



## Teachers' reflections on inclusion of newcomers in Swedish upper secondary education: Challenges arising from value differences and cultural diversity

Annika Lejon, Åbo Akademi University

In recent years, wars and conflicts have had a strong impact on immigration to Sweden. In 2015, 40,000 newly arrived school-age children came to Sweden. They made up 8% of the upper secondary school students (16–18 years) (see also Nilsson Folke, 2017). In national statistics for 2019, students who were foreign-born or had foreign-born parents amounted to 32% in upper secondary school (SNAE, 2019). A need for research on educators' practices in multicultural schools, specifically with regards to cultural differences, has been announced (Obondo et al., 2016).

The aim of this presentation is to examine the challenges perceived by teachers regarding inclusion of newcomers in upper secondary education, and to expand our knowledge on how teachers reflect upon how they pedagogically can meet the needs of their students. Drawing from semi-structured interviews with six teachers in Swedish upper secondary education, the material consists of narratives from two secondary school forms, where the municipality offers education to newcomers, wanting to gain upper secondary school qualifications. In total, four recordings with three individual interviews and one group interview with three teachers. Inductive qualitative content analysis was used, where data was classified by means of coding into different categories (Johannesson & Tufte, 2003), focusing on aspects perceived by the teachers' as extra demanding.

The result holds three themes. In *tensions between students former and current school cultures* teachers discuss challenges related to democratic classroom norms, interactive teaching, and a critical approach. *Epistemological differences*, focuses on teachers' expectations, and the understanding of knowledge. Finally, in *teachers' deficient knowledge the teachers* consider their desire for support and further education. The themes are discussed in relation to intercultural- and relational competence. The result concludes in a call for a more profound preparation of Swedish teachers in upper secondary education regarding greater awareness of cultural dilemmas.

**Keywords:** Newcomers in Swedish upper education, Intercultural teaching, Multicultural education

### References

Johannesson, A., & Tufte, P-A. (2003). *Introduktion till samhällsvetenskaplig metod*. Liber.

Nilsson Folke, J. (2017). *Lived Transitions. Experiences of learning and inclusion among newly arrived students*. University of Stockholm.



Obondo, M. A., Lahdenperä, P., & Sandevärn, P. (2016). Interkulturell pedagogik i praktisk handling – utmaningar och möjligheter. In P. Lahdenperä, & E. Sundgren (Eds.), *Skolans möte med nyanlända* (p. 182–204). Liber.

SNAE, Swedish National Agency for Education [Skolverket] (2019). *Statistik*.  
<https://www.skolverket.se/skolutveckling/statistik>