Bringing diversity – Institutional thoughts on newly arrived students in a newly diverse Swedish school

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to contribute knowledge about how newly arrived students are perceived as bringing diversity, and how that relates to the potential to be included in a newly diverse Swedish school. The research questions guiding the analysis are 1. How are the newly arrived students perceived in the teachers’ statements in relation to diversity and inclusion? 2. How can the teachers’ statements on this be understood in relation to Ahmed’s concept of institutional thought? Theoretically, the analysis in this article draws on the work of Sara Ahmed, specifically institutional thought, which refers to routines and norms within an organisation. The study was carried out through qualitative interviews with nine teachers at a newly diverse, countryside upper secondary school. The results of the analysis show that the teachers view is that students already at the school were lacking experiences of diversity, while the newly arrived students added diversity merely by being there. Further, the analysis indicates that the students already at the school become the hosts, and the newly arrived students become guests who by all intents and purposes are welcome but remain guests within the organisation. If diversity is identified as a property of “others”, then this view on newly arrived students as bringing diversity is in line with the institutional thought. But as Ahmed (2012) points out, when diversity can be achieved by adding people to the institution simply to be diverse, the result may be that nothing really changes within the institution.

Introduction

During the autumn of 2015 and the spring of 2016, the number of refugees that sought asylum in Sweden increased dramatically. The sudden increase of newly arrived students affected the whole school system in Sweden, which was not dimensioned to receive that many students at once. In Sweden, the municipalities have the responsibility for reception and school placement, and most municipalities have one or a few schools, depending on the size of the municipality, which receive the vast majority of newly arrived students (Bunar, 2015). Now, the schools who usually were the main recipients were overburdened (authors). This meant that the municipalities had to review how they received newly arrived students and had to place newly arrived students at schools that did not have any previous experience. Countryside school, a school in a small, rural society, which is in focus in this article, was one of the schools that began receiving newly arrived students for the first time during this period.

This article is based on interviews with nine teachers from Countryside school. The school was part of a research- and development program conducted at three elementary schools in a municipality in Sweden. The purpose of the program was to develop these schools’ work with newly arrived students, and to support and follow this development in research. Our role as researchers was to contribute scientific perspectives and knowledge on the development, as well as conducting research on the development process. Within the context of the research-and development program, a separate study was performed at the upper secondary section of Countryside school, about their work with newly arrived students in a broader sense. The study emanated from experiences from this school, which before 2016 hardly had any experience of teaching students with migrant backgrounds. Suddenly receiving a larger group of newly arrived students put the school and the teachers in an unknown situation, which sets this school apart from the other two schools within the research- and development program. The teachers’ professional experiences have been analysed in a previous article (authors), but during analysis of the interviews, issues of inclusion and relations regarding newly arrived students emerged as important themes. Those themes are the focus of this article.

Schooling for newly arrived students in Sweden is regulated in the
Education Act (SFS, 2010), which states that all children have the right to attend school. In 2016 the law was amended in order to assure equal education for newly arrived students in compulsory school. For instance, the term ‘newly arrived students’ became an official term (Government Proposition, 2014/15.45). In addition, there are national guidelines and advice for school organisers, principals, and teachers. Schools can opt to place students in an introductory group for a period of no more than two years (National Agency of Education, 2016). Many schools also offer extra support for a period of time, either language support or study support (The Swedish Schools Inspectorate, 2017).

In addition to the rights for newly arrived students that are regulated by law, the Swedish national curriculum brings up issues of cultural identity and diversity, as well as what norms and traditions that are to be passed on in Swedish schools. One section highlights that values such as individual freedom and integrity, all people’s equal value and equality between men and women should be taught and upheld by Swedish schools: “In accordance with the ethics borne by a Christian tradition and Western humanism, this is achieved by fostering in the individual a sense of justice, generosity, tolerance and responsibility.” (The Curriculum for the Compulsory School, Preschool class and School-Age Educare, 2011, p 5). In the following section, the curriculum states that the internationalisation of Swedish society and increasing mobility across national borders places high demands on people’s ability to live with and appreciate the values: “Awareness of one’s own cultural origins and sharing in a common cultural heritage provides a secure identity which it is important to develop, together with the ability to understand and empathise with the values and conditions of others” (Curriculum for the Compulsory School, Preschool class and School-Age Educare, 2011, p 5).

The national curriculum emphasises both the important part that the school plays in forwarding and preserving so-called Christian and Western values and tradition, but also tasks teachers with imparting respect for those who are ‘different’. It is the responsibility of all Swedish schools to teach according to the national curriculum, and it is also the responsibility of teachers to interpret what the curriculum means and turn that into action at their schools.

The aim of this article is to contribute knowledge about how newly arrived students are perceived as bringing diversity, and how that relates to the potential to be included in a newly diverse school. The research questions guiding the analysis are 1. How are the newly arrived students perceived in the teachers’ statements in relation to diversity and inclusion? 2. How can the teachers’ statements on this be understood in relation to Ahmed’s (2012) concept of institutional thought?

Previous research

For the purposes of this article, we have chosen to focus on research that highlights teachers’ and schools’ views on immigrant students in general, as well as studies about newly arrived and refugee students. A large study, which compares education for newly arrived students in eight European countries, identifies segregated schools and social inequalities as the greatest challenges (Catarcì, 2014). Segregation and a lack of equality pose difficulties for newly arrived students’ possibilities to learn, as well as to make use of their education in the new country (Adelman & Taylor, 2015; Devine & McGillicuddy, 2016; Dryden-Peterson, 2016, 2017). Regarding newly arrived students’ possibilities to perform in school, socioeconomic background is an important factor (Häna et al., 2017; Catarcì, 2014), as well as the risk that students who arrive late during their schooling do not have possibilities of further study, but rather are positioned as a form of working class from the onset (Migliarini, 2017). Several studies also point out that many newly arrived students have a strong motivation and capacity, and that this is not utilised enough in their education (Nilsson & Bunar, 2016; Häna et al., 2017; Pastoor, 2017). A study conducted in Sweden, which focused on newly arrived students’ pathways through the educational system over the course of a year, found that the embodied experiences of these students were characterised by a sense of being different, by feeling and being excluded and constantly navigating and negotiating the risks of being excluded (Nilsson Folke, 2016).

In Western countries, the student population has changed greatly during the last 20 years, due to increased social mobility and immigration. The image of the ‘typical student’ and who teaches the students has not changed to the same degree, meaning that even at schools with a majority of immigrant and/or minority students, the teachers are not part of minority groups themselves (Ahmad & Boser, 2014; Goodwin, 2017). At the same time, schools in Sweden have become more segregated, due in part to a marketised system which has increased differences between schools in privileged and less privileged areas (Beach & Sernhede, 2011). For a school to become more diverse after a long period of a monocultural set of students can pose a challenge. A longitudinal study, which focused on the process of a small city becoming more diverse due to policy decisions (Simó & Telford, 2012), summarises the effectiveness of different strategies in handling increasing diversity in school. Decisions that so fundamentally change a community, need to be anchored in practice (Simó & Telford, 2012), and even teachers with many years of experience will need support and guidance when faced with this new situation (authors).

Several studies refer to the deficit model in relation to newly arrived students. The students are understood as lacking knowledge in relation to the school system in the new country, which is reinforced in those cases when students have traumatic experiences (Devine & McGillicuddy, 2016; Nilsson & Bunar, 2016; Pastoor, 2015). Studies point to a lack of coordination and structure in the support offered to the students, which means that teachers’ work with these students risk being ad hoc. The deficit perspective also risks lowering teachers’ expectations on newly arrived students (Devine & McGillicuddy, 2016), and thereby diminishing teachers’ sense of responsibility for these students (El-Haj, 2015), an issue which research suggests can be handled by enhancing collective responsibility for newly arrived students (Jaffe-Walter, 2018). Other studies raise the need to question diminishing stereotypes and to adopt a wider perspective on newly arrived students’ learning and how their experiences and competencies might be incorporated and made use of in education (Catarcì, 2014; Hattam & Every, 2010; Nilsson & Bunar, 2016; Devine & MacGillicuddy, 2016; Dryden Petersen, 2016, 2017; Migliarini, 2017). Similar results have been found regarding students in higher education. A Swedish study about students with a migrant background in pre-school teacher education shows that these students expected to add value to the program by being diverse. At the same time, the students were seen as lacking language skills and cultural knowledge about Swedish traditions, which positioned them as the Other in relation to their fellow students and the norms within the program (Rosén & Wedin, 2018).

In summation, the previous research outlined above points to a few central points that are relevant in relation to the analysis in this article. One point is that newly arrived, or migrant, students often are seen as lacking skills and knowledge when they start school in their new countries. In order to remedy this, the importance of incorporating and making use of newly arrived students’ experiences and competencies in education is another central point. Finally, studies have shown that newly arrived students experience exclusion and being made to feel different in educational settings. The analysis in this article builds on these points, and adds to the field by looking at how teachers view newly arrived students and how and what these students contribute to a school in a rural society.

Theoretical framework

Theoretically, the analysis in this article draws on the work of Sara Ahmed presented in On being included (2012). Institutions as acting bodies are made up not only by policy and different kinds of documents. Institutions are what they do (Ahmed, 2012). Within the organisation there are routines and norms which Ahmed terms institutional thought. Certain things are a part of institutional thought, making it possible to
act in accordance with that thought, while other things are not. Due to demands on many organisations to have plans for diversity or against discrimination based on e.g. race, diversity has become something to aim for, a goal, for institutions. Ahmed’s argument is that diversity, despite a focus on writing policy and creating documents that outline actions, is not part of institutional thought. Rather, practitioners within the institution (in Ahmed’s case higher education) are given the goal of making diversity a goal. A common way of dealing with ‘having diversity as a goal, as a goal in itself’, is that documents such as action plans are seen as achieving the goal, without any real changes taking place. Ahmed writes that documents have a tendency to take on a life of their own; they travel and act within the organisation. This is also tied to the policy of stranger making, that is, who is able to create an inhabitable space within institutions and who is not. As Ahmed puts it: ‘…how some more than others will be at home in institutions that assume certain bodies as their norm.’ (Ahmed, 2012, p 3). Different bodies within the institutions may not be given the same space; if for instance whiteness is the norm, then those bodies will move more easily and take up more space – and feel more at home.

When diversity exists as something that comes to the institution from the outside, and not as an institutional thought, Ahmed writes that diversity often takes the form of hospitality. The logic at work is one where the bodies already at home in the institution are in a position of welcoming (diverse) bodies as guests, revealing the implicit institutional thought: ‘…that those who are already given a place are the ones who are welcoming rather than welcomed, the ones who are in the structural position of hosts.’ (Ahmed, 2012, p 42). Applying that logic, the organisation is the host who receives those who embody difference, and those who are guests are not at home. Ahmed further states that diversity as hospitality is conditional:

> People of colour in white organisations are treated as guests, temporary residents in someone else’s home. People of colour are welcomed on condition they return that hospitality by integrating into a common organisational culture, or by ‘being’ diverse, and allowing institutions to celebrate their diversity (Ahmed, 2012, p 43).

One of the key points here is that the norm, or the institutional thought, does not simply exist, it is produced by actions and non-actions. ‘Welcoming’ someone re-enacts and produces different spaces for different bodies. Further, Ahmed (2012) states that “responsibly for diversity and equality is unevenly distributed” (p 4), and that oftentimes in white organisations having another ethnicity means being placed in a category and primarily seen as a representative for that category.

The interplay between diversity as something to strive for, and actions made possible by institutional thought are key in our analysis of the teacher interviews in this article. In a Swedish context, the term people of colour is not frequently used. Rather, there is a distinction in everyday talk between ‘Swedes’ and ‘immigrants’, where perceived cultural and religious otherness is as big a part of issues regarding diversity as skin colour or race. Nonetheless, Ahmed’s (2012) analysis of whiteness and structural racism as institutional thoughts is of relevance in a Swedish context as well, as the idea of welcoming diverse others, who by their mere difference will bring about diversity, is present in Swedish discussions in the same way as in the practices examined by Ahmed.

Studies have been carried out in which Ahmed’s theoretical concepts are used as tools for analysing newly arrived students’ experiences. A study regarding newly arrived youths in Swedish upper secondary education, showed that being perceived and positioned as different from the norm was a central factor for the youths, in that social and spatial boundaries were created within the educational system (Hagström, 2018). Similarly, another study found that the embodied experiences of newly arrived students in upper secondary education were defined by a constant navigation and negotiation of not fitting the norm of Swedishness or whiteness (Nilsson Folke, 2016).

Ahmed performs a phenomenological analysis of diversity work in higher education and writes within the field of race and feminist issues. Right away, we want to stress that our study is not phenomenological. The school, however, is embedded in a social and geographical context that entails a certain kind of (Swedish, white) student, and is also embedded in an educational system which has become increasingly segregated (Bunar, 2015). Ahmed’s work is central in its’ field and we utilise mainly her point that diversity work within institutions often takes the form of adding ‘diverse elements’ and banning inequality and racism, rather than dealing with inequalities and systemic racism that exists and is being supported by actions and routines within the institution.

**Method and materials**

This study is based on interviews held at a compulsory school with about 300 students from grades 1 to 9 and about 30 teachers and is situated in a municipality of about 1300 inhabitants where most of the inhabitants of the society were born in Sweden. Before 2016 this school hardly had any experience of teaching newly arrived students. During 2016, approximately 30 newly arrived students came to study at the school, most of them in grade 7–9. All of the newly arrived students lived in a larger municipality of 100 000 inhabitants about 30 km away from the village, and these students were offered bus service to arrive at the school. This group were the only newly arrived students to be admitted to Countryside school, which means that after three years, all of these students had left the school. Since then, Countryside school has not had received any more newly arrives students.

The interviews were semi-structured, qualitative research interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014) conducted at the school. Nine teachers at the school were interviewed, and we conducted three interviews together, and three each individually. The participants’ years of experience vary from 5 to 30+ years. The interviews lasted from 15 to 52 min. All interviews were recorded in full, with written permission from the participants. We used an interview guide with both open and leading questions centered on a number of themes concerning the schools work with newly arrived students. The interviews were transcribed and analysed using a qualitative method of content analysis (Kvale & Brinkman, 2014). The interviews were conducted in Swedish, and the excerpts that we chose to include in the presentation of the results have been translated from Swedish to English.

As stated earlier, the empirical material for this article comes from an interview study with a broad focus on Countryside school’s work with receiving newly arrived students. When analysing that material, how the teachers talked about the newly arrived students as well as the students already at the school stood out as a topic which needed further analysis. For the purposes of this article, we have focused solely on statements from the interviews which concerned that aspect. The other parts of the empirical material have been the base for analysis in another article (authors).

During the first stage of the analysis, we both read the selected parts of the transcripts and identified preliminary themes by colour-coding according to our respective interpretations. By focusing on the content of the interviews, we brought together statements that in our interpretation had similar meanings. During the second stage, we compared our coding, and mutually decided on three themes. During the third stage, aspects of these themes were theorised using an abductive method (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2017).

When conducting the research, we have taken into account The Swedish Research Council’s ethical principles (The Swedish Research Council, 2017) regarding information, consent and confidentiality. The teachers whose statements are presented in this article know each other and have all been part of other research articles published by us. In this current article we have chosen to again re-name all the participants, and to not state their function or what subjects they teach. This has been
done in order to strengthen confidentiality for the participants. We use only pseudonyms, all beginning with the letter ‘S’ for the interviewees. In addition, we have changed the gender of some of the interviewed teachers. All information making it possible to identify persons or places has been removed as far as possible.

Results

The results are presented in three themes with the following headings: Adding value to Countryside school and its surrounding society, Included or excluded and A more diverse school. In connection with each theme a theoretical analysis of that theme is presented. The teachers interviewed commonly use the term ‘integration’ when they talk about the newly arrived students, but in accordance with the theoretical perspective we have utilised, we as authors use the term ‘inclusion’ instead.

Adding value to countryside school and its surrounding society

The teachers’ statements express the importance of adding diversity in a broader sense to a school and a local community that they perceive as lacking diversity in relation to Swedish society in general. Sharon phrased it this way:

This is a big geographical area, but everyone’s the same. There is a great conformity here. If the students at this school are to be given a chance to form an opinion about what it’s like outside this place, they have to meet other people. And they got to do that for a year or two. And that’s a value we should not disapprove.

Several of the other teachers echo this sentiment. Steven says that in the society where the school is located “...there are very few immigrants, it’s mostly people who run pizza places.” Sue points out that countryside school:

... is a school with only Swedish children, if that’s ok to say, and no immigrant families. It’s great that other cultures came in, and for the kids to see how privileged they are, and that these people have come here for a reason.

The aspect of adding different cultural perspectives is also emphasized by Sean: “It’s good that people out here get to see that there are other cultures, that there’s more multiculturalism. And that makes you less small-minded as a person.”

Further, almost all of the teachers describe having newly arrived students at the school as being good for the students already attending the school; the students who grow up in the countryside and who do not really face diversity in their everyday lives. The students already at the school are identified as lacking something, which the newly arrived students can provide. Serena states that she saw a need for the students at Countryside school to experience something outside the school, while Sybil says that she sees the homogeneous nature of the school as a problem:

I’ve always worked for us being more diverse and tolerant, because our student group is very homogeneous. They have not met people who differ from them in their opinions or heritage or thinking, because most people here are very similar.

Sharon expresses the same sentiment and adds that the cultural diversity brought by the newly arrived students was an opportunity the school could not afford to miss. According to Sean, this new cultural diversity was clearly noticeable at the school. He states:

It was like a breath of fresh air. I felt that it was a very positive thing for the children at Countryside school. That they get to experience the people they will meet in their working life and see the world for what it is. And I thought, this is a very good experience for the children here.

In addition to the newly arrived students adding value to the school and surrounding community, Sharon also points out that meeting and learning to handle diversity is important for teachers as professionals. She says:

When you meet differences, that’s rewarding. You have to learn to handle differences, whether you like it or not, you have to handle meeting differences in your professional role. And that has been the most rewarding aspect. I think.

Sylvia and Stuart express an opinion that stands out when talking about the newly arrived students adding value to the school. Sylvia is openly critical towards the view that the newly arrived students added value by being different. She means that identifying these students as merely adding something which was lacking from the school and the other students, led to the newly arrived students not fully being viewed as ‘our students’. She says:

The whole starting point when we received the group of newly arrived students, was that it was good for the students at Countryside school. I mean, it was never said explicitly but they [the newly arrived students] were never really students at Countryside school, they were meant to benefit the students who had been here since first grade.

Similarly, Stuart puts emphasis on what the school can contribute to the newly arrived students. He points out that while the students already at the school indeed needed new perspectives, the school also would have needed to provide the newly arrived students opportunities to meet students who speak Swedish, in order to promote integration.

In summation, some of the teachers’ statements demonstrate a view of having newly arrived students at the school as beneficial. The surrounding society would become more open to diversity, the students already at the school would have a better idea of what Swedish society is really like, and practice meeting people who are different from them. The teachers as professionals would also benefit as it gave them an opportunity to learn to handle diversity. In this sense, the teachers can be described as diversity workers (Ahmed, 2012). They see a deficit at the school and in the society where it’s placed, and express a view that the school, the students already at the school and the community would benefit from experiencing what Swedish society is actually like, a diverse place. In contrast to this, the focus in the teachers’ statements is on the differences between the students already at the school and the newly arrived students. The students already at the school are described as growing up in an environment where differences are met with suspicion, while the newly arrived students were seen as adding different cultural perspectives at the school and in the local community merely by being there. Sylvia and Stuart, on the other hand, point this out as a criticism; that the newly arrived students are expected to add value to the school and the students already there simply by ‘being’ diverse (Ahmed, 2012), and that the school and the teachers should have more focus on what they could contribute to the newly arrived students.

Included or excluded?

Another aspect of the teachers’ statements about receiving the newly arrived students had to do with how these students fit in at the school. Again, the newly arrived students are viewed as a group set apart from the students already at the school. The teachers express that these students were mostly uninterested in their new classmates, which the teachers saw as unfortunate. Sean says:

I guess they [the students already at the school] were fine the way they were. They did not have that need. Or that curiosity. And out here people are not used to a group arriving, of maybe more
unknown people. They are not that used to integration /.../ they did not invite them [the newly arrived students] in, they already had their friends, so they [the newly arrived students] were not integrated, it was difficult to integrate them. It got a bit better with time, but in the beginning the newly arrived students kept to themselves, and the Swedish-born students kept to themselves.

Serena echoes the same sentiment: ‘I guess they [the newly arrived students] did not feel that they were integrated much at the school, they became like their own group.’

Sylvia is more explicit when she talks about why the newly arrived students were not included, and means that it has to do with the attitudes amongst the other students:

Many students view things that are strange to them as frightening. So, what happened at the school with the newly arrived students, was that they were very segregated in that they never became part of any groups, or community, so they turned to each other.

The teachers also express that the school as a whole did not succeed in including the newly arrived students. Some of the teachers state that they wish they had more time to prepare for receiving the newly arrived students, also when it came to social aspects, Sophia says:

Maybe we should have prepared for this better. But many students have an empathetic ability anyway, and understood that ‘wow, this person comes from a different country and does not speak Swedish at all, of course it’s difficult’. And with integration, suddenly, our school and our students have to familiarise themselves with this, but it’s a very special situation, that a lot of people arrive suddenly.

Although there were difficulties, several of the teachers state that things got better with time. Samuel states:

Some ended up in conflict right away, the tough guys, and there were some minor conflicts. But then somehow, they found each other, it must have been last year. It felt then as if they had found other contacts, not just in their own class but outside too. And I felt that some students were more caring and inviting.

The general opinion is that the students already at the school were not as inviting or welcoming towards the newly arrived students in the way the teachers had hoped. There was also a variation amongst all of the students, where some were more interested and open, while others ended up in conflict.

In summation, the teachers’ statements demonstrate that they saw a problem with the newly arrived students’ inclusion at the school. The newly arrived students were expected to do add diversity, while the students already at the school were expected to take responsibility for integrating the newly arrived students, in the teachers’ perceptions. This relationship between the two groups of students can, in Ahmed’s (2012) terms, be understood as that between a guest and a host. The newly arrived students are viewed as the guests, while the students already at the school are the hosts.

As Ahmed (2012) states, some bodies are more at home within the institution than others. The critical question of who is able to create an inhabitable space and who is not, is underlined by the teachers’ statements about ‘our’ students and the newly arrived students as two different groups. In our interpretation, the teachers’ perceptions of the students already at the school indicate that their bodies are at home at the school, there is already a place and room for them to move and therefore really no need to invite new perspectives or actions. Ahmed (2012) points out that the prevailing institutional thought about diversity in many organisations is that diversity is a ‘goal in itself’, rather than actual diversity that makes room for different bodies. The teachers state that they saw a lack of integration of the newly arrived students at the school and we want to make the analytical point that if diversity is seen to be achieved by newly arrived students attending the school, then no further action towards inclusion is necessary.

Despite being welcomed at the school by their hosts, and being seen as valuable (Ahmed, 2012), the newly arrived students remained strangers or guests.

A more diverse school?

We asked the teachers whether they think that having newly arrived students has changed anything at Countryside school, and if so, what. The teachers’ views differ somewhat regarding this. Sybil says that she sees a change for the better in her view, in that students and teachers at the school have gained new perspectives:

I can see a difference in their [the students already at the school] mind-sets and values. And I hope that it’s had an effect so that they are more diverse /.../ I think we’ve become more open to differences, and even if we have not achieved everything I think, at least, I can see in some colleagues that they’ve changed their ways of working and their thinking /.../ I see things in a bigger perspective, we have not had any [newly arrived students] here in the 50 years that the school has existed. Considering that, I think it’s been good for the school.

Serena and Sue share this view. Serena states that the students already at the school have gained a more positive attitude towards newly arrived students, while Sue says she hopes that the students will carry their experiences with them, and that they understand how privileged they are. Here, both Serena and Sue refer to the students who have grown up in the local community. Sean and Steven are a little more ambivalent regarding the issue of changes to the school. Sean says he hopes that the school has been affected in a positive way, but also sees a risk in that the school no longer has any newly arrived students:

The risk is that it ends up being an exception. It might very well be. That you forget this, as a parent, and the students who attended the school, well they’ve left and those who’ll come after them will not think about it.

Steven also points out the period of receiving the newly arrived students as an exception, to the school’s detriment, but at the same time he sees some positive effects:

I think that Countryside school is richer for these experiences. I think so. And they will change the teaching methods for those who have actually looked at themselves and their work. I’m sure of that. I would wish that the school was able to receive more [newly arrived students], it would be good for everything here. Because it was like an exception, they arrived and then they left. That’s not good for the school.

In summation, the teachers’ statements demonstrate that the experiences have been rewarding in many ways. The students who were already at the school have been given chances to gain new perspectives, and the teachers in general were given opportunities to develop their teaching and their competencies. But when the experiences of this period have faded, because the school no longer receives newly arrived students, some of the teachers’ state that it might be difficult to keep that diversity. The teachers express disappointment at the school returning to the way things were before the newly arrived students. In Ahmed’s (2012) theoretical view, institutions are bodies, which produce certain actions, routines and norms; institutional thought. However earnest the teachers at Countryside school were in their wish for diversity, his period of having newly arrived students at the school only fulfilled that vision for a short period of time. Several of the teachers express the hope that this period would lead to a more permanent change towards diversity, but at the same time they express doubt that it will happen since they no longer receive newly arrived students at the school.
Discussion

The teachers interviewed in this study are all part of the Swedish educational system, a system which has become more segregated in small part due to a marketised system (Beach & Sernhede, 2011) as well as housing segregation (Bunar, 2015). Although many European educational systems have more heterogeneous student groups due to amongst other things immigration, the view of the ‘typical student’ has not changed to reflect that (Ahmed & Boser, 2014; Goodwin, 2017). The teachers make their statements within the institutional thoughts produced and re-produced in the Swedish educational system, both at a national and a local level. Again, we want to emphasize that we do not draw any conclusions about the teachers’ actual interaction with the newly arrived students. Neither should the analysis be understood as a criticism of these teachers. Instead, we want to contribute knowledge about different views on diversity and newly arrived students at a newly diverse Swedish school and how that is an expression of an institutional thought on diversity.

Ahmed’s (2012) concepts offer perspectives on inclusion and exclusion from the perspective of the organisation as well as actors within it, and tools for analysing how institutional thoughts set boundaries for inclusion. Previous research in the field of newly arrived diverse Swedish school and how that is an expression of an institutional thought on diversity to become institutional thought, the institution needs to re-produced that hinder diversity (Ahmed, 2012). Teachers are embedded in institutional structures, as are students, but the teachers are also at least partly responsible for the structures.

The Swedish national curriculum carries with it an emphasis on teaching children what are phrased as traditional Swedish and Western values, while also teaching the value of and respect for cultural and ethnic diversity (Curriculum for the Compulsory School, Preschool class and School-Age Educare, 2011). An interpretation of this is that in this document, the culturally or ethnically different people are seen as existing outside the organisation or outside the so-called Western tradition. The curriculum then travels, in Ahmed’s (2012) terms, and is interpreted by teachers at different schools. At Countryside school, the dominant view amongst the teachers interviewed can be interpreted as seeing an opportunity to teach respect for other cultures as is mandated by the newly arrived students. Neither should the analysis be understood as a work reported in this paper.

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