School leadership and linguistic and ethnic diversity

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Synopsis: How can school leaders contribute to the inclusion of all students in meaningful learning? The article builds on analyses of interviews with school leaders in an upper secondary school in Norway in order to explore the leaders' expectations, meanings, and presuppositions about intercultural education. The analysis shows that for this school's leaders, coping with linguistic and ethnic diversity is primarily about linguistic integration, and that they do not recognize their students' heterogeneous cultural and linguistic background as resources in education.

Introduction

Norwegian education policy has high aspirations: in basic education, all students should be given an education that is equitable and adapted to their needs. It should also develop students' knowledge, skills, and abilities to enable them to participate in further education and employment. Students must be included and experience mastery throughout their educational trajectory. This poses challenges for schools in the face of an increasing diversity of students, and there appears to be a large gap between goals and practice. Even though it seems as though many minority students are doing well in secondary schools, too many drop out and do not attain the necessary competence level (Lødding, 2009). Challenges do not start in upper secondary education, but must be seen in close connection with the students' previous school experiences. However, competence attainment for minority students in upper secondary schools is a serious issue. Compared with the majority of students we are dealing with higher proportions who have quit and those who have not completed in five years. An important preventive measure may be to offer support to minority students to help them cope with academic requirements (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2007; Lødding, 2009). In White Paper 31 it is argued that schools might be "lacking the professional community and the kind of leadership required to support the teachers" (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2007, p. 57). For example, in a study on leadership in multicultural schools, Aamodt (2004) found that most school principals in primary schools lack training in bilingual education and multicultural education. Vedøy (2008) argues that the traditions and "Norwegian" values can no longer be taken for granted; they are challenged by increased linguistic and ethnic diversity. She concludes that it is necessary to create spaces for dialogue in schools. A study on the implementation of the new curricula in basic Norwegian for linguistic minorities and

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native speakers (Rambøll Management, 2009), shows that less than half of school leaders felt sufficiently equipped to lead the implementation, and that school leaders in primary schools felt better equipped than the school leaders in secondary education. For example, not all school administrators were even aware of new curriculum. Still, expectations for school leaders is that they point out directions in school development, exert influence, and make decisions related to issues and events concerning the provision of education for linguistic and ethnic minorities.

Leaders reflect and affect which issues are considered important and how they should be understood (Spillane, Diamond et al., 2002), and a larger linguistic and ethnic diversity challenges their ability to see and create meaning. It is also about promoting recognition and making diversity visible, in order to avoid culture being considered neutral ("colour blindness"). Moreover, school leaders must be able to detect educational practices that exclude individuals and groups of students, and to understand the school’s role in a larger socio-political context (Evans, 2007). Meaning is constructed through social processes of discussion and negotiation that are both contextual and value-charged. How school leaders contribute to developing and making meaning explicit in such processes will influence the school's content, direction, and practice. There is no simple recipe for good leadership in a school characterized by linguistic and ethnic diversity. Within its context each school must find solutions that promote teaching and learning, as well as positive relationships between various student groups.

With increased linguistic and ethnic diversity, school leaders have a special responsibility to promote adaptations in order to comply with the educational needs of minority students (Dimmock and Walker, 2005). In this article, we examine how school leaders perceive and create meaning from their experiences related to education for linguistic and ethnic minorities in upper secondary schools. When school leaders shape and influence the interpretation of issues and events in their schools, they build on their own interpretations (Ryan and Wignall, 1996; Spillane, Diamond et al., 2002). In meaning-making, they draw on structural conditions and local traditions, background, historical circumstances, and roles at school (Møller, 2004), and this forms the basis for what they choose to prioritize, emphasize, or ignore (Evans, 2007). Based on data from interviews with leaders in a secondary school, this article investigates school leaders' expectations, opinions, and assumptions relating to intercultural education. Furthermore, we discuss the implications these expectations and assumptions may have for leadership.

**Intercultural Education**

Attention to the education of linguistic and ethnic minorities in Europe has increased as immigration has escalated. In Norway, despite the ambition to create good conditions for inclusion and integration, minority groups in many respects fall short when it comes to participation on equal terms in society (Bakken, 2009; Engen and Solstad, 2004; Pihl, 2009). Although many minority students succeed in education, it is also true that the differences between performance levels and the dropout rates in secondary school are greater among pupils from ethnic and linguistic minorities (Støren, Helland et al., 2007). Lillejord (2008) points out that the Norwegian
educational system is built on the assumptions of a homogenous, consensus-seeking society. Consequently, it is a great challenge to change the cultures and structures of schools. It is not just about improving performance and reducing dropout; the larger questions relate to what schooling is in a multicultural society. In a society characterized by diversity, schools need to help build knowledge about differences and promote cooperation between different groups and individuals. In this way, schools may be able to prepare students to take a position, to act in accordance with their convictions, and to promote important values such as solidarity and equality (Hagness, 2002).

Intercultural education aims to enable all to live in ethnically and culturally diverse communities (Leeman, 2003). Therefore, schools need to promote solidarity and key values, such as autonomy, equality, and social justice (Bennet, 2001). Moreover, intercultural education means that schools may have to initiate special measures in order to facilitate the learning needs of students from minority groups, for example, additional language training to promote social participation (Leemans, 2003). Both of these dimensions have been strongly emphasized in both policy development and research in the Nordic countries (Horst and Pihl, 2010). An intercultural perspective emphasizes the need to strengthen relationships between individuals and groups, in order to avoid seeing cultures as separate entities that exist (and continue to exist) side by side (Gundara and Portera, 2008). In this way, culture and ethnicity can constitute resources in a joint project for a diverse society, rather than as a matter of deficiency and deprivation. Intercultural education teaches students about the differences and similarities between cultural and ethnic groups, discrimination, the connections between and the importance of ethnicity and socioeconomic background, and the opportunities and limitations on social participation depending on ethnicity, gender, or status. It is not about celebrating diversity or to cultivate ethnic affiliation; rather, it focuses on the need to discuss such issues in order for students to develop attitudes and skills that enable them to manage their lives in a multicultural society. Through its practice, the school must work to develop common values and attitudes, but also contribute to promoting respect and recognition of others.

Most teachers in Norwegian schools may not have skills related to intercultural education, and it may not be a theme that is discussed among the school’s staff. The majority of the teachers in upper secondary schools received their teacher education at a time when there were no such challenges, and for the vast majority of Norwegian schools, the number of students from minority backgrounds is relatively low. This means that many Norwegian teachers have little or no experience with teaching linguistic and ethnic minority students. According to Pihl (2000), the most significant educational challenge we face concerning multicultural education is schools’ mono-cultural roots. Teachers and school leaders are socialized through education and practice into a structure and culture that has rarely taken into account the fact that we live in a multicultural society. Intercultural education requires that the issues related to cultural differences are equally important in schools with few students from minority groups, because a core competence in our society is to be able to live with differences. For teachers and school leaders, this is a major challenge, especially when many of them neither have experience nor formal qualifications. Neverthe-
less, school leaders have a particular responsibility for promoting intercultural perspectives, and thus help highlight both problem areas and resources. Thus, we have interviewed leaders at a high school to examine the perceptions, beliefs, and values put into play.

Inclusive leadership

An important role for school leaders in multicultural schools is to promote and facilitate the educational practices in their schools in a manner where cultural and linguistic diversity is seen as a normal state, and not a state of emergency; a practice in which the principle of adapted education is understood to include all students in academic learning processes (Dale, 2008). The need for a perspective on leadership for the inclusion of all constitutes the foundation for Ryan's concept of inclusive leadership (Ryan, 2006). Ryan conceptualizes inclusive leadership as involving the relationships between school members, the ways in which roles and responsibilities are distributed, and the purposes and goals of the organization. Based on the special challenges leaders face in multicultural schools, it is necessary to examine the manner in which goals, responsibilities, and relationships promote or hinder inclusion. Ryan (2006) sees leadership as a collective process in which actors are influenced and have opportunities to exert influence. Co-determination is an integral part, as well as an outcome of, inclusive leadership. This perspective is a criticism of management approaches that exclusively focus on the qualities or skills of formal leaders, an approach that is shared with distributed leadership (Spillane, 2006). It is the normative valuation through explicit and predetermined objectives that differentiates between the two perspectives.

Inclusive leadership is a consistent and continual commitment to advancing the goal of social justice, and to developing the school's procedures, processes, and teaching practices in ways that will provide all students with the knowledge and skills required to enable their participation, both in school and in the community. In multicultural schools, this implies that school leaders should promote inclusion, ensure that teachers and students develop knowledge about cultural diversity, monitor instruction to make sure that instruction addresses all students' learning, establish inclusive strategies for decision-making, and work to develop collective attitudes (Ryan, 2006). Thus, it is not only about preventing obviously discriminatory attitudes and practices among students and staff. Inclusive leadership entails that leaders work relentlessly to change structures, policies, and teaching practices that may be exclusive. A particularly important task is to build knowledge, both through in-service and further education, but also to create arenas for information and knowledge sharing and development among teachers, students, and parents. For such knowledge development to take place, critical awareness must be developed among all school actors, because this is a prerequisite for breaking with habitual ways of thinking. An open and supportive school culture is necessary in order to establish the critical dialogue where exclusionary attitudes and practices can be detected, recognized, and challenged. School leaders should create arenas for communication where dialogue about student learning is the top priority. Professional learning cultures can help to develop the individual instructor’s teaching repertoire repertoire, and also...
create and maintain networks for critical dialogue (Riehl, 2000).

Changing a school's cultures and practices are complex tasks, and will not succeed unless the school's many stakeholders understand and invest in such change. Nevertheless, school leaders' positions give them both responsibility and opportunity. Inclusion is both a normative and a professional project. Thus, how the school leaders contribute in the meaning-making processes among school staff, pupils, and parents is important. But school leaders are not always aware of the ways in which the school's practice legitimizes beliefs that privilege some students and marginalize others (Riehl, 2000). Consequently, diversity may be rendered invisible, or diversity may be "celebrated" without connecting to the schools teaching practices. This is the background for our interest in exploring how school leaders describe and understand their role as "advocates" for an inclusive practice.

Method

The data is based on a case study of Fossen upper secondary school. Fossen is located in a medium-sized Norwegian city. The percentage of minority students is between 10 and 15%. A total of just under 1300 students and approximately 300 teachers, school administrators, and other staff work in the school. We have conducted individual interviews with the principal, a deputy, and a social adviser with special responsibility for the school's work related to linguistic and ethnic diversity. We also conducted a group interview with eight deputies. Ethnographic field notes (Atkinson, Coffey et al., 2007), form the basis for the design of the interview guides, and also provides background data for the analysis. In this article, attention is on expectations, beliefs, and assumptions related to intercultural education.

Three dimensions provide a framework for the analysis of the school leaders' perceptions. The first is related to the notion that traditional values and standards give access to participation in school. As a consequence, the school seeks to normalize certain actions, values, and beliefs (including students adaptation to these values and standards), and to exclude those who do not follow or adapt to the norms (Tate, 1997). The second dimension refers to the ways that ‘status quo’ interests may be manifested in the school’s practices, vision, and mission (Ladson-Billing & Tate, 1995). Third, we focus on how school leaders see diversity in the school, and to what extent they are influenced by beliefs that allow them to ignore the immigrant students' backgrounds, perspectives, and in some cases, their presence (Tate, 1997).

Who are minority students?

Both within research and in educational policy documents, minority students are defined differently. The concepts in use are displayed in the schools’ practice when categorizing the students. Often, linguistic minority, a concept that embraces the linguistic competences, is used; thus, the cultural aspects may be invisible. At Fossen, the students’ linguistic proficiency is the point of departure regarding categorization practices. When the linguistic proficiency is so low that special adaptation is required, the students are labeled as “minorities”. The deputy principal explained that Fossen High consisted of a very small group (probably not more than 45) of minority students. He considered ethnic and linguistic minority students as being
equivalent to students with special educational needs (SEN). He explained that the entire group of minority students was probably larger, since many were become part of the ordinary student group and could no longer be considered minority students. In addition, since they had been to an ordinary Norwegian elementary school, they were not considered to have “any problems with coming from a different country of origin from Norway.”

From an intercultural education perspective, to categorize someone as “finished with the integration process” is highly problematic. Labeling of any sort, including stereotyping (Evans, 2004) as “integrated or not integrated,” while it may help colleagues, students, and parents make sense in an efficient manner, may also justify the majority students’ legitimacy over the minority students. Moreover, labeling minority students as students with special educational needs displays a willingness and ability to construct meanings based on stereotypes. Furthermore, through deficit thinking, implicit meanings about minority students may legitimate a hierarchical structure and status quo. Hence, this could ultimately marginalize the academic and social interests of minority students (Gorski and Founder, 2008). Moreover, the social adviser’s statements support this perception: “If we define minority students, we count strange names and then we wait, and those who do not see themselves to have any problems are considered ordinary students.” She continues: “This is a Norwegian school and here you are a Norwegian student. Either you speak Norwegian or you do not speak Norwegian.” She also contends that, “We can have minority students but they have to speak Norwegian. That is how we focus. They have nothing to do here if they cannot speak Norwegian.” “The norm” is to speak Norwegian. Consequently, it may be that the school underestimates the significance of linguistic proficiency in teaching and learning, losing the opportunity to connect it with questions about belonging and identity (Østberg, 2009).

Results show that the school leaders suggest two categories of minority students. The first consists of those who are “already integrated” and who have a high Norwegian linguistic proficiency. Thus, these students do not need any particular form of adaptation. The first group consists of those who have not yet mastered the Norwegian language, and who may at the same time have social challenges and problems with various school subjects. The second group consists of SEN (special education needs) students with social or academic problems, thus treating multilingualism as a functional disability (Pihl, 2010). Thus, some students are uncritically defined as students with special educational needs, and not as students requiring adapted education due to their linguistic and ethnic backgrounds. Furthermore, those who are not categorized as SEN students may lose the opportunity to receive an equitable education; hence, they will be excluded from important learning processes.

The significance of the mother tongue

Although linguistic proficiency in Norwegian was considered an important criterion with regard to the definition of a minority student, some of the school leaders recognized the significance of taking advantage of the minority students’ first language in teaching and learning. For instance, one deputy principal stated that she
was in favor of translating textbooks from Norwegian into different languages since there were several minority students who had difficulties understanding parts of the school subjects due to their lack of Norwegian linguistic proficiency. Two of her colleagues had a quite different approach. One argued that translation would imply “a shift in the wrong direction.” Supporting him, a second deputy principal added that “as long as you are a student in a Norwegian school, a prerequisite ought to be that you are able to understand what is being said in that school.” His assumptions may confirm the social adviser’s point of view in the preceding section. The deputy principal also contended that teachers had complained that it was quite unfortunate that minority students used their first language. He emphasized that it was impossible to understand what the minority students were talking about as long as they used a language other than Norwegian. I asked him what his preferences would be, and he suggested having two or three social workers who spoke the students’ language, to which I replied, “In the classroom?” He explained:

Yes, and in recess, in the library, or anywhere. You meet them, and you listen to a language that you do not understand. Even if you demand that they ought to speak Norwegian, they seldom do. I wish that we had a kind of social worker who could have a certain kind of control regarding what was going on internally in these groups.

Although research documented worldwide has emphasized the positive effects of the use of the mother tongue language in learning a second language (Cummins, 1981; Skutnab-Kangas and Cummins,, 1988; Krashen 1995), in his view, the focus on the students’ use of their native language was primarily a matter of being able to monitor and control them, rather than (as his opponent initially suggested) to use it as a tool for developing understanding. Several studies have also documented that in learning a new language, it may take more than five years for minority students to attain academic skills such as vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension (Cummins, 1981; Hakuta, Butler et al., 2000; Thomas and Collier, 2002). Moreover, the negativity towards the students’ first language justifies a practice which does not guarantee high quality education for all students based on equity and social justice principles (Pihl, 2000; Gorski and Founder, 2008).

Specifically evident here is the downplaying of the mother tongue language’s significance as a tool for learning and understanding. The examples also exemplify “deficit thinking” (Valencia, 1997) that is often associated with minority students. Placing blame on students’ linguistic and ethnic background effectively negated the impact of structural inequality on the minority students and their school (Evans, 2007).

**Colour-blindness and neutrality**

Several school leaders specifically underscored the importance of thinking of minority students as an extremely heterogeneous group. As an example, the principal referred to Norwegian linguistic proficiency, educational background, and socio economic background. Additionally, he emphasized the importance of focusing on challenges in connection to what students have in their “backpack related to behaviour.” However, in practice, linguistic and ethnic backgrounds are often made
invisible in conflict management. To exemplify (data from observation): After a meeting with a minority student who was accused of engaging in provocative behaviour, the principal emphasized that the student’s behaviour had nothing to do with his ethnic origin or language. His considerations may be considered an instance of ethnically neutral explanation. The school is constructed as value neutral.

Value neutrality is also displayed with regard to educational practices at school. Intercultural education is not a theme for discussion among staff. In the individual interview with the deputy principal, I asked if there was any kind of adapted education due to the fact that some students have linguistic and ethnic minority backgrounds. He replied:

_Yes, in a natural manner, just as if someone had originated from Bergen. Fine, how is it there? And from Somalia, how is it there? So, it is a natural part of it. In the Program for Restaurant and Food Processing, they often have an international week, where students from different countries make their contributions on the menu._

Internationally, research tends to agree that an information package on other cultures is inadequate for approaching intercultural education: intercultural education ought to go beyond celebrating diversity on menus and on certain days. Advocating and practicing intercultural education ought to disturb the existing sociopolitical order and problematize privilege (Gorski & Founder, 2008), which involves more than knowing what it is like in different countries around the world. However, the school leaders at Fossen do not consider it necessary to use examples and content from different cultures and groups to illustrate important concepts, generalizations, and theories in a school subject (Banks, 2006). A deputy principal contended that these dimensions were not supposed to be addressed in a high school curriculum. “It is too late for that,” he stated. Additionally, he pointed at the minority students’ skills before they start in high school. He also stressed that the students have to be made aware of the necessity to be prepared for a job market in which Norwegian language is required. Additionally, he claimed that the high school should not be responsible for issues related to using content from different cultures and groups. The social advisor’s point of view, as expressed in her individual interview, may support my interpretation that there is a tendency to ignore the very presence of minority students: “There is no focus on the fact that we have students with a minority background and that they have brought something with them.” The significance of developing and to practice a culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) is not a prominent trait.

**Arenas for creating meaning**

The interviews display that Fossen, to a very limited extent, has facilitated arenas where the significance of linguistic and ethnic diversity are discussed. Indeed, the school leaders contend that the issues related to minority students are often discussed in various meetings, and that they handle problems well when they arise, because they respond quickly when it is needed. However, if questions related to the education of minority students are mainly brought up when acute situations occur, one consequence may be that basic issues connected to concepts, knowledge, theo-
ries, and explanations become invisible and not thematized. Hence, the problems are handled instrumentally, without challenging assumptions and meanings. Inclusion becomes a technical question where problems related to linguistic and ethnic origin must find a solution through assimilation: "(...) We define inclusion like ‘now they understand Norwegian, so now they are able to participate.’ " Inclusion presupposes the ability to reveal and challenge such attitudes (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010). Nevertheless, this presupposes both arenas and competence, which seems to be lacking at Fossen.

Our data displays, for instance, that the school leaders pay little attention to what a linguistic and ethnic diversity may imply for the school’s educational practices. The school leaders consider high proficiency in Norwegian as a prerequisite for participating in the educational system, and that students who do not have this knowledge risk being ignored. The students ought to adapt to the educational practice at school, and not the educational practice to the students’ prerequisites. We can see that the minority students’ competence is not highly valued: the school leaders primarily see them in terms of whether they function within traditional Norwegian practices. If a student has high Norwegian language proficiency, and other competences or challenges are becoming invisible, potentially significant issues connected to linguistic and ethnic diversity is ignored.

Leadership for inclusion

From an inclusive leadership perspective (Ryan, 2006), the leadership group at Fossen may easily be criticized. The findings reveal that the leadership group’s expectations, opinions, and assumptions are manifested in deficit thinking, normalization, and ethnic neutrality. On the one hand, this is disquieting provided that school leaders’ values and perceptions are of great importance for the school’s understanding of inclusion of linguistic and ethnic minorities. On the other hand, it is equally important to emphasize that the school leaders at Fossen focus on the importance of the minority students’ skills in the Norwegian language as a presupposition to be able to participate in school and society. Nevertheless, concerning the inclusion of linguistic and ethnic minorities, what is reported that the school does not do is equally important, as well as what perceptions the practice rests upon. Values and actions need to be problematized and opinions re-negotiated. Inclusive leadership does not provide rigid prescriptions for leadership. Rather it provides practical suggestions for promoting and implementing inclusive leadership (Ryan, 2006).

One prerequisite for the inclusion of linguistic and ethnic minorities is knowledge. In schools like Fossen where the number of minority students is relatively low, school leaders must be in the forefront regarding this kind of knowledge. This implies that they must recognize inclusion as a goal, and intercultural education as a prerequisite for learning to live in a multicultural society, whether the school has 1, 10, or 80% of students with a different background than the majority students. Likewise they ought to take initiatives to develop knowledge among staff members. By creating arenas for knowledge development, school leaders advocate for dialogue, an opportunity for multiple voices to be heard, and critical consciousness among
the school leaders and teachers. This knowledge development may contribute to the recognition of difference, and to the avoidance of transparent taken-for-granted patterns that may lead to exclusion of minority students. This is particularly important concerning practices that are connected to intercultural education (Gorski & Founder, 2008).

In a study examining the impact of particular types of leadership practice on student outcomes (Robinson, Claire et al., 2008), two analyses of different types of leadership provided essentially the same answer—the closer educational leaders get to the core business of teaching and learning, the more likely they are to have a positive impact on students’ outcomes. Inclusive leadership implies having a particular focus on how educational practices promote inclusion, and shows enthusiasm and support for the teachers in their struggle to change exclusive practices. Contributing to solving the existing problems, like the leaders at Fossen, is a part of this. Likewise, it is equally important to have an exploratory approach to the teachers’ classroom practices in order to advocate for and promote inclusion (Ryan, 2006). To exemplify this implies to make inclusion a nonnegotiable reality (Anderson & Fine, 1993; Nordahl & Skilbrei, 2002), to identify, and act in accordance with exclusive practices, and to share the theoretical, ethical, and research-based rationality for inclusive education and leadership (Thousand & Villa, 1994). School leaders who consciously advocate for and promote inclusion will create arenas for frequent discussions about inclusive practices. To take a critical stance presupposes that school leaders contribute to the development of a school culture that promotes dialogue, as well as members who are willing to participate in such dialogue. This is important in order to secure a school development aiming at ensuring social justice, and to avoid the undercommunication of aspects connected to ethnicity and social classes (Bakken, 2007; Lillejord, 2008). Dialogue may, at its best, encourage the inclusion of voices not normally heard (Ryan, 2006). For schools like Fossen, this implies that the school leadership takes initiatives to develop structures for cooperation and ensures that issues related to the inclusion of minority students are put on the agenda.

Core concepts in most definitions of leadership point out directions in school development and exert influence on staff (Leithwood, Harris et al., 2008). We have discussed implications for leadership in a linguistic and ethnically diverse upper secondary school. In order to avoid ignorance and assimilation, school leaders have a particular responsibility to direct and influence staff to counteract the practice of difference-blind principles based on unconscious, discriminatory arguments. Inclusion implies the emancipation of those who are marginalized, and ensuring opportunities to develop knowledge, skills, and courage, thus enabling them to participate in the school’s activities and in society. Both inclusive leadership and intercultural education have normative aspects based on values connected to equity and social justice. It is necessary to take an explicit, value-based position in accordance with the school’s core values when it comes to leadership of the diverse students that are part of a Norwegian upper secondary school.
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Przywództwo w szkołach a językowa i etniczna różnorodność

Niniejszy artykuł jest próbą odpowiedzi autora na pytanie, jak liderzy w edukacji mogą przysłużyć się inkluzji wszystkich studentów w kształcenie. Autorzy przyglądają się szkolnictwu w Norwegii, które choć aspiruje do zapewnienia wszystkim uczniom porządnej edukacji, sprawia, że część uczniów będących przedstawicielami mniejszości osiąga gorsze wyniki. Przyczyną tego może być brak odpowiedniego przygotowania przywódców w szkołach i nauczycieli do kształcenia w warunkach wielojęzyczności i wielokulturowości uczniów, gdy „norweskie” wartości przestają...
Przywództwo w szkołach powinno zatem wspierać rozwój tej różnorodności i eliminować złe praktyki.

W artykule autorzy przedstawiają wywiady z przywódcami norweskich szkół drugiego stopnia, w których opisują oni swoją praktykę, wyrażając opinie i oczekiwania wobec wielokulturowej edukacji. Mniejszości w Norwegii wydają się uczestniczyć na równych prawach w społeczeństwie w niższym stopniu niż w wielu innych krajach Europy, co więcej, norweski system edukacji wydaje się być zbudowany na założeniu homogeniczności społeczeństwa. Szkoły muszą więc zacząć nadzierać za zmianami i wspierać współpracę między różnymi grupami społecznymi. Niestety wielu nauczycieli nie jest przygotowanych do pracy z uczniami pochodzącymi z mniejszości, ponadto sami byli wykształceni w systemie opartym na monokulturowości. Podstawową kompetencją, której szkoły powinny uczyć, jest umiejętność życia w różnorodnym społeczeństwie, do czego wielu przywódców i nauczycieli nie ma kompetencji.

Koncepcja inkluzywnego przywództwa opiera się na przeświadczeniu, że szkoła powinna tworzyć więzy między wszystkimi członkami jej społeczności i że różnorodność powinna być uważana za stan normalny. Inkluzywne przywództwo powinno być procesem mającym na celu dostosowanie wszystkich uczniów do życia w wielokulturowym społeczeństwie. Powinno prowadzić do zrywania z wykluczającymi praktykami. Chociaż jest to trudne, wymagające wielu zmian systemowych zadanie, przywódcy w szkołach mają możliwość i obowiązek wspierania dobrych praktyk, z czego często nie zdają sobie sprawy.

Na potrzeby badania przeprowadzone zostały wywiady w szkole średniej w Fossen, której 10–15% uczniów i pracowników należy do mniejszości etnicznej. Postrzeganie mniejszości w szkole zostało ograniczone do mniejszości językowych, różnice kulturowe zaś wydają się być niezauważone. Uczniowie o innych narodowościach zostali potraktowani jak uczniowie specjalnej troinki lub jeśli opanowali język norweski i ukończyli norweskie szkoły, jako w pełni zintegrowani „normalni” uczniowie.

Z wywiadów wynika, że szkoła nie dostrzega różnorodności kulturowej wśród swoich uczniów, „norweskość” jest zaś uznana za normę, do której należy dążyć w procesie edukacji. Pewnych problemów nasłuchiwać niewystarczająca znajomość języka norweskiego przez niektórych uczniów, w wywiadach można jednak dostrzec negatywny stosunek pracowników szkoły do takiej różnorodności językowej. Szkoła, starając się być kulturowo neutralna, nie łączy pochodzenia etnicznego uczniów z ich sytuacją, co sprawia, że wielokulturowość staje się jeszcze bardziej niewidoczna. Potrzeba nauczania, jak żyć razem w wielokulturowym społeczeństwie, jest niedostateczna. Uczniowie pochodzący z mniejszości są w Fossen kategoryzowani jedynie pod względem znajomości języka norweskiego, pozostałe ich kompetencje i wyzwania, z jakimi muszą się zmierzyć, pozostają niezauważone.

Przywództwo w przebadanej szkole może być zatem poddane krytyce jako niepełna,veneszące wymogów założeń inkluzywnego przywództwa. Inkluzja nie może polegać na normalizacji studentów z innych grup etnicznych i niedostatecznie różnic pozwala na teraz na etnicznej neutralności. Przywódca powinien obrać sobie za cel rozprowadzanie wiedzy na temat wielokulturowości i wprowadzanie dobrych
praktyk niezależnie od liczby uczniów nienależących do dominującej grupy etnicznej. Zarówno rozwiązywanie bieżących problemów związanych z wieloetnicznością, jakie pojawiają się w szkole (co ma miejsce w Fossen), jak i wspieranie długo trwałych procesów mających na celu zastępowanie wykluczających praktyk powinno być zadaniem szkoły. Inkluzja zakłada tworzenia pola dla dyskusji na temat różnorodności i wspieranie rozwoju uczniów z zachowaniem ich odmienności, co wymaga przedefiniowania pewnych wartości, na jakich opiera się system szkolny.