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Powerful Knowledge of Language and Migration in Norwegian and Swedish Textbooks
Birgitta Ljung Egeland and Lise Iversen Kulbrandstad

Introduction

Waves of global migration and increased cultural and linguistic diversity are bringing about societal changes in the two neighbouring countries of Sweden and Norway. In 2020, 25.5 per cent of persons living in Sweden were either born outside the country or both of their parents were (SCB 2020). The corresponding share for Norway is 18.2 per cent (SSB 2020). Classrooms in these two countries include a growing number of multilingual students – with several being second language learners of Swedish or Norwegian. This greater societal diversity is challenging the education system, especially the language subjects, Swedish and Norwegian, respectively, since they developed as school subjects within a monolingual tradition (Lindberg 2009; Kulbrandstad 2018). However, the most recent curricula for compulsory school in both Sweden and Norway stress the need to address diversity. A Swedish student should, for example, be able to ‘understand [his or her] own reality in a global context’ (Skolverket 2018: 8), while a Norwegian student should experience ‘that being proficient in a number of languages is a resource, both in school and society at large’ (Utdanningsdirektoratet 2017: 6). Meeting these new challenges requires new teacher competencies as well as new teaching aids. The topic of diversity is slowly finding its way into teacher education programmes but is still considered a matter which needs to be better covered (Følgjegruppa 2015; Lärarutbildningskonventet 2018).

In this article, we explore teaching aids in the light of the diversity caused by modern migration. We ask how and in which ways subject content related to language and migration is transformed into the school subjects Swedish and
Norwegian through printed textbooks for middle school (students aged 10 to 12). We look at both the content and the roles students are invited to enter through textbook assignments.

Teaching aids of various kinds are an important facet of how schools introduce and adapt content to students. Norwegian primary school teachers, for example, describe textbooks as central for structuring classroom activities and for ensuring work towards the learning goals established by the national curriculum (Gile et al. 2016). Lately, the complex transformation of content through different teaching aids has been studied in terms of questions of equality as well as inherent norms and expectations of students’ competencies (Vinde 2018).

Two theoretical perspectives are used as our point of departure: multilingualism as part of language awareness (Hélot 2012; A. Young 2018) and the transformation and selection of knowledge (M. Young 2009/2016; Gericke et al. 2019; Hudson 2019). Of special interest is M. Young’s concept powerful knowledge since we argue that knowledge of linguistic diversity in societies characterized by super-diversity created by new patterns of migration (Vertovec 2007, 2019) is knowledge which can provide young people with ’new ways of thinking about the world’ (M. Young 2009/2016: 110). Vertovec (2019: 126) makes the point that super-diversity is producing novel hierarchies of social positions and ’new patterns of inequality and prejudice’. In both Norway and Sweden, the educational legislation and regulations emphasize the importance of equality and equal rights and prescribe that school ‘shall present knowledge and promote attitudes which safeguard these values’ (Utdanningsdirektoratet 2017: 4), and ’actively resist discrimination and degrading treatment of individuals or groups’ (Skolverket 2018: 10).

In the following, we first expand on the theoretical perspectives and then present and discuss the results of a textbook study in view of these perspectives. Finally, we address the consequences for teacher education.

Multilingualism as part of language awareness

In her review of research of language awareness in primary education, Andrea Young (2018) asks why language awareness matters in schools characterized by linguistic diversity caused by migration. Her answer is that raising language awareness might be a way to handle inequality, linguistic prejudices and negative attitudes to differences, and as such to ’make a positive contribution to anti-discrimination education’ (Young 2018: 24). She argues that inclusive practices
might be favoured by taking account of all languages and dialects spoken in the classrooms as a basis. Learning to understand language, multilingualism, multiple identities and how we acquire language(s) are among topics listed that might ‘have the potential to unlock children’s prior knowledge and skills brought from home to school’, help children ‘to better comprehend the complexities of our multilingual worlds’ and help them ‘feel more confident and better prepared to negotiate linguistic and cultural differences, viewing it as a resource and a right rather than a problem’ (ibid.).

The teaching of languages has traditionally concentrated on linguistic competence. Language awareness adds new dimensions, raising the importance of both knowledge about languages and linguistic tolerance (James and Garrett 1991: 13; Hélot 2012: 220). An observation made by several researchers is that it still seems difficult to bring the multilingualism and linguistic diversity developed outside school into classrooms. The monolingual norm based on European nation state ideology appears to remain dominant in many places (Gogolin 2008; Hélot 2012; A. Young 2018; Pujata 2018).

Textbooks might be helpful for raising language awareness. However, previous textbook studies show that societal diversity is still presented as the exception, not the norm (Niehaus 2018: 337). Loftsdóttir (2009: 257), for example, studies textbooks in Iceland and concludes that children of diverse backgrounds should be allowed to ‘better identify and position themselves as part of Icelandic society’. L.A. Kulbrandstad (2001) analysed content on language variation and multilingualism in Norwegian textbooks for the lower secondary level published in the 1990s. He found that questions of migration-related linguistic diversity held a peripheral position, while Sami languages were slightly better covered. Content knowledge about multilingualism was, however, not dealt with at all.

Transformations of knowledge

Michael Young’s concept of powerful knowledge provides a starting point for this study. It gives inspiration while we analyse the relationship between specialized academic knowledge and the school subjects, and we employ it to explore the potential intellectual power that knowledge can give students, for example, through new ways of seeing the world. The ROSE-project at Karlstad University, to which this study belongs, sums up the use of Young’s concept in the project as follows:
Powerful knowledge is defined by Young as subject-specific, coherent, conceptual disciplinary knowledge, that, when learned, will empower students to make decisions and become action-competent in a way that will influence their lives in a positive way.

(Gericke et al. 2018: 428)

Young (2013) understands powerful knowledge as both an analytic concept in educational sociology and a curriculum principle. Powerful knowledge is both specialized by being developed in academic disciplines and differentiated by being distinct from the everyday knowledge students bring to school. While everyday knowledge is tied to particular situations, knowledge that is part of the school subjects should enable students to ‘generalize beyond their experience,’ according to Young (2013: 110). His focus is the content of schools, not the ways schools work to adapt content as part of their teaching. Hudson (2018: 395) therefore criticizes Young for overlooking the importance of research on subject didactics. Following up on such a critique, Gericke et al. argue for an extended understanding of powerful knowledge with use of the concept of transformation.

Transformation [...] is defined as an integrative process in which content knowledge is transformed into knowledge that is taught and learned through various transformation processes that take place outside and within the educational system at the individual, institutional and societal levels.

(Gericke et al. 2018: 432)

Gericke et al. (2018: 433) emphasize that since school subjects can never be seen as simple reductions of academic disciplines, the study of school content must include transformations of content in the light of the didactical questions of why, what, for whom, when and how. While all of these questions are interwoven in our textbook study, our focus is on the what and how questions. We first sum up the results of earlier analysis of the content of the textbooks, that is, the what question (Kulbrandstad and Ijung Egeland 2019) and then more closely look at a sample of textbook activities aiming to explore language and migration in different ways, that is, the how and when questions. The why question motivates the study since we assume there is a need for changes to the curriculum due to the increase in cultural and linguistic diversity. These changes are not only relevant for the teaching content, but the composition of students in school is also ever more linguistically heterogeneous, leading to calls for new awareness of who the students in class are, that is, the who question.
The project language and migration: Identifying areas of focus

The first step in the analysis was to identify topics from academic disciplines possibly able to provide students with powerful knowledge about language and migration. Traditionally, the school subjects Swedish and Norwegian are built on knowledge from Nordic linguistics and literature studies while multilingualism and linguistic diversity form parts of the quite new academic field of second language research, which developed following the new waves of migration during the 1970s. To identify areas of focus for the textbook study, we analysed the content of university courses in Swedish and Norwegian as a second language (Kulbrandstad and Ijung Egeland 2019). These courses are based on second-language research and studied by prospective teachers. We concentrated on the four universities that established research and teaching in this field early on, namely the universities in Oslo and Bergen in Norway, and Stockholm and Gothenburg in Sweden. We found that the course descriptions had three overall topics in common:

- Swedish/Norwegian in a comparative perspective
- Multilingualism
- Second language learning

Thus, these three topics represent core content emerging from second-language research. At the same time, they represent new areas of knowledge for the school subjects in question. In the project, we consider the extent to and in which ways knowledge from these topics is transformed through the textbooks into the school subjects.

Material and method of the textbook study

We examined 24 printed textbooks in Swedish from three different publishers issued between 2011 and 2017 and a total of 27 Norwegian textbooks from four publishers, released between 2006 and 2017. The books are written for middle school, which refers to grades 4–6 in Sweden and 5–7 in Norway. More details of this first part of the study are given in Kulbrandstad and Ijung Egeland (2019) and Kulbrandstad (2019).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Representation of languages other than Swedish and Norwegian</th>
<th>Texts about multilingualism</th>
<th>Language comparisons</th>
<th>Texts which thematize learning a second language</th>
<th>Texts which thematize learning through a second language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Words or phrases</td>
<td>Texts in general</td>
<td>About Sami languages</td>
<td>About minority languages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The textbooks were examined through qualitative content analysis. We worked deductively, looking for examples of the three topics found in the analysis of the university courses (cf. upper row, Table 5.1). As part of the process of going through the books, more specific categories emerged (the two lower rows, Table 5.1). We first worked individually with the Norwegian or the Swedish textbooks and then together with all of the books, discussing typical and less typical examples of each category and adjusting the analysis. Table 5.1 sums up categories used to register occurrences.

**Transformation of powerful knowledge of language and migration through textbooks**

A main result of the comparative study is that the three topics derived from second-language research are only occasionally covered as content knowledge in the textbooks (Kulbrandstad and Ljung Egeland 2019). Second-language learning is almost absent, while language comparisons are the most frequently found topic of the three. Most often, the neighbouring languages Norwegian, Swedish and Danish, which are mutually understandable, are compared. In the Norwegian textbooks, even more frequent are comparisons of different dialect forms and of the two written standards of Norwegian, Bokmål and Nynorsk.
In the textbook sample, there is one example we consider to be quite a thorough treatment of multilingualism as content knowledge for the age group in question. We characterize this coverage as in-depth because it defines concepts and describes multilingualism as both a phenomenon in society and something pertaining to the individual.

Norwegian and other languages
We say that Norway is a multilingual society because it is a society where we use more than one language. There are two official languages in Norway: Norwegian and Sámi. The fact that a language is official means that it is used on road signs, in newspapers and on television, in schools and other public places. In some places in Norway, the road signs are in both Norwegian and Sami.

To be multilingual
In addition to the two official languages, many more languages are used in Norway. Most people speak Norwegian as their mother tongue, but many speak another language at home. If you know more than one language, you are a multilingual person. For example, if you speak Persian at home and Norwegian at school, you are multilingual.

(Anly, Lissner and Nome 2015: 106, our translation)

Both the Swedish and the Norwegian textbooks include examples of words, phrases and texts from other languages, for instance, the word ‘hello’ in different languages, greeting phrases in Sami, and a text message exchange in Faroese. Still, only one text is directly connected to migration: a short postcard in Bosnian. We find the same tendency when it comes to the way the textbooks choose single words and phrases from other languages. All in all, there are examples of words from 34 different languages across all the Norwegian textbooks and 27 across the Swedish ones. However, the collection of single words does not cover all of the largest immigrant groups. For example, there are no occurrences of words from the following languages spoken by large immigrant groups of Norway in the Norwegian books: Polish, Lithuanian, Somali, Kurdish, Tigrinya, Pilipino, Thai, Persian or Dari.

To sum up: The textbook analysis shows that the three thematic topics of multilingualism, second language learning and Swedish/Norwegian compared with languages other than the Nordic are only occasionally relatively thoroughly covered in the textbooks. Thus, the content does not reflect the current multilingual situation of Sweden and Norway but includes examples of what we characterize as promising first steps away from a monolingual tradition. Still, the main conclusion is that the books offer few opportunities to explore linguistic diversity in ways that potentially will take students beyond the limits of their own
experiences’ (cf. M. Young) or help them better comprehend the complexities of our multilingual world (cf. A. Young).

Thus far, we have concentrated on the content presented in texts. Below, we present a study of textbook activities that constitute part of the textbook content. The purpose is to explore whether focusing on these activities will add new perspectives to the understanding of possible transformations of powerful knowledge through teaching materials. Studying activities is of special interest since classroom research shows that students in primary school spend an important part of their school day working on exercises individually, in groups or as part of whole-class teaching (Haug 2012; Skolinspektionen 2017). In the school subjects of Swedish and Norwegian, textbook activities are used in different ways to transform content knowledge into learning. For example, students are supposed to work on the knowledge content itself, on developing and using their oral and written language competencies, or on developing empathy and their own identity.

Framework for analysing textbook activities

The textbooks present several activities in each chapter. We decided to concentrate on activities linked to textbook content already found to be promising first steps away from a monolingual tradition. This allowed us to explore examples holding the possibility of helping to transform content into powerful knowledge.

As the main analytical framework, we further developed a typology originally presented in Ottes (2015) for describing the different roles students are invited to enter by writing assignments in middle-grade classrooms. We use four possible roles in the typology for analysing all kinds of assignments relating to the transformation of subject-specific content on language and migration. The roles were given the following labels: the subject-specific apprentice, the personal expert, the empathetic individual and the active citizen. Table 5.2 gives an overview of transformation processes that might be initiated through the different roles and how the roles connect to the development of powerful knowledge (cf. Young 2013; Maude 2016).

When students are invited to enter the role of a subject-specific apprentice, they perform activities in which they are supposed to work on learning the content presented in the textbook. These activities are often closely connected to the content, for example, answering questions about the text. As such, they might be considered an early phase in learning the content in question.
### Table 5.2 Transformation processes through student roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roles students are invited to enter</th>
<th>Description of the roles within the subject Swedish/Norwegian</th>
<th>Possible contribution to powerful knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject-specific apprentice</td>
<td>Doing activities to work on learning the textbook content</td>
<td>Basis for establishing knowledge and discovering new ways of thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal expert</td>
<td>Using the knowledge students have from before</td>
<td>Potential invitation to reflect on, generalize and develop identity, but in isolation there is a danger of only learning what students already know from earlier experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathetic individual</td>
<td>Entering a role as another person in a different situation</td>
<td>Engaging with feelings, going beyond the limits of the students' own experience, generalizing from a particular situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active citizen</td>
<td>Participating by communicating opinions in different genres</td>
<td>Becoming action-oriented, being able to engage in current debates in society</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When invited to take on the role as a personal expert, the students are supposed to use what they know from before, which very often means their everyday knowledge. Sometimes, such activities invite reflection and generalization by combining knowledge from the textbooks and from the students themselves. In these cases, one might say that the use of everyday knowledge aims at 'unlocking' the children's prior knowledge (A. Young 2018: 24) as part of the process of learning the school content. However, textbook activities sometimes only invite schoolchildren to rely on their personal knowledge, and they are thus not challenged to learn new content. While the term personal expert has a positive connotation, Michael Young's critical comment, 'students do not come to school to know what they already know from experience' (2013: 111), spurs our interest in observing how this role might be combined with other roles and integrated with a teaching sequence. By working together with classmates, students for example also have possibilities to share experiences.

The third role, the empathetic individual, is often linked to working with literature. The students are invited to enter roles as another person in a different life situation and to explore new worlds. Young (2013: 109) comments that
literature might be powerful because literature engages with feelings that are ‘experienced in particular contexts but common to all human beings’.

The fourth role is an active citizen. In the national curriculums of both Sweden and Norway, the importance of school’s contribution to democracy and fostering active citizens is emphasized. One way of doing this is by developing the ability to communicate and participate (Skolverket 2018: 7; Utdanningsdirektoratet 2017: 8f). In the subjects of Swedish and Norwegian, fostering active citizens often means learning to present opinions in different genres, for instance, a letter to the editor. However, it also means finding the students’ own voice and developing their ability to reflect and adopt a critical stance.

When we analyse the textbook activities below, we also characterize them as open or closed, which means they can either be solved in different ways or have a fixed answer. We also notice in which part of the teaching process the activities are used: Are they a way into the content, are they closely connected to working directly on the learning content (a text), or are they used to sum up or go beyond the content presented in the textbook?

All of the following textbook examples are translated to English from Swedish or Norwegian by the authors.

Analysis of textbook activities and student roles

The role of subject-specific apprentice: Learning about alphabets

The first example is from a Swedish textbook for grade 6 presenting language history by introducing the development of different writing systems (Eriksson and Sahlin 2017: 60–1). Relatively solid knowledge material on historical perspectives is presented. One double page contains the headings ‘The Phoenician Alphabet’ and ‘The alphabet spreads out’. The Arabic writing system is explained, but no connections are made to contemporary use of Arabic writing in either Sweden or other countries. However, one speech bubble reads: ‘Did you know that our numbers are Arabic?’

The exercises follow directly after the text. The students are invited to answer questions like: ‘How many letters did the Phoenician alphabets consist of?’, and ‘Which similarities are there between the Phoenician and the Arabic alphabets?’ In each case, the questions are used to check basic understanding since the answers might be found directly in the text. The questions are thus characterized as closed. We argue that here students are expected to practise the role of a subject-
specific apprentice by processing the knowledge presented in the textbook by reading and probably copying the text. Such exercises might serve a purpose in an early phase of learning. Liberg et al. (2001) present a model for describing different ways of participating in learning activities within a community, from being a listener without a contribution of their own to an independent participant creating different kinds of texts. In between there are several steps, for example, participating through heavily controlled contributions like answering the above-cited closed questions on alphabets. The role of a subject-specific apprentice might be a necessary step, but in our material it is more often combined with other roles.

Combining the roles of a subject-specific apprentice and a personal expert: Multilingualism on the agenda

The second example is activities linked to the text about multilingualism that we already quoted (Anly, Lissner and Nome 2015: 105–8). In this textbook, students in grade 5 are invited to enter the role as a subject-specific apprentice combined with a role as a personal expert. The topic 'Talk about languages' is introduced with a picture showing a schoolyard with 'hello' written in different migrant languages. Four questions introduce the topic: Which languages do you recognize?, Which languages do you speak?, Which languages do you write? How many languages do you know all together in class? All of these questions are open, and students are invited to use or mobilize their personal knowledge, that is, to enter the role as a personal expert in introducing the topic. The purpose here seems to be to start unlocking the students' everyday knowledge (cf. A. Young 2018). The next double-page contains the subject-specific substance. Following these texts, students are asked to talk about languages in Norway by answering eight questions together with a classmate. Four of these questions help grasp the content or control that the students already have knowledge about, like 'Which languages are official in Norway?' and 'What does it mean to be a multilingual person?' The answers to these questions are all found in the text. Thus, the questions are closed and reproducing but, as mentioned, represent a frequently used step to ensure that students work on the content knowledge by taking on a role of a subject-specific apprentice. The potential of these tasks depends on how the questions are formulated, what they focus on, how they are combined with other types of questions, and of course how they are used in the classroom. One mission might be to help the students attend to important parts of the text. In this example, such questions alternate with four open, often self-reflecting questions where students are again invited to assume roles as personal experts, like 'Are
you multilingual?’, and ‘What are the benefits of speaking multiple languages?’ In answering these questions, they are supposed to build on a combination of what they have learned from the text and their own experiences and to share them with their classmates.

**Encounter with an illegal refugee by combining the roles of a subject-specific apprentice and an empathetic individual**

This third example is connected to a fiction text from grade 7 in which a boy (Tony T) is confronted with a dilemma: A refugee girl is hiding from the immigration authorities in the attic of the boy’s house. He discovers her by accident and must decide whether he should help her or tell his mother, who is a police officer (Bjerke and Pedersen 2017: 206–7). The activities presented after the text are partly meant to help the students understand the text by taking on the role of a subject-specific apprentice discussing both explicit and implicit information. In the end, the students are also challenged in an open activity to enter the role of an empathic individual:

> Imagine that you are Tony T or the girl. Describe what you feel, think and do when you meet the other person in the attic.
> (Bjerke and Pedersen 2017: 207. our translation)

In our material, we often find activities in which students are supposed to assume the role of an empathetic person while working with fiction texts. Even though literary knowledge represents specific ways of knowing (Medway 2010; MacLean Davies and Sawyer 2018), the literature also offers knowledge about other areas, like in the example above – language and migration.

**The role of an active citizen writing blogs after reading poetry**

The final activity exemplifies the role of an active citizen. The exercise follows a text about a young author with a refugee background and two poems she wrote soon after she arrived in Norway (Bjørndal, Eide and Elvebakk 2016: 205–6). Several exercises are supposed to help students understand and reflect on the texts. One activity illustrates how they are asked to take on the role of an active citizen.

> Imagine that you are Marima or another refugee. Write a blog about your reflections after your arrival in a foreign country.
> (Bjørndal, Eide and Elvebakk 2016: 205, our translation)
The subjects Norwegian and Swedish aim to create active citizens by focusing on developing oral and written argumentation skills as well as learning to write in different genres on political or personal issues. The example just quoted is of one such genre, namely a personal blog, and one current issue of great concern: the refugee situation. However, there are few instances in our material where students are explicitly invited to take on the role of an active citizen when the topic is language and migration. It might be that the textbook authors consider topics related to migration to be too controversial for use in such activities for children aged 10 to 12.

Discussion

The four examples illustrate possible roles students might adopt while working with activities on the topic of language and migration. At the same time, they show how the language subjects can transform content in ways that might help students deal with knowledge in powerful ways. The core of the subjects Swedish and Norwegian is language and literature. By working on these areas of knowledge, students develop tools for reflection, communication and for building knowledge. Language as well as literature is also important for personal development and expressions of identity. Studies of language and literature thus help students to know the world, other people and themselves.

Taking the increased societal diversity as a point of departure, our aim was to study whether and how this new situation is influencing the school subjects we are concerned with. Overall, we find that linguistic diversity can hardly be said to be integrated into the subjects, at least not in the textbooks. Still, there are some promising examples of where multilingualism and migrant destinies are placed on the agenda. Such examples represent necessary first steps on the way towards more linguistic inclusive school subjects that acknowledge multilingualism as part of normality. This is in line with Andrea Young’s emphasis that raising language awareness is one possible way to help children better comprehend ‘the complexities of our multilingual world’ and to handle inequality and linguistic prejudices (2018: 24). Integrating perspectives on diversity might accordingly amount to a contribution to an anti-discriminatory school from the language subjects.

The language subjects must always consider both historical and contemporary contexts, meaning the choice of teaching content can neither be static nor incidental. The concept of powerful knowledge draws attention to the important balance between the transmitting of past knowledge and building
on this knowledge to create new knowledge. The question of what students are entitled to learn has no 'once and for all answer', as Michael Young stresses (2013: 101). The knowledge base of a school subject must, in other words, be dynamic enough to include new perspectives. At present, the growing societal diversity is a development that is challenging the subjects of Swedish and Norwegian to open up for new knowledge.

In classrooms, subject knowledge is transformed through the different ways in which teachers choose content and of how to work to ensure learning. Hence, the analysis of the textbook assignments and their potential contribution to the development of powerful knowledge is an exploration of transformation processes. The first example in our analysis, where the knowledge content is the alphabets of the world, uses the role of a subject-specific apprentice. Here the contribution to powerful knowledge will require an extension of the textbook content, for example, by adding a contemporary perspective to the historical one and by introducing new ways to work on the topic. Through knowledge about both the history of alphabets as well as their current use, students could have been invited to compare alphabets that are actually in use today. This might lead to the discovery of new ways of thinking about written languages, which go beyond the students’ own experiences. At the same time, such extensions would invite those with knowledge of more than one alphabet to act as personal experts. In the second example, where the content knowledge is about multilingualism, we find that the textbook exercises already promote a combination of a subject-specific apprentice and a personal expert. In the first phase of the encounter with the content, students are invited to unlock their everyday knowledge and to then explore the content by focusing on developing concepts and making generalizations. In the final phase, they are again invited to rely on their personal experiences, but this time based on the subject knowledge and in a context in which they can share their experiences. Thus, this is a possible contribution to powerful knowledge since the combination of roles ensures that the students go beyond their prior knowledge.

The third example, where the schoolchildren read a fiction text about a young refugee on the run, invites the students to assume the role of an empathetic individual. This is a way of becoming familiar with another person’s life situation and rising above one’s own frames of reference, here possibly also with an emotional engagement. Experiences emerging from reading fiction also make it possible to generalize from one specific situation. The fourth example is an assignment presented in the last phase of the work on a topic. Through the textbook, the students first meet a young refugee girl and her story, then read
two of her poems describing experiences in the new country, and are finally given the role of an active citizen and practise participating in society by stating opinions through blogs. This activity may contribute to powerful knowledge through the invitation to become action-oriented and engage in current debates.

The role perspective on learning activities has helped us better understand how transformations of powerful knowledge can be achieved through teaching materials. Although we have not counted different types of activities in the textbooks, the overall impression is that the role of a subject-specific apprentice is the most frequent. This role is considered a necessary step in the learning process, but it must be combined with one of the other roles, a personal expert, an empathetic person or an active citizen, for the students to connect knowledge about language and migration to their own lives or the lives of others, and to society. Yet, the students most often lack this opportunity even when the textbooks actually present relevant content, and we consider the texts to be promising first steps away from a monolingual tradition.

One weakness we observed is that assignments on language and migration sometimes stand more or less on their own. This means they are not connected to the content presented in the textbook. In such activities, students are often invited to enter roles as personal experts, but without a combination with the role of a subject-specific apprentice. They are thereby not offered help from the teaching material to conquer knowledge that provides them with new ways of thinking about the world and makes them go beyond the limits of their personal experiences, as powerful knowledge might do.

Implications for curriculum innovation and teacher education

Teachers' professional knowledge may be described as a combination of knowledge about the learners and their development, knowledge of the subject matter and curriculum goals, and knowledge of teaching (Bransford, Darling-Hammond and LePage 2005: 11). Super-diverse societies challenge all of these aspects of professional knowledge. The knowledge base of teacher education must open up to new perspectives and for adding new knowledge concerning diversity. Preparing teachers to teach diverse learners is characterized as a 'recurring theme for improving' across countries around the world (Darling-Hammond and Lieberman 2012: 159). In addition, the concept of super-diverse societies highlights the need to include knowledge of diversity in the teaching of all students. For the subjects Swedish and Norwegian, this means going from a
monolingual norm to an inclusive linguistic diversity norm – with this applying to the school subjects as well as the teacher education subjects. One possible way of doing this is to put greater focus on raising language awareness by using all of the languages spoken in the classroom to thereby prepare children for negotiating linguistic and cultural differences and viewing diversity as a resource. For teacher education, this implies that questions of diversity, equality and social justice need to be addressed in discussions both on how to choose teaching content and how to work on different ways to transform content to learning in the classrooms. Michael Young’s concept of powerful knowledge might be a fruitful entry point for discussions on these topics. Student teachers need to build awareness of their future roles as curricula-makers in everyday practice (Lambert 2014).

One way of making the discussions both theory-based and practically oriented is to analyse teaching aids like textbooks. Analysis of the selection of the content of different books, what is there and what is missing, leads to reflections on both powerful knowledge and the epistemic quality of the choices made by the textbook authors (cf. Hudson 2019). As shown in this article, looking at assignments can also shed light on transformation processes. Which roles are school children invited to enter, which functions do these roles have, and in which ways do they contribute to quality education and school children’s establishment of powerful knowledge? One strength of teacher education is that student teachers also practise teaching under supervision. This permits the possibility of not only discussing different examples of how content can be transformed through textbooks but also trying out different transformation processes in classrooms and later critically reflecting on them.

Student teachers of today are preparing for work in societies undergoing rapid changes. Cummins and Early (2011: 155) stress the importance of making teachers aware of their important roles as powerful agents of change in the classroom, by letting them ‘articulate and reflect critically on the instructional choices that we make on a routine daily basis and to examine alternative possibilities’. Teachers and student teachers need to open their eyes to diversity. Thus, the advice given by Cummins and Early, which we endorse, is to put on multilingual lenses.

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