas the other half of the respondents use the higher values to indicate their knowledge (Table 3). A basic starting point for teaching multilingual children and to ensure their rights for equality, could be that teachers are aware of the resources and rights that the Education Act prescribes. To have knowledge about rights can also be seen as an issue of how power is situated in the school system, something that is an important part of the Critical Multicultural (May and Sleeter 2010) perspective. Our findings may indicate a need for discussion on how, this issue could be addressed more strongly in ITE.

The preservice teachers use higher values to indicate their perspectives on diversity as a resource (Table 2). This is in accordance with the perspectives described in the National Guidelines, the OECD report and also principles from Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (Gay 2002; Taylor and Sobel 2011). Based on the theoretical perspectives presented above, we might still argue the importance of ITE educators to ensure that positive attitudes are challenged with a critical perspective (critical consciousness) – one of the main competences highlighted by Howard and Aleman (2008).

Preservice teachers appear to rate their own knowledge of various ways to stimulate learning in multilingual groups higher than the mentor teachers rate their opportunity to try it out (Table 4). Preservice teachers may be less aware of the knowledge base available and more positive towards their own knowledge and competence. It can also be that the schools and classrooms where students have their field practice are not perceived as being diverse. However, this result could also indicate that preservice teachers learn more on campus than they get to use or show during field practice. Akiba (2011) underlines both the importance of ITE to model teaching, but also the importance of field practice experiences. Field practice is an essential arena for student teachers to try out methods of teaching (Bravo et al. 2014; Mushi 2004; Cajkler and Hall 2012; Miller and Mikulec 2014). It can be disconcerting that mentor teachers respond using the lower values on the scale concerning whether they provide students with opportunities to try out methods for teaching in multicultural classrooms (Table 4). Egeli and Thomassen (2015) found concerns among teacher educators in Norway that field practice was not organised in a way to ensure that all student teachers were given the opportunity to practice teaching in diverse classes.

This can indicate a need for ITE to have a stronger focus on how to organise field practice so that student teachers get an opportunity to teach in diverse classrooms and meet diverse, multilingual pupils – and also that these field practice periods are followed by critical reflections (Zeichner et al. 1998; Chang, Anagnostopoulos, and Omae 2011).

A question that receives low scores from both mentor teachers and student teachers is about assessment of pupils' language competence. 57.3% of the preservice teachers use the three lowest values on the scale for the item: I know different tools to assess language competence, and 67% of the mentor teachers use the three lowest values for the item: preservice teachers get experience in using assessment tools to assess language difficulties. This result indicates that assessment of language competence is an area that both preservice teachers perceive less competence of, and mentor teachers provide them with few opportunities to develop such knowledge during field practice. This places more responsibility on the schools that hire newly qualified teachers and can also make the transition to teaching more difficult for new teachers since they have not developed vital competence to assess students' language skills. To have knowledge about multilingualism and second language learning related to assessment is also important for the equity perspective for pupils.

An important finding in our study is the statistically significant difference between students choosing 1–7 (where Norwegian is a compulsory subject) and students choosing 5–10 where they do not have to choose Norwegian. Although, as we have seen, diversity is included in learning outcomes in Pedagogy and there are general goals for being able to teach in diverse classrooms in all subjects, our study indicates that students in ITE 1–7 develop more knowledge of teaching multilingual children. Where knowledge about multilingual education is placed, can vary from programme to program internationally, and as international research literature reveals, this is still a challenge in Teacher Education in other countries than Norway, too. Several researchers point at the need for teacher education to enhance the way it qualifies all students teachers for diverse classrooms (Horst and Holmen 2007; Bravo-Moreno 2009; Kalkin-Fishman, Pitkanen and Verma 2002; Paine, Aydarova, and Syahril 2017; Vavrus 2017). To ensure that all preservice teachers are given opportunities to develop sufficient knowledge and competence to teach in multicultural/multilingual classrooms is an important issue for ITE. The results from this study, indicate that this is a continuing challenge for ITE.

## Conclusion and further research

This study has contributed to knowledge on how preservice teachers and mentor teachers assess their knowledge for teaching in diverse classrooms and how field practice during ITE supports this development. Our findings can indicate some areas to develop further in ITE programs. Where should teaching of rules and regulation and assessment of language competence be placed? How can programs organise and follow up field practice to ensure that students get experience from diverse classrooms? How can ITE programs ensure that all ITE students learn about teaching in multicultural and multilingual classrooms?

This article is based on self-reported data, and due to the design, we are not able to connect student teachers with their field placement school. This would be of interest for

future research designs to address. Self-reports are important to obtain an impression of how teacher education programs are perceived, but future research should also question the content of preservice teachers' competence. We also suggest further development in variables used. Although single items can be equally valid, it would be beneficial to test this assumption related to the topics in this study in future research. The Cronbach's alpha scores computed for the sum score variables indicate internal consistency, suggesting that the constructs are coherent and measure more or less the same variable.

Validity theory maintains that validity is not a `property of the test or assessment as such, but rather of the meaning of the test scores` (Messick 1995, 741). To assess validity, we need to include the persons and the situation as well. A strength is that this study includes representative samples of respondents from all teacher education institutions in Norway. It is also a strength that both preservice teachers and mentor teachers are represented. The study provides much needed insights into how teacher education programmes prepare preservice teachers to work in ways that promote equity in school.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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