



School of Health, Care and Social Welfare

# SWEDISH TEACHERS IN MULTICULTURAL CLASSROOMS

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## ABSTRACT

Mass migration in the past five decades fills classrooms with a mix of cultures, values and national identities. Swedish teachers find themselves working in multicultural classrooms. The aim of this study is to identify the challenges teachers face and propose solutions. This study uses the qualitative research methods of grounded theory and participatory action research. This exploratory research uncovered the theory that political factors, support, self-image and multicultural competence impacted the teachers' central task of raising Swedish citizens. Additionally, teachers reveal their tactics and proposed solutions to manage the challenges in multicultural classrooms. Teachers call for policy changes, including smaller class sizes and providing multicultural competency skills for teachers.

**Keywords:** grounded theory, teachers, multiculturalism, work-life

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Swedish teachers are currently challenged to teach in multicultural classrooms. Class populations changed drastically as a mass of new types of students with diverse backgrounds started entering Sweden reflecting the national population change.

The present study aims to explore teachers' work in multicultural classrooms and further to identify the challenges, as well as the solutions teachers are using or seeking.

This study's approach to earlier research evolved from the chosen research method, a grounded theory process that starts with a "blank slate" and attempts to gather information in the process of gaining information from research participants. Prior research was gathered concurrent to data emerging in the exploratory study. The teachers' perspective and experience appear to have been the missing piece in comprehending how education is functioning in Sweden. This research aims to fill some of the gap between the philosophical ideals and the real undertakings of the working life of teachers in Sweden during this time of demographic changes.

## 1.1 Political Impacts

### 1.1.1 *Sweden's population change impacting teachers' work*

Sweden's population picture has changed rapidly as refugee immigration accelerated growth. Sweden's population has grown by 1.4 million since 2000 with most of the growth attributed to immigration. (SCB, 2020). Today, 19% of the Swedish population constitutes of inhabitants born outside of Sweden. (SCB, 2020)

As families and unaccompanied children are entering Swedish society, schools are taking in a mix of cultures. Schierup, Hansen and Castles (2006, Chapter 8) state that while the post-World War II generation and baby boomers experienced a mostly homogeneous society of social democracy and Nordic traditions, since the late 1970s Swedish society has become much more multicultural as the result of globalisation and migration.

The following information came from the Swedish migration authorities (Migrationsverket, 2016) and Swedish population statistics (SCB, 2016). Unfortunately, due to reorganisation of those departments and their websites, the information is no longer available through the links from which they were accessed.

- Political upheaval in Chile and Iran caused 40,000 immigrants to come from those countries in the 1980s into the 90s.
- The former Yugoslavia produced many refugees in the 1990s. Several came to Sweden
- These new inhabitants added more Catholic, Muslim and other traditions to the Lutheran-dominant culture in Sweden.
- As 2000 to 22,000 immigrants come annually from the Middle East since 1980, Muslim influence increases in Sweden.
- The number of asylum seekers increased from 50,000 in 2013 to 160,000 in 2015. They mainly from the Middle East, Africa and Asia.

### 1.1.2 *Sweden's school policy changes*

The school's population in Sweden is changing due to social political situations according to Nihad Bunar (2008). Bunar (2008) found that the current Swedish school system attempts to blend multiculturalism, combine traditional social democracy

with neoliberalism and all this creates a conflicted mix.

Summarising the research of Bunar (2008), the decision to privatise education failed to improve schools and only created higher costs in many areas. While the social democratic focus is to equalise citizens' economic situation through distributing education capital fairly, neoliberal policies moved education out of the public realm into a private commodity. The ambiguous role of charter schools resulted in an increased gap between the economic privilege and those in poverty in a "poorly organised education market" (Bunar, 2008, p 435). Instead of creating integrated multiculturalism, Sweden's open school system, one of the most liberal educational markets in the world, created segregation (Bunar, 2008; Arnesen, 2006).

## **1.2 Support**

As political changes in the world brought refugees from many cultures into the classrooms and the national educational policies changed many schools from public to private entities, teachers' work became more complicated. They needed to find support from colleagues, parents, and administration.

### ***1.2.1 Support from colleagues***

Much of the support comes from colleagues, both formally and informally. The formal meetings seem to occur around a practical task, whereas the informal are around sharing insights and tactics for teaching strategies (Stedt, 2011).

Research performed by Cameron and Lindqvist (2014) found that special education teachers' one-to-one time with students had decreased significantly while their advisory and administration tasks increased. Deductively, we can imagine that as students with special needs get less one-to-one time with these educational support staff members, classroom teachers are needing to devote more time to the struggling students.

The Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS 2013) performed through The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) suggests that teachers in Sweden need to receive more support to increase efficiency and job satisfaction (Skolverket, 2014).

### ***1.2.2 Parental support***

According to Bouakaz (2007), as psychology and educational science became interested in child development, parental participation in their child's education lessened. Teachers were given a greater role to raise the child and this especially relates to immigrant children. A policy decision was made that demonstrated little confidence that parents can integrate their children into the Swedish society as "democratically inclined and well-functioning citizens" (ibid, p 69). Schools and teachers report being often frustrated by parents' lack of participation in their program. The schools culture and parents culture tend not to mix. The schools may fail to sympathise with the parents' complex struggle. Immigrant parents tend to be absorbed in trying to adapt to a new language and society that challenges their traditional family roles. The parents often have difficulty understanding Swedish educational methods as they come from another education system. Parents use a strategy of resignation and avoidance to suppress feeling humiliated by their lack of knowledge of the system.

A study on school absenteeism and dropouts in a community in Turkey found that immigrant students failed to engage in school when parents had a poor relationship with the school. Their study found that parents failed to support their child's

participation in school due to lack of care, family problems, financial difficulties and failing to understand the importance of education (Sahim, Arseven & Kilic, 2016).

Formal school education tends to perpetuate the ideals of the ruling political authorities, local and national (McCulloch, 2016). Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller (2002) go as far as describing school education as "methodological nationalism". Sahim et al. (2016) noted that some parents held views that departed from the school culture; they had not participated in school education and lacked appreciation for education - preferring that their children simply study the Koran and start family life instead.

Parents' socioeconomic position tends to impact their connection to the school. Parents with less cultural capital of Western European ways can feel that teachers, police and social workers as suppressive authorities. This lack of trust inhibits open communication and can often frustrate teachers in their attempted relationships with immigrant parents so that teachers become ambivalent and resign to non-functioning connections. (Bouakaz, 2007)

Since education is historically seen from the perspective of the ruling majority of the population, often minority children and parents are seen as uncooperative and even rebellious (McCulloch, 2011; Bouakaz, 2007; Khetarpal, 2017). As negotiators between the policy ideals and the actual multicultural classroom experience, teachers are placed in stressful positions. Bouakaz (2007) encourages teachers to develop a new view with multicultural understanding to address the parent's desire to grasp their new citizenship responsibilities and not just focus on their school involvement.

### ***1.2.3 Support from the administrative system.***

Support may include public services like hospitals, police and social services. International research has provided more insight to how the larger system including school administration can support the work of teachers in multicultural classrooms. Georgis, Gokiert, Ford and Ali (2014) observed the Canadian collaborative approach to integrating immigrant students into the school system. They found that the system employed cultural translators to connect public and private community organisations, including schools, with new immigrants. These cultural translators know the immigrants' culture and language and interpret the new system into terms that harmonise with values from the old country. The results of the study found that immigrant families rapidly integrated into society as a result of the intervention.

## **1.3 A Cultural Competency Framework**

As the student population has changed significantly in the Swedish classrooms, teachers are faced with challenges around multiculturalism. Teachers in many countries outside of Scandinavia have been working in multicultural environments and have developed strategies with varying degrees of success.

### ***1.3.1 Cultural competency.***

The term cultural competency was coined by sociologists and psychologists Cross, Bazron, Dennis, and Isaacs, (1989) to describe the ability to work successfully in multicultural context. McCabe (2006) described the best level of cultural competency is striving for an overall balanced outcome. Empathy and self-awareness and awareness of others are core components of cultural competence (McCabe, 2006; Cross et al., 1989). Cultural competency is a lifelong process of becoming aware of one's own norms,

attitudes and expectations while minimising attitudes and biases (Lehman, 2016).

Several researchers interchange the terms: 'intercultural competence', 'multicultural competence' and 'intercultural competence'. Yet, they all refer to creating successful outcomes in multicultural context (Leavitt, 2010).

Cultural competency is a concept that initiated in the medical field to enhance agreement between medical staff and patients of different cultures. People with diverse backgrounds can have varying values and desired outcomes. The differences need to be taken into consideration when a professional provides services to the client or patient so that the client gets the service he or she wants and the provider lives up to his or her professional standard.

### ***1.3.2 Focusing on cultural competency in schools.***

Introducing multicultural skills in teacher education became a focus within the past twenty-five years in many nations. A systematic review of multicultural education programs for teachers revealed that the different student teacher multicultural education programs lack effectiveness, yet intense cultural immersion programs produced noticeable impressions on the teachers-in-training (Mills, 2008). When students learning to become teachers engaged in a tutoring program for new immigrant children in Australia the student teachers developed a multicultural competence that resulted in the immigrant students' academic success (Naidoo, 2013). Learning by engaging in the multicultural environment, such as experiencing a theatrical portrayal, also proved to be effective according to Berhanu and Beach (2006). Their research involved an intervention using a theatrical performance to stimulate dialogue and empathy of intercultural values in an immigrant dense school in Göteborg. They found that teachers and students engaged in problem solving around critical social issues as a result of participation.

A comparative study between Switzerland and Turkey revealed that student teachers with cultural competency training had better outcomes in their multicultural classes than those with no training (Polat & Ogay-Barka, 2014). Lahdenperä (2000) emphasises awareness of the communication differences in creating multicultural competent relationships. Another study from Sweden revealed that teachers felt a lack of intercultural competence as they are challenged with educating immigrant children (Popov & Sturesson, 2015).

### ***1.3.3 A need for teacher cultural competency skills.***

Swedish scholars, Sandström Kjellin and Stier (2008), studied five European countries and their teachers' citizenship educational practice. They found that self-awareness and self-reflection are key components needed for teaching values. Specifically, as a teacher, one must be able to see and reflect upon one's own attitudes, values and behaviours in one's role as an influencer to students. The researchers found that the five countries had different guidelines resulting in a variety of knowledge, skills, attitudes and performance in the teachers. Particularly, in Sweden, the guidelines presented ambiguous values and offered no clarity about how teachers should learn competence. This study of the five countries revealed that one student teacher overcompensated for Swedish preference by allowing free expression from ethnic non-Swedes and excluded the Swedish pupil.

Similarly, results in a British study found that while teachers in the UK seem to be motivated for multicultural fairness, they are unevenly skilled (Forrest, Lean & Dunn, 2016,)

Scandinavian scholars found a need for multicultural competency skills to be developed in teachers so that they could meet the challenges of multiculturalism in



this changing society (Räsänen, 2009; Popov, 2015). Räsänen (2009) defines those competencies as being able to minimising inequality through awareness of cultural differences, stereotypes and discrimination.

### **1.3.4 Assimilation and integration is a challenge.**

Resistance towards integration comes from the majority, the minority and the confusion around defining a cohesive national identity (Keddie, 2014).

Informal powers of position tend to be the resistance to multiculturalism as the established majority culture feels threatened by changes to the status quo (Lahdenperä, (2011). The old established culture clashes with "other" cultures and, historically, the established culture uses the education system to "reform" the other into the majority way of thinking (Churchill, 2004). Ultimately both majority and minority populations are ethnic groups and only when the concept of dominant culture ceases to exist will true assimilation occur (Wirt, 1979).

As the result of her research Lahdenperä (2009) found that Swedish schools are generally monocultural promoting "Swedishness" treating immigrants as "others", and concludes that school leadership needs multicultural competency to include understanding, behaviour and personal abilities in working with multicultural situations. Awareness of one's own concepts, ideas and ethnic background are basic requirements to be able to engage in multiculturally appropriate behaviour; beyond playing with an ideal of diversity (Lahdenperä 2000; 2009).

Minority cultures may also present strong resistance to multiculturalism. Keddie (2014) interviewed staff and students at an immigrant dense school and found that minority parents promoted homeland culture, language and affiliation while teachers attempted to create a unified cultural consciousness. The child was taught loyalty to the the country of their ancestors at home. Then at school, teachers attempt to create a cohesive cultural identity in the class, yet were met with resistances as students identified themselves as Indian, Pakistani, Afghani, etcetera. first and British secondly. Teachers expressed that the religious, ethnic and rational distinctions created alienation and segregation. In effort to integrate the two forces, students tended to identify "Britishness" in ways that appeared as a shared culture or as a birthplace and/or residence. Teachers attempted to integrate both the parents' efforts with their own into a British identity that included diversity.

Scholars identified the uncertainties involved in understanding diversity, assimilation and national identity as an additional resistance. Keddie (2014) expressed teachers' confusion and their decision to emphasise belonging more than assimilating into a narrow view of "Britishness". Teachers create a definition of "British identity" that includes all cultures. Lahdenperä (2000; 2009) found that when the country's ethnic majority holds onto narrow views of national identity, they exclude the new minorities and this precludes multiculturalism.

## **1.4 Teachers' experience of self**

The teacher's self-image comes both internally from within the individual teacher and from the society. Teachers have a personal view of their task and performance. Society forms an image of teachers that may or may not concur with the teachers' own perception. Prior research on teachers' personal view of their work is limited compared to research on students' experience of education. Since 2008, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has conducted a survey every five years with teachers in participating countries. In the survey, teachers can express their views on teaching. According to the Teaching and Learning International

Survey (TALIS 2013) only 5% of the teachers in Sweden feel that society values the teaching profession whereas in Norway 31% of the teachers feel their profession is valued and in Finland 59% feel that society appreciates their profession. Even with low social standing, 90% of Swedish teachers believe they have a low status in society, 90% report feeling satisfied in their profession (Skolverket, 2020).

Recently, researchers wrote much about changes in educational policy in Sweden with indications of reduced teacher status. In theory, teachers have the legal authority to use professional judgment to make decisions towards the end of proper and equal education for their students (Ohlsson, 2011; Bergh, 2015). In reality, educational policy has shifted the focus of schools and created limits on teachers that counter their ability to practice good pedagogy (Bergh, 2015).

*"Just as Sweden reshaped the school's position, it reshaped the role of the teacher. Given limited time, teachers came to focus on discovery learning and independent work. As the student's role and status increased, the teacher retreated." (Fletcher-Wood, 2016)*

Since political shifts in the 1990s introduced privatisation of many formally public organisations, schools in Sweden have become a type of market product with parents being the consumers (Bouakaz, 2007; Arnesen & Lundahl, 2006; Bergh, 2015; Aldenmeyr, Wigg & Olson, 2012). This shift into a market-oriented model puts teachers in the position of being part of a "sales team" with responsibilities to "keep the client" when parents have the option to remove and replace their children with the accompanying state funds following the child(ren) (Fletcher-Wood, 2016). This role shift conflicts with the teachers' main focus.

## 1.5 Moulding future citizens

Scandinavian scholars describe teachers' key role is that of raising future citizens, which includes integrating the new multicultural population into a cohesive society. Arnesen (2006) finds that education is the cornerstone of Nordic style of democracy. In Finland, the teacher's role is seen as a fluid construct including values, education, influence, and modelling citizenship (Räsänen, 2009). Ohlsson (2011) explains Swedish law and policy as asking teachers to go beyond the task to convey knowledge and take the responsibility to develop children into good citizens.

*"Bringing up democratic citizens was one of the core ideas of the education reforms after the end of the second World War and is still emphasised in the national curricula and educational legislation in the Nordic countries." (Arnesen & Lundahl, 2006 p 294)*

Society looks to schools, and teachers, to reduce racism by fostering integration and tolerance to build a society with national integrity (Keddie, 2014; Forrest, et.al, 2016; Arnesen, 2006). Arnesen (2006) found that education is expected to inclusively prepare all citizens to function both in the sociocultural and economic roles needed to sustain social democracy, particularly in the social welfare states of Scandinavia. Compulsory education is used to balance social-economic standings of all citizens while creating equality racially, culturally and in every way for justice in the workfare/welfare social democracy (Arnesen, 2006). Sandström Kjellin & Stier (2008) propose that teachers are expected to foster competence to work effectively in social and cultural diversity in their students. Teachers are asked to create active citizens for the social democratic society.

However, research shows contradictory visions of "citizenship" in neo-liberal

Swedish schools. The societal expectation of citizen-building for a harmonious multicultural social democracy in Sweden is countered by the competitive, commercialised society in which the market-oriented schools exist. Teachers hold ethical educational ideals to mould students into citizens of democracy. The neo-liberal ideal of citizenship speaks of a self-determining, active individual, yet, is actually moulding students into desirable characteristics determined by the teacher that values marketed society or tradition. The pre-packaged, predetermined ideals alienates immigrant children. The disagreement between definitions of citizenship seems to create conflicts in teachers' understanding of their work (Aldenmyr, Wigg, & Olson, 2012).

## **1.6 Summary of the previous research**

The summary of this research shows that mass migration in the past 50 years has made multiculturalism and integration a central political topic impacting schools and teachers. Additionally, scholarly analysis reveals that education policy attempts to adapt to globalisation and bring about a fair social democratic integration, yet the policy has brought the opposite result, greater segregation.

Maintaining the policy goal to accomplish multicultural integration, politicians put forth the ideas; teachers have the task of doing the hands-on sculpting. In the challenge, teachers need support. Prior research in community support is minimal, and none was found for this study relating to Sweden. Parent-teacher relationships were the topic of one Swedish doctorate research, which uncovers poor collaboration between immigrant parents and teachers showing that parental support for teachers needs great improvement. Support from colleagues is another area needing improvement according to OECD research.

Managing a multicultural classroom calls for multicultural competence. Most research in cultural competence comes from the English-speaking countries, yet European and Scandinavian studies are coming forth. These studies are mainly related to student teacher training. According to research on currently working teachers' experience, improvements are needed to succeed in multicultural classrooms, including opportunities for currently working educators to receive greater cultural competency skills.

Teachers' experience of their role has changed by the new educational policies and the free market school system. Teachers experience low social status with limited authority in the classroom and adapt salesmanship to compete in the market, yet as the TALIS 2013 shows, they find satisfaction in their work. Research inferred that Swedish teachers have a relatively low status in society, yet insufficient research exists to paint a clear picture.

Researchers express that schools are expected to mould the native- and immigrant-born children into future Swedish citizens. This ideal appears to be central to educational policy. Yet, the unspoken practical reality of teachers' task and performance is elusive and complicated by the increased multicultural population. Information and understanding appears to be missing.

## **2. AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Swedish classrooms are taking in more immigrant children including many who have arrived in the country without parents. This research investigates how Swedish teachers in multicultural classrooms perceive and manage their work. This aim can be presented in these two questions:

1. What challenges exist for teachers in Swedish multicultural classrooms?
2. How can teachers meet those challenges?

### **3. METHOD**

#### **3.1 Design**

This study began as an exploration of teachers' work life experience in multicultural classrooms and developed into engaging teachers to participate in evaluating and making suggestion for improvement. Teachers' participation in the research marries knowledge seeking with practice. Improvement is seen as a cycle of investigating needs, prioritising, planning, implementation and evaluation (Inauen, Jenny & Bauer, 2011). The two methods could then answer the research questions and set a foundation for the planning and implementation phases of the improvement cycle.

##### ***3.1.1 Grounded theory***

The investigation, and to some extent, the prioritising phases of the study were managed through using the grounded theory method (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2013; Glaser, 2009; Guvå, & Hylander, 2003) primarily run by the researcher. The teacher participants revealed the challenges of working in multicultural classrooms and provided suggestions for solutions in three phases: open coding, axial coding and theoretical coding (explained in more detail under the data processing section).

##### ***3.1.2 Participatory action research***

The developing relationships with teachers in their work called for addressing the problems and, thus, this study included a research forum in line with participatory research method (Herr & Anderson, 2012; Lindhult, 2019; Newton & Burgess, 2008). As teachers gave time and thought to their work life through the research interviews, they began to take an interest in further evaluating the challenges and possible solutions. Teachers reported that their time had been so occupied with their administrative and teaching tasks that they had not reflected on their working situation. The researcher added the participatory method for greater depth and further movement towards fulfilling the improvement cycle explained by Inauen, et al. (2011)

Erik Lindhult (2019) explains that participatory action research evolved as a method from the need to make scientific research relevant to the field for solving problems and improving social conditions. This research engages the participants into the actual research project and often results in more validity than other methods.

Collaboration and participation in the research by the stakeholders have the potential for best outcomes for change or improving practice (Herr & Anderson, 2012).

#### **3.2 Participant Selection**

The sample of teacher participants came from a variety of sources and could be considered a sampling of convenience. Several teachers came through friends of acquaintances. Two teachers came through another study conducted at the university. Five others came through direct contact with the researcher as she explained her research to teachers she met in daily life.

There were two criteria for participant selection: 1) Teachers who have worked for three or more years in Sweden 2) Teachers experienced with grades three through gymnasiet (high school).

Eleven teachers from grades 3 through gymnasiet were interviewed for the information in this study. One teacher was interviewed again for the third phase of data collection (see table 1). All interviews were in the interviewee's native language, which is Swedish except two that are noted below.

Table 1  
*Participants in the study*

<b>Participant &amp; gender (F/M)</b>	<b>Teaching grades -</b>	<b>Years worked as teacher</b>	<b>School type &amp; population</b>
P1 -F	4-6	42	public mostly immigrants
P2-F	3-5	15	public mostly immigrants
P3-F	3-5	23	public mostly immigrants
P4-M	8-9	6	charter mixed Swedish and immigrant population
P5-F	7-9	4	charter mixed Swedish & immigrant population
P6-F	7-9	14	charter mainly Swedish population
P7-F	gymnasiet level (10-12)	20	public mainly Swedish
P8-F	6 & 9 music & math	21	public mainly Swedish
P9-F	7-9	13	public mainly Swedish
P10-F	7-9	16	public mainly Swedish
P11-F	1-9 yet, last 20 years 7-9	43	public mainly immigrants
P12-F	4-6	13	public mainly immigrants
P13-F	gymnasiet (10-12)	4	public and private schools mainly immigrants
P14-F	special education	29	public and charter schools mixed population
P15-F	gymnasiet (10-12)	13	public mixed population

### 3.3 Data Collection

Gathering data came in the form of interviews conducted by myself as the

researcher during the period from April 2016 to September 2017 . Twelve 50 to 120-minute interviews were conducted, whereas ten were in Swedish and two in English, based on the comfort of the interviewee. Before the first round of interviews I formulated a few open ended questions asking about the teachers' experience working in multicultural classrooms (see appendix 1). With the information received in the first round of interviews, I made more specific questions to explore the topics revealed in more depth (see appendix 2). After the second round of interviews a model of teachers' working experience in multicultural classrooms began to form. I then created questions designed to get greater clarity of the experience and the challenges (see appendix 3). I met with the teachers either at their schools or in their homes. The interviews were then recorded, transcribed and partially translated. Additionally, memos, in the form of jotted down insights occurring to the researcher during the process, and other written materials, such as information from media, were used as suggested by Charmaz (2005). Four additional teachers gathered with the researcher for a three-hour research forum to review the identified challenges (research question one) and to form clear answers to research question two. The five participants gathered in a study room at the university after work. The researcher provided coffee, tea and sandwiches while introductions were made. One of the participating teachers took notes while the group discussed the findings from the grounded theory, fine-tuned the identified problems and came forth with solutions. Solutions came from a combination of practices the teachers had used, previous research, and practical ideas. The researcher took pictures of the problems and solutions chart that was scribbled on the white board (see appendix 4). All forum participants gave abundant information and insight on the experience of teaching in multicultural classrooms.

### **3.4 Ethical Considerations**

This study abides by the principles of the Swedish Research Council (Codex, 2015). All participants were informed of the purpose, design and use of the study. Their voluntary participation was emphasised, which included oral instruction that they could withdraw at any time as well as choose not to answer questions. Participants were informed that their interviews would be recorded, transcribed and kept in confidentiality. Additionally, revealing only the information needed to give a clear picture for the study conceals participant identity. No personal information is exposed.

### **3.5 Data Processing**

To answer the first question, this research followed grounded theory to develop a theory or discovery a process from studying the target population (Cresswell 2013; Pedersen, Hallberg & Wayne, 2007). This approach focuses on using an open mind, as absent of preconceptions as possible, to investigate the subjects' experience (Benton & Craib, 2011). The participation action research added confirmation of the results and embarked on the second question of finding solutions. Creating a picture of the working life of teachers came in the grounded theory phases of data collection through open-ended questions, analysing, reformulating more targeted open-ended questions, and collecting more data until no new data was emerging (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2013). Answering the second question came in the form of a focus forum where a group of five participants, including the researcher, evaluated the results of the grounded theory research and collaborated to come up with solutions to identified problems.

During the grounded theory research, the first phase, which is called open coding, included five interviews using a list of general questions (see appendix 1) that were tape recorded, transcribed and coded. I met with one fourth grade and

two third grade teachers working in an immigrant dense populated public school - teachers P1, P2 and P3. Then I met with two teachers at a bilingual Swedish-English charter school teaching grades seven to nine - teachers P4 and P5. One teacher is male; the other four are female.

The analysis of the first five interviews produced 19 categories, which were later reduced to 9 codes. These 19 categories were inter-coded by asking two scholars to read the first interview and to choose which concepts they could find from a list of 34 categories based on their review of the interview transcript. The overall inter rater reliability of Cronbachs Alpha K= .88. The 19 categories could be reduced to 9 codes.

The second phase, axial coding, required new interview questions (see appendix 2), which were used in an additional five interviews with teachers of grades 6 to 9 and gymnasiet - teachers P6, P7, P8, P9 and P10. These interviews were also taped, transcribed and coded.

The teachers revealed more details to the first concepts. The initial codes were re-evaluated and relationships between the categories were analysed more carefully. The nine codes were condensed to five with a clear core concept.

The third phase, theoretical coding, included an additional two interviews with new questions (see appendix 3). A 90-minute interview with the 11th teacher who had 43 years of experience created a full picture out of the collected data - teacher P11 - and a second interview with the gymnasiet teacher - teacher P7 -polished some of the details. This final stage revealed a model of interactive dynamics.

Simultaneous to the interviews, memos and notes were collected that included research materials, documents and "grey matter", as referred to by Pope, Ziebland and Mays (2000) that included the researchers insight and intuition, which helped assimilate the data into a meaningful depiction of Swedish teachers in multicultural classrooms. In between the interviews, and sometimes directly after, thoughts would come. Some ideas connected data to form an image, and others unveiled what was not said as important pieces of information to verify in later stages of the study. The memos were recorded either in voice memos on the smartphone or in a "draft with notes" document on the laptop.

As topics came from the interviews, the researcher investigated them further in previous research, textbooks on laws for teaching in Sweden and information from government and professional organisations web sites. Then the researcher returned to the field to gather more data from participants with new questions. The back and forth between the field for data collection and the closed door office for analysis can be likened to a crisscross stitch pulling a red thread through living experience and disciplined coding to create a usable structure (Guvå & Hylander, 2003).

After the grounded theory phase of this study, the researcher involved four teachers, which included three new teacher participants, to clarify the problems and brainstorm for solutions. Discussions came in the form of phone calls, emails and meetings, during a period of three months, centering around a focus forum session where we all met together as a team of five. Results for the second question came during the focus forum session and were refined in communications afterwards.

## 4 RESULTS

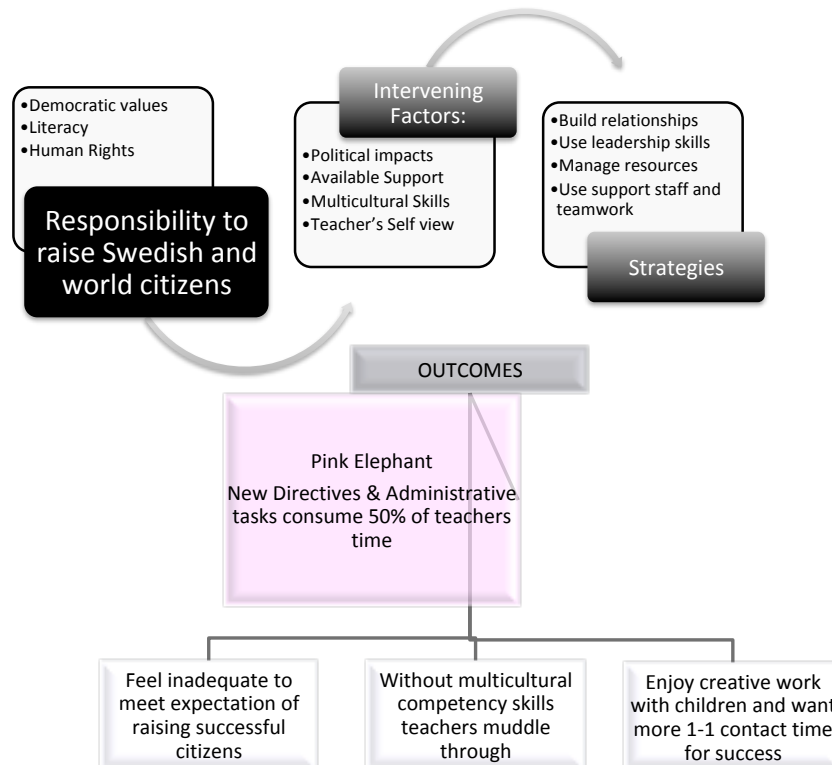
The participating teachers worked with grades 3 up through high school (gymnasiet) in middle Sweden. The teachers' perspectives come from their many years of working in several different schools and areas over their careers. The results of this study speak to the experience of teachers in the area around the Malaren Lake region of Sweden from Stockholm westward. The teachers gave rich descriptions of their

work-life experience and provided many ideas for solving the problems they face in multicultural classrooms. (see figure 1)

At the core, teachers begin with the responsibility to raise children into Swedish and world citizens. Swedish teachers aim to instil the democratic values of respect, equality and tolerance in their students. Included in the obligation to prepare citizens for a democratic society are the tasks of teaching means for gather and disseminating information, such as reading and writing, as well as human rights. The intervening factors, which impact the teachers' ability to meet their goal of raising citizens, are: socio-political impacts, multiculturalism, support and teachers' self concept. Social and political situations created the new classroom populations from homogeneous Swedish-raised students to a mix with children coming from many different cultural and academic backgrounds. Support, or lack of support, makes the task easier or more difficult. The teacher's own multicultural competence affects his or her ability to meet goals within the multicultural classroom. Teachers stated that a strong positive self-image is needed to feel successful with the challenges.

Many teachers look to get guidance from authorities. Yet, several recognised that they have been developing their own strategies. They found that they need to build relationships with the students and parents along with developing their own strong leadership skills, such as being clear and managing time. Teachers reported that using support staff and building teamwork among the teachers is an important strategy.

Figure 1 Model of the process of Swedish Teachers in Multicultural Classrooms





The “pink elephant”, the unmentioned major impactor, is the political meddling with teachers’ work. New directives that include different grading systems, mandated materials to use in classes and excessive documenting interfere with teachers’ ability to use their skills in raising well-functioning citizens for society. Teachers reported that 50% of their work is administrative tasks, leaving not enough time to engage in direct teaching.

Teachers revealed that the outcome of their work in multicultural classrooms creates the personal feeling that they are inadequate as they muddle through the challenge of teaching children with many different academic levels, learning styles and backgrounds in one classroom. Most teachers expressed concern that the new immigrant children would not succeed in the Swedish society and felt that teachers lacked skills in multicultural competence. Despite the contradictions, teachers say they enjoy expanding their creative skills as they work with the children and would like more one-to-one time with each child for better success.

## **4.1 What challenges exist for teachers in Swedish multicultural classrooms?**

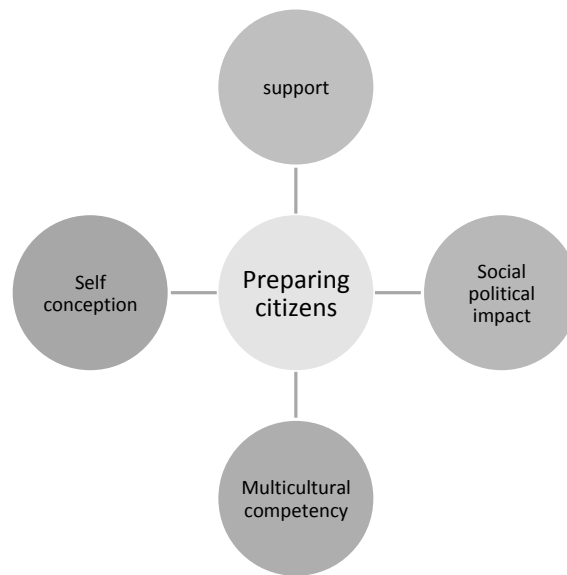
To answer the question of challenges for teachers in multicultural classrooms, grounded theory was most useful and produced a model showing influencing factors around the central theme of having the primary function of raising citizens. The influencing factors are: support, social-political impact, multicultural competence, and self-conception. Support was identified as coming from parents, administration and colleagues. Social-political impacts included world political situations that increased migration as well as domestic political directives and policies. Multicultural competence describes the teachers’ individual ability to create successful outcomes in multicultural context. Teachers described a need to increase multicultural competence. In general, the teachers who were interviewed expressed having a positive self conception. They recognised that the challenges of teaching in Sweden required strong self confidence. The formulated hypothesis is that Swedish teachers’ central task is raising citizens and the influencing factors to their success are: political impact, multicultural competency, support and self-conception. (see Figure 2)

### **4.1.1 Support**

Support is a key factor for teachers' ability to succeed in multicultural classrooms. Teachers stated that they need support from the administration, colleagues, and parents to successfully educate students. Teachers have large diverse classes requiring more resources than have been available. While special education teachers, translators, counsellors and school principals help teachers with their students' needs as resources allow for, teachers feel they need much more support. Administrative support appears to be minimal, in general, while teachers’ tasks mound. They seem to take on many responsibilities that could belong to other professionals. Besides educating, teachers are expected to counsel, discipline, parent and maintain documentation of what occurs in the classroom.

*I am not just an educator. I am also a counsellor, behaviourist, parent, supporter. I am many things. .. I have become my own administrator. I do everything today and of course a lot can fall in my lap*

Figure 2 Theoretical model of teachers' complex process to succeed in their core task of preparing citizens.



Additionally, the immigrant parents use the teachers for support that they have trouble finding elsewhere, such as asking for help regarding translating documents and government correspondence, finding services, and understanding Swedish customs.

Support from colleagues seems to be the strongest area of support to teachers. As previous research revealed this study found collegial support is both formal and informal.

*Now as a teacher in a class of 26 students, I am expected to take care of all those who have a difficult time to sit still, those who have logical formulation difficulties, reading and writing difficulties, those who have learning disabilities. I have all of the high-performing students and those who want to do nothing and don't even want help. Every one of these are in my class .... I have a special education teacher that comes twice a week in different classes. It's not enough... I put in two extra hours of teaching a week that I take out of my planning time. I go help a colleague in a 6th grade class with a very*

*difficult group ... I'm just there as an extra adult. Then we have another group of students that are failing math that I help.*

Parents' support can vary. The socio-economic status of a family and home life has a big impact on students' motivation and ability to learn as well. Some students are high academic achievers with parents who are greatly invested in their education. Other students have parents that place little value on education and see schools as institutions to discipline their children.

Some of the immigrant parents who invest greatly in their child's education fail to comprehend the Swedish system. Those immigrant parents believe that academics consists of memorisation, whereas the Swedish system emphasises creative thinking to apply the information into one's unique interpretation. These parents are frustrated by the low grades that their children get due to the extra academic challenge.

Some cultural norms interfere with students' willingness to adhere to the Swedish education directives. Cultures that have strong male and female roles discourage their children to participate in classes that are part of the Swedish national education plan. For example, some boys from immigrant cultures are discouraged to participate in homemaking classes. Another example is the discouragement of girls from swimming classes, because their culture does not allow them to reveal their bare skin if males are present. The national education plan requires students to succeed in homemaking skills and swimming. Teachers have to work creatively with immigrant parents.

*Immigrant boys do not value this class ... they can be very good and like sewing yet at home their fathers say: 'Your wife will do that. You should not learn to sew.' They don't get the essential support they need from home to succeed*

#### **4.1.2 Socio-political impact.**

Teachers identified two main challenges coming from political grounds: national politicians frequently changing educational directives and mass refugee immigration resulted from political shifts abroad and responses in European and Swedish policy. The migration challenge is closely connected to the challenge of multiculturalism, which will be presented further on as a separate challenge.

In Sweden, national educational policy changes as new parties are voted in. Teachers get new directives and have to adapt to new edicts that impact such things as the grading system, accreditation requirements for teachers, and support for charter schools.

Teachers express feeling that politicians carelessly play with education without having fundamental understanding of what teaching involves.

*"Schools have become experimental workshops. We constantly speak about that should be that material, that should be that IT (information technology) etc., and then they feel that everything is solved with that. But it is not so. I wonder sometimes how do those who govern think. Every child needs a lot of adult contact, one-to-one instruction"*

As part of the changing policies, teachers are given less respect and often threatened by the students to be reported for abuse. Students use the threat to dismiss their responsibilities to attend classes, do their homework and follow directions.

Policy makers create new rules and directives as often as administrations change. The teaching profession is tightly managed by the government on national, state and local levels. Additionally, teachers are given numerous administrative tasks, resulting in teachers spending only about 50% of their work hours actually teaching students.

*Swedish laws and policies impact teaching 100%, because we must follow mandates for the school and for teachers. I am controlled by mandates that come from the national level and I must write report after report after report .... Then the local government and city government have policies and documents to follow. At least 50% of my time is spent in administrative work apart from teaching activities.*

The world political situation impacted Sweden as the nation received asylum seekers from Chili in the 1970s around the coup of Pinochet, to the recent immigrations from Africa, the Middle East, and Asia from unrest and conflicts in those areas. One teacher worked in the Stockholm region since 1976 and witnessed increasing numbers of refugee immigrants filling her classrooms. Her classrooms were evidence of increasingly accelerated mass migration from the mid 1980s due to political situation in the world.

*No one had a clue that the school would be an immigrant school and the area immigrant dense. It was a new school starting with 3 [refugee immigrants] and after a year, 30 came into the class. No one knew [how to teach diversified classes]. Teachers had to do the best they could. None of the students understood Swedish, the parents neither and there were no specialists for anything. It was terribly messy and extremely difficult in the early '70s.*

#### **4.1.3 Teachers' self-image**

The teachers' self image appears to be unaffected by the perception from the outside world concerning their personal view on the significance of their occupation, role and mission. In Swedish society the status of teachers is low and teachers' income reflects that. Nevertheless, teachers feel that their work is important and readily invest in meeting each child's needs. They enjoy using their creative skills to bring success in challenging situations.

The social image of teachers is low. In Swedish society, the occupation of teaching is looked down upon as a difficult and thankless job. Teachers feel that their low income demonstrates that society places little value on their profession. Even more, the media exasperates the negative view of teaching and influences the public view of teachers.

*People have a negative picture of what it is to be a teacher. I think it comes from the media. Media draws forth the negative. They always focus on the negative.*

#### **4.1.4 Multicultural competency.**

The nation of Sweden has an increasing international population and so her schools are brewing pots for the next generation of multicultural Sweden. Teachers were not prepared for teaching children with different languages and customs. Identified challenges include language difficulties, segregation, culture clashes and diversity in education levels.

Teachers had no training and preparation to work with the immigrant children that were new to the culture and lacked conception of many ways that most Swedes, including the teachers, take for granted. Teachers question how these immigrant children could succeed in Sweden since they lacked the basic foundation to fit into the system and the teachers did not know how they could help them. The teachers' lack of training and inability to educate and broker integration for the immigrant children is a frustration.

Segregation accompanied the multicultural shift. Several teachers came from multicultural backgrounds and noticed particularly strong contrast between the

traditional Swedish ways and norms of the immigrants. Teachers noticed that immigrants cling to their own kind. Teachers, as leaders of their group of children, struggle to create cohesiveness in their classes, because the Swedish and “other” children had fundamentally opposing mannerism. Swedish children are taught to be reserved and quiet, while other cultures taught their children to speak up, express their different opinions and be noticed.

*Here it is very divided between the Swedish culture and 'other'. I don't know if it's because Swedish culture is so specific in how Swedes are, in general, very reserved, quiet and calm. Because the cultures that are at our school are very loud and very animated, it's just a stark contrast or it's just a different mentality than that in Sweden. ... I think it's not just how the Swedish people think. I think it's how the immigrants see themselves. They are the first ones to call out the divide, saying, "I'm an immigrant"*

Teachers remarked that the new wave of immigrants appeared less interested in integrating into the Swedish society believing that the current trend seems to be toward more separation as opposed to unification. Conflicts from the immigrants' countries continue to exist in Sweden and impact the children in the classroom. Longtime enemies pass their hatred down to their children, and the children meet face-to-face in the classrooms. Children are told not to associate with classmates. Teachers are challenged to try to create unity in the classroom with the children who are instructed by parents to create divides.

From what teachers are seeing, multicultural integration is further challenged by the Swedish clan-like tradition. Swedish behaviour, in general, is to create a small tight knit group of friends, often family, and while they can be polite to others, they rarely allow newcomers into the clan.

Teachers want to have more guidance with multiculturalism to alleviate the clashes in the classroom. They seem to recognise that they, as teachers, have their own culture - expected behaviours in the classroom. Then they see unfamiliar ways of behaving, interacting and relating from the non Swedes. Through the contrast of the immigrants, teachers begin to realise that Swedish behaviours are particular and not the standard in other parts of the world. Teachers have been accustomed to the assumed standards of Swedish culture and are newly confronted with other perspectives and mannerisms. Democratic qualities such as equality, respect and tolerance have to be interpreted in new ways, challenging the teachers' capacity. Teachers consistently spoke about needing the skills of multicultural competency.

*I believe many schools need cultural competency skills since more and more immigrants are arriving. It becomes a bigger problem and we must learn how to handle multiculturalism. I don't think many teachers have had training in their education ... We need to know more about how one learns a language and how we need to teach a language ... I think we need to learn more about how it is for them.*

#### **4.1.5 Moulding Swedish citizens.**

The core concept and main focus of teachers' work is the moulding of Swedish citizens. Teachers discussed their democratic values, which include respect, support and human rights. The attribute of respecting others with empathy and compassion is an important quality teachers try to instil in all students. Students and families from other countries need additional education to understand the democratic system in Sweden.

*My values are: respect and treat others as you wish to be treated. My fundamental principle is the system we have here in Sweden - democracy, which is so evident and can be difficult for people who have not lived in a democracy [to grasp].*

In contrast, those students who come to Sweden from other non-democratic countries are challenged to learn how their new country functions. Several teachers expressed the frustration that foreign students and parents have with the Swedish ways. Many foreign cultures have strong gender roles and a hierarchy of positions. For example, in some cultures children are expected to unquestionably obey the patriarch. Swedish law gives each person rights regardless of gender and age. Children wake up in one culture then spend the day in the school culture, which can feel like thousands of miles and centuries away from the culture that they will return to in the evening.

After repeatedly negotiating the two cultures, the children adapt. They can learn to manoeuvre the two situations to their advantage. When children learn about their rights in Sweden, develop command of the language and grasp of the Swedish culture, they find that they have equal rights to their elders. The upheaval in traditional family structures (for the immigrants) can create chaos. Teachers are then asked to help parents understand Swedish style democracy and guide them with appropriate parenting.

*"I understand that parents coming from other countries [have difficulties]. Children think there is freedom here. Subsequently, parents feel that they cannot grasp or be too strict. Perhaps they will go there [social services]; they will be reported. It is a horrible thought for parents to think that their children may have the idea of reporting their parents.*

## **4.2 How can teachers meet the challenges?**

The answers to the question how teachers can meet the challenges came both from interviews in the grounded theory method and from a participation action research method of a focus forum.

Teachers revealed complex challenges working in multicultural classrooms. Some challenges seemed to be beyond the capacity of the creativity and skill of even experienced teachers. The results of the analysis of this research question are summarised in figure 3 .

### **4.2.1 Social political impacts**

Social political impacts include political changes in education policies, mass global migration and segregation in communities and the classroom. When there are so many extreme changes in short periods, as governing parties change, teachers feel that they have to prioritise which changes they adapt.

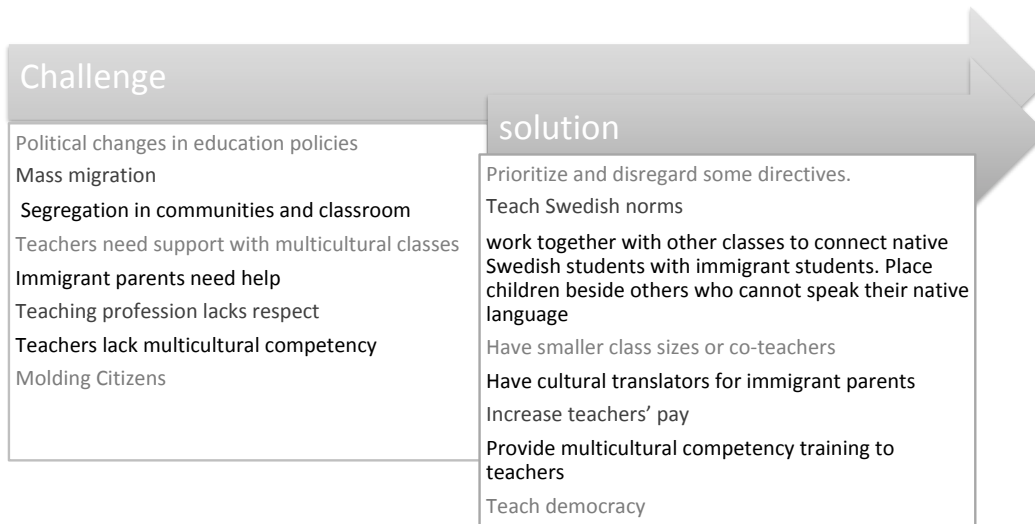
*We are certainly in a particular political position! You see that all the time - political swinging in schools is what they do. But somehow it is we who are the workers (as teachers) who are like, 'Ah ha! Now it's that policy - oh we scale it down a little'... There is certainly no work that is so meddled with by politicians as ours!*

With the influx of immigrant refugees from global political changes, teachers find that they needed support with multicultural classrooms to teach the children Swedish

norms. Teachers have to try to understand the culture and empathize with the immigrants. Then they have to gently teach them basic standards such as keeping appointment times.

Academically, the children are on a wide spectrum of levels. Each country of origin has an educational standard, which often looks very different than the Swedish national curriculum. In some countries mandatory education goes only up until grade five. In other countries education opportunities are hard to come by, while others have very high standards. The children in the classrooms come from these varying education backgrounds and the teacher is challenged to bring each child up to par with the criteria of the grade that they are in.

Figure 3 The challenges and proposed solutions for teaching in multicultural classrooms



The extreme diversity of education from the immigrants' countries of origin presents a big challenge to teachers in the classroom. The teachers find that they overcome the challenge by exposing the children to many different areas that are new to the children as a way of stimulating their interest and bringing them up to date with children that have stronger academic backgrounds.

*Some children haven't had any schooling and are together with children that have studied a lot. So, I give them exposure to new things. I attempt to get the students to have fun and trust that I will not challenge them with anything that feels too dangerous for them to try.*

### **4.2.2 Segregation**

Segregation is prevalent and creating a united group in the class is perplexing. Both Swedes and immigrants tend to identify strongly with their own culture and stick to their own kind. Teachers identified many challenges in the task of creating cross-cultural collaboration. Native Swedes and immigrants seldom co-mingle and teachers have difficulty getting the students to work together. Teachers have created companion programs, yet find that few Swedes wish to participate. Another approach is to create a unique classroom culture where each student feels equally accepted and they leave their backgrounds outside the classroom door. The teachers expressed their attempts to bring unity in the classroom, yet did not express having much success.

### **4.2.3 Support**

Support from the system and colleagues. With the enormous challenge of working in multicultural classrooms, teachers look to get more support from leadership. They look for policy changes and directives pertaining to the real-life situations that they have to deal with. While they appreciate the supportive services of colleagues, translators and special educators, they ask for class restructuring. Knowing that parental influence on the students is essential to their work, teachers invest effort into gaining parental support.

Teachers work in classes of 20 to 30 students with individual backgrounds and needs. The diversity of education levels and potentials complicates the task of the educator.

*Now as a teacher in a class of 26 students, I am expected to take care of all those who have a difficult time to sit still, those who have logical formulation difficulties, reading and writing difficulties, those who have learning disabilities. I have all of the high-performing students and those who want to do nothing and don't even want help*

When asked what teachers wished for the most, they all said they wanted to be able to give each child more attention. Several suggested smaller class sizes or having a second teacher to be able to give more individualised instruction. The teachers need time to prepare lessons appropriate for each student, review the students' work and follow up with guidance. The motivated and gifted students are given the least attention, because the teachers' duty is to make sure each student passes the basic requirements for the grade. The struggling students take most of the teachers time and energy, leaving little to nothing for the gifted and motivated student. Teachers have hopeful visions of successfully working with two teachers in a classroom.

*I could work better if we were two teachers in a class. One could lead and the other could go around and help. We could have group sessions with half the class. Some children have a hard time speaking in front of a big class.*

Teachers found that immigrant parents need help. Teachers realise that parents heavily influence the child and parental cooperation is key to a child's school success. Often teachers had to work with immigrant parents to help them with the Swedish system. The teachers found that good collaborate with the parents helped the child to do the homework, get to class on time and be prepared as well as engage in learning.

*I think the most valuable thing is having parents with you on your side in*



*contact - being in the know and being in constant contact with parents and them being open to you. .*

#### **4.2.4 Teachers' self-image**

Teachers build a positive self-image. In the challenging situation, teachers are able to formulate a positive self-image by recognising the social impact they make from successful relationships. When they create group cohesiveness and manage to motivate children to improve, teachers feel these accomplishments as huge rewards. Parents and students recognise teachers' efforts and offer concrete expressions of gratitude in thank you notes, praising text messages and hugs.

*What other job is going to reward me in this many hugs each day?*

#### **4.2.5 The social image of teachers in Swedish society.**

Teachers reported that their profession lacks respect. While the immigrant populations look up to teachers, overall, teachers seem to be undervalued in the Swedish society. Additionally, teachers feel the disrespect and disregard. Teachers are aware of their current depressed social status and propose to raise it by increasing the salaries.

*One thing we must do is raise teachers' status. How do you raise teachers' status? Here in Sweden and the Western world we show value with money. We must insure that all teachers are paid well.*

#### **4.2.6 Multicultural competence.**

Teachers lack multicultural competence. Swedish teachers revealed that they had not received multicultural training and the concept seemed new to them. Teachers felt that they were placed into a multicultural situation without any direction or preparation. They look for directives from the leadership. Teachers see that we are living in a multicultural world and the training from ten years ago does not pertain to the real situation that they have to work with now. They look for guidance and training for the current multicultural state.

*Absolutely, teachers should get multicultural training in the education...  
We live in a multicultural world.*

#### **4.2.7 Moulding Citizens**

Moulding Swedish Citizens is the central theme of teachers work. Teachers find that educating young people to be part of a democratic society is their fundamental task. Knowing how to access and evaluate information is a key component of being a democratic citizen, as well knowing ethical values. They recognise that democratic education goes beyond teaching the child in the classroom. Teachers work with parents to extend the democratic education in the home.

*My fundamental principle is to teach the system we have in Sweden - democracy, which can be difficult for people who have not lived in a democracy....and democracy depends on literate people who can gather*

*information, so no one can just take over.*

## **5 DISCUSSION**

### **5.1 Discussion of results**

In this work-life science research, the hypothesis formulated as the result of the grounded theory method is such, Swedish teachers' central task is raising citizens and the influencing factors to their success are: political impact, multicultural competency, support and self-conception.

Previous research revealed that Sweden's school system had become multicultural, privatised and segregated (Bouakaz, 2007). Swedish teachers lacked support and mostly relied on help from colleagues (Stedt, 2011; Skolverket, 2014). While in Canada the cooperation of a variety of government and private groups help immigrants integrate (Georgis et. al. 2014), in Sweden the burden is laid mostly on teachers. Swedish teachers lack cultural competency training (Räsänen, 2009; Popov, 2015). While teachers perceive their social status as low, they feel satisfied in their work (Skolverket, 2020). Society expects teachers to raise Nordic style democratic citizens (Arnesen & Lundahl, 2006), yet defining what that citizenship looks like can be confusing (Aldenmeyer, et. al., 2012).

This study contributed greater insight to how teachers experience their work, to the extraordinary burdens placed upon them and their ability to problem solve. Multicultural classrooms have added demands upon teachers that go beyond their official roles and abilities. Teachers feel that policy makers failed to make a plan to integrate immigrants into the Swedish system, leaving the teachers with the challenges. Additionally, teachers feel that politicians play with education policy for personal gain, and thus inhibit best professional practice, in particular, direct teacher-student engagement time. Swedish teachers work passionately to nurture democratic principles in their students. The focus forum demonstrated that teachers can identify problems and formulate practical solutions to areas such as segregation, integrating immigrants, and moulding new citizens.

### **5.2 Methodological discussion**

Choosing grounded theory for this study allowed for the development of a hypothesis of Swedish teachers' work in multicultural classrooms based on information directly from the teachers. The participatory action research focus forum showed that collectively teachers could dig deeper into identifying challenges and possible solutions.

A benefit demonstrated from both research methods was the potential impact that the research had on teachers. Teachers revealed that, normally, their teaching and administrative responsibilities kept them too busy to reflect on what they were doing, education's main mission and the educational system as a whole. Being given the opportunity to reflect on questions about their work helped them identify some challenges, specifically in the area of multicultural competence, and explore solutions. The open-ended questioning of grounded theory, which was also used in the focus forum, created this possibility.

Using grounded theory as an initial approach to the area seemed most appropriate to this American researcher who understood little of the Swedish system. Using open-ended questions afforded participants the opportunity to produce data that the researcher may not have thought to look for and, thus, allowed for the formulation of a relevant hypothesis. The researcher could then facilitate a focus forum after the over

year-long data gathering process with more clarity about the subjects involved and contribute information from previous research to aid the solution procedure. The results of the grounded theory method indicated that the Job- Demand resources model could be applied to the working life of teachers..

The research process took a comprehensive approach in efforts to capture the real picture of teachers experience and provide opportunities to find solutions. The researcher learned new investigation methods to benefit the study. While finding participants for the study seemed to be a challenge initially, social connections produced an ample number of participants. Even with the overwhelming schedules that teachers have, they were interested enough in the research to be willing to give hours to this study. Interview periods ran from 40 minutes to three hours and several participants provided additional information through email communications. After some time, the numerous and lengthy data gathering periods started to produce the same information, suggesting that the research was reaching saturations, as is the goal of grounded theory. Thus, the theoretical model of teachers' complex process in multicultural classrooms seems to be comprehensive. Yet, the solution portion of the study may be an ongoing process on which we just began to scratch at the surface.

### **5.2.1 Strengths and weaknesses.**

This study's participants are experienced teachers in different types of schools and several areas in middle Sweden. Even though integration and discrimination is such a hot topic in Sweden now, the participants shared their insights and experiences openly, which is considered a strength for the study. One weakness is that there were some teachers that openly said they did not want to participate. Another is selection of convenience. Missing teachers may have information excluded from this study since they did not reveal the reasons why they did not wish to engage.

Using the grounded theory method for investigating the situation of Swedish teachers in their work with multicultural classrooms revealed unidentified challenges that may have been missed in other methods using preconceived ideas. The participatory action research engaged teachers in formulating solutions. Interviewing teachers gave them the opportunity to reflect on their work and identify areas needing improvement. The focus forum of participatory research brought forth many solutions and suggested solutions through reflection and discussion.

The culturally competent perspective would reveal a weakness of missing other points of view and experiences. Had other research methods been used such as testing a theory or simple observation, perhaps other data would have come forth.

This was a small study done by one student researcher in only a portion of Sweden. Perhaps a larger study could reveal more areas of concern and potential solutions. The benefit of this being a study that was non-sponsored by private or government funding is the reduced risk of biased outcome. Yes, the researcher has individual perspectives and opinions, yet she had no personal interest (such as children in the school system or work as a teacher) that would tempt her to influence research outcomes.

### **5.2.2 Reliability and validity.**

While this research is qualitative and uses the researcher's insight, evaluation and interpretation of data, the reliability of the codings were tested. The overall inter-rater reliability was Cronbachs Alpha  $K = .88$ . Confidence on the reliability of the 19 categories gave the researcher conviction to proceed and reduced the categories to nine codes in consultation with her research advisor.

The validity of this research lies in how it relates to the current working life of teachers in Sweden. Because both the grounded theory and participatory research was driven by

teachers' insight and expression, the results should deem valid to the research questions.

## 6 CONCLUSION

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This research contributed to work-life science by identifying several challenges that teachers have in their work in multicultural classrooms. The study revealed specific problems in the areas of political changes, support, teachers' self-image and multicultural competency, and was enriched with teachers' participation to formulate some solutions to the challenges that included prioritisation, collaboration and learning multicultural competence. Some of these solutions are employed by a few teachers already, yet no official protocol for meeting the challenges of teaching in multicultural classrooms was identified. Many of the proposed solutions lay in the hands of policy makers, such as reducing class sizes, raising teachers' status and increasing support.

The work life of teachers is complex and now the added complexity of multicultural classrooms is the norm more than the exception. Their main task is complicated by many quickly changing factors. Each of the identified areas above can change within a few years. The constant seems to be that teachers need multicultural competency skills. Their primary function to raise citizens requires collaboration with other teachers, parents and organisations to integrate immigrant students, educate each student to their level and potential, and to create a sense of cohesion, or unity.

Policy makers could be wise to take suggestions from experienced teachers to create a smaller student to teacher ratio in classrooms and allow teachers more direct teaching time to educate future citizens rather than burdening them with administrative tasks. By including teachers to guide policy makers in their education policies, the status of teachers and standards of education may improve in Sweden.

Insights from this research open many doors of curiosity in the fields of working life science, sociology, politics and education. Suggestions for futures studies primarily includes testing the hypothesis that Swedish teachers are the moulders of citizens impacted by the four influencers. This work-life research on Swedish teachers begs for more research on the question, "Would professional teacher participation in educational policy making improve function in the working environment of teachers, Swedish schools?" A study to test the solutions to the challenges revealed in this study could be the first step toward answering the big question.

This exploratory study involving working teachers in the research process brought forth a viable picture of the educators' job in a time of increased multiculturalism. The information and possible solutions that teachers provided reveal that teachers have astuteness and caring that could be valuable to policy making. For the broader picture, the knowledge revealed could be used to improve the education system in Sweden and consequently harmony in the multicultural Swedish society.

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## Appendix A

### Grounded Theory phase 1 Teacher Interview Questions in English (and Swedish)

1. Describe the cultural composition of your class. Do your children come from different cultures/countries? Do you know from what countries?
2. What are your values and culture? How do you feel people should behave with one another: student to teacher? Parents to teacher? Student to student?
3. How well do you think children understand the values they need in order to be successful in school and Swedish society?
4. What do you do towards bringing successful outcomes in your objectives as a teacher?
5. Do the children work well together? How do you handle differences that the children from different cultures may have with each other?
6. Describe your interactions with parents from different cultures. How do you respond to any differences they may have with your teaching style?
7. How well do children from different cultures perform? Any tendencies in relationship to culture? To parenting?
8. Describe what you understand of the different cultures. What type of beliefs and behavior do the children from different cultures have?
9. Describe what type of enhanced skills teacher may need to teach the multicultural classes that are currently more and more common in Sweden. Was this part of your education? Is there something you would like more skills or support with?
10. Would you like to add anything more?

### Swedish

1. Beskriva din klass: Kommer barnen från olika kultur/länder? Vet du vilka?
2. Vad är dina värderingar och kultur? Hur tycker du att människor ska bete sig mot varandra: barn mot lärare? Föräldrar mot lärare? Elev mot elev?
3. Hur väl tar barnen in värderingar för att blir framgångsrika i skolan och samhälle? Hur vill du att klassen ska fungera?
4. Vad gör du för att få ett framgångsrikt resultat i dina mål som lärare?
5. Fungerar barnen bra tillsammans? Hur hanterar du kulturella skillnader som barnen kan uppleva sinsemellan?
6. Beskriv dina interaktioner med föräldrar från andra kulturer. Hur hanterar du motsättningar de kan ha när det gäller din stil som lärare?
7. Hur framgångsrika är utländska barn i klassen? Finns det några tendenser beroende på vilken kultur de kommer ifrån? Hur föräldrarna uppfostrar sina barn?
8. Beskriv vad du vet om de olika kulturerna. Vilka trosuppfattningar och beteende har barnen från olika bakgrund?
9. Beskriv kunskaper som lärare behöver ha för att fungera bra i mångkulturella klasser. Fick du denna kunskap under din utbildning? Finns det andra erfarenheter (eller annat) som du skulle vilja ha?
10. Vill du lägga till någonting mer?

## **Appendix B**

### Grounded Theory Phase 2 Teacher Interview Questions in English (and Swedish)

11. Describe the cultural composition of your class. Do your children come from different cultures/countries? Do you know from what countries?
12. Describe your view of successful teaching. How does that match your actual current work?
13. What are the challenges you experience as a teacher? Describe the support you get for the challenges.
14. What are your values and culture? How do you define respect?
15. Describe what you understand of the different cultures. What type of beliefs and behavior do the children from different cultures have? Describe their values and definition of respect.
16. How do you handle any differences that the children from different cultures can have with each other?
17. How do parents and home life impact on students' performance? Any tendencies in relationship to culture? Describe your interactions with parents.
18. Describe what type of enhanced skills teacher may need to teach the multicultural classes that are currently more and more common in Sweden. Was this part of your education? Is there something you would like more skills or support with? What type of skills?
19. Describe the respect that education and teachers get from children, parents and society.
20. How do Swedish laws and policies impact your work as a teacher?
21. What support do you get from the teachers' union?
22. Why do you work as a teacher?
23. Would you like to add anything more?

### Swedish

11. Beskriv din klass: Kommer barnen från olika kulturer/länder? Vet du vilka?
12. Beskriv ett framgångsrikt sätt att undervisa enligt din åsikt. Hur passar det i ditt aktuella arbete nu?
13. Vilka utmaningar har man som lärare? Beskriv stödet du får för att möta utmaningarna.
14. Vad är dina värderingar och kultur? Vad är din uppfattning av respekt?
15. Beskriva vad du vet om de olika kulturerna. Vilka trosuppfattningar och beteende har barnen från olika bakgrund? Beskriv deras värderingar och uppfattning av respekt.
16. Hur hanterar du kulturella skillnader som barnen kan uppleva sinsemellan?
17. På vilket sätt har föräldrar och livet hemma påverkat elevernas prestationer? Finns det skillnader beroende på vilken land de kommer ifrån? Beskriv dina interaktioner med föräldrar.
18. Beskriv kunskaper som lärare behöver ha för att fungerar bra i mångkulturella klasser. Fick du denna kunskap under din utbildning? Finns det andra erfarenheter (eller annat) som du skulle vilja ha? Vilka kunskaper?

19. Beskriva respekten som utbildning och lärare får av barn, föräldrar, samhället.
20. Hur påverkar svenska lag och regler ditt arbete som lärare?
21. VILKEN STÖDD FÅR NI IFRÅN FACKFÖRENINGEN?
22. Varför jobbar du som lärare? Vill du lägga till någonting mer?

## Appendix C

Grounded theory Phase 3 Teacher Interview Questions in English and Swedish

1. If your objective is to produce future Swedish and World citizens, what are your main tasks and how do you succeed with them?

1. what are democratic values? Define: Respect, tolerance, equality, caring Describe values you have learned from your students

2. What importance do you place on teaching social behavior? academics?

2. Where do the values come from? What is the origination of democratic citizenship?

Swedish tradition? home life?

Government?

(Religious origins? Then how to involve other religions into a common citizenship goal?)

3. What are your challenges with the tasks?

a) what support to you get?

b) hinders

4. How do you work with multicultural students and parents?

Do parents help in teaching democratic values?

a. immigrant

b. Swedish

5. How did you learn your strategies? Describe your training mentors and experience.

6. In what ways do you feel satisfied (or lacking) with your work as a teacher?

7. What would you like to see in the school system and teaching to improve the goal of producing Swedish and World citizens?

8. What would you like to add?

Swedish

1. Om ditt mål är att få fram både svenska och världsmedborgare för framtiden, vilka är dina huvudsakliga arbetsuppgifter och hur lyckas du med dem?

1. Vilka är de demokratiska värden

definiera:

- Respekt, tolerans, jämlikhet, omtanke

- värden du lärt dig från dina elever -

2. Vilken betydelse tror du placerar på att lära ut om socialt beteende? akademiker?

2. Var kommer de värden ifrån? Vad är uppkomsten av ett demokratiskt medborgarskap?

Svensk tradition? hemmaliv?

Regering?

(Religiösa ursprung? Hur man sedan inkluderar andra religioner i ett mål om gemensamt medborgarskap?)

3. Vad är dina utmaningar med uppgifterna?

a) Vilket stöd får du?

b) Hinder?

4. Hur arbetar ni med mångkulturella elever och föräldrar?

Hjälper föräldrar till att lära ut demokratiska värderingar?

a. invandrare

b. svensk

5. Hur lärde du dig dina strategier? Beskriv dina utbildningsmentorer och erfarenhet.

6. På vilket sätt är du nöjd (eller känner att du har saknat någonting) i ditt arbete som lärare?

7. Vad skulle du vilja se i skolsystemet och undervisningen för att förbättra målet att (producera) forma både svenska och världsmedborgare?

8. Vad vill du lägga till?

## Appendix D

### Participatory research forum questions

#### Introduction

- Participants introduce themselves and give identifying data
- The researcher explains how the focus forum and the research methods are being used

#### Discussion questions-

1. Does this model of Teachers' work life seem accurate? Is the main mission to develop new citizens? Stämmer modellen om Lärarens arbetsliv? Är huvuduppgiften att hjälpa forma nya medlemmar?
2. What is a citizen? Are we concerned about molding Swedish citizens? society's citizens? world citizens? What are the characteristics of good citizenship? Vad innebär det att vara medborgare?- fokuserar man på den svenska medborgaren? Samhällsmedborgaren? Världsmedborgaren? Vad är goda medborgares egenskaper?
3. What are the real challenges in the multicultural classroom? Vilka aktuella utmaningar finns det i det mångkulturella klassrummet?
4. What strategies have worked well as solutions to the problems? Vilka strategier har fungerat bra för att klara av utmaningarna?



5.



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