New immigrants. An incentive for intercultural education?
Yvonne Leeman and Erna van Koeven

The Department of Education, University of Humanistic Studies, Utrecht, The Netherlands; The Department of Education, Windesheim University, Zwolle, The Netherlands

ABSTRACT
This study was inspired by an inclusive intercultural perspective on education, and developed empirical knowledge concerning the intercultural professional development of in-service teachers. The study was conducted during the first year of a newly-designed master’s programme that focused on “education for refugees”. In the Netherlands master’s programmes in education qualify in-service teachers to contribute to school development, together with giving them a specialisation in a specific topic. The findings were based on the teachers’ written work, and interviews with the teacher educators. They show that the intercultural professional identity of the teachers was developed by a combination of pedagogical approaches. These include the following: new knowledge from an inclusive intercultural perspective, critical socio-cultural self-examination, real encounters with newly-arrived refugees, and a reflective, intervention-based approach to professional learning and curriculum renewal. The intervention-based approach turned out to be the most important for the teachers’ agency in intercultural school development. The challenges experienced concern mono-cultural practices in mainstream education for refugees, together with the dominance of an instrumentalist approach to teaching and learning.

KEYWORDS
Intercultural professional development; refugees; language teaching; teachers’ agency; intercultural school development

Introduction
This study on the intercultural professional development of in-service teachers was conducted in the Netherlands during the first year of a newly-designed master’s programme in teacher education that focused on teaching refugee students. The master was developed in 2016. Master’s programmes are intended to develop the teaching expertise of in-service teachers and enable them to contribute to school development. Departing from an inclusive perspective on intercultural education, we investigated the pedagogical strategies that support the intercultural development of in-service teachers,
with regard to both teaching and influencing school development. In addition, we considered the challenges that they experienced.

In the current context of hostility towards refugees across many European countries and an increase in exclusive types of nationalism, we consider that inclusive intercultural education is of crucial importance for the cultivation of humanity and social justice. Inclusive intercultural education is concerned with the moral and political aims of education, the curriculum, pedagogical approaches, school culture and school policy (Allan 2004; Banks & Banks, 2001; Byram, 2014; Hajisoteriou & Angelides, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Leeman, 2003; Nieto, 2000; Pollack, 2013; Reid & Major, 2017). It includes the appreciation and acknowledgement of cultural diversity and takes account of tensions in balancing commonality and diversity. Moreover, it adopts a critical stance towards the context, which includes intersectional inequalities along colour, ethnic, cultural, religious and socio-economic lines (Leeman & Reid, 2006; May, 1999). Accordingly, the intercultural professionalism of teachers should involve a reflective stance towards educational aims related to issues of (im)migration, diversity and social justice. In addition, it should develop agency, an inquisitive stance and skills that will aid in the development of intercultural teaching and intercultural schools.

In this research, we focused on gaining empirical knowledge of pedagogical strategies for the intercultural professional development of teachers. Informed about possible perspectives on the curriculum (Goodlad, Klein & Tye 1979; Van den Akker, 2003), we focused on the curriculum as designed and as learned. In order to become informed about the curriculum as it is learned, the first author read the written work and final evaluations of the six in-service teachers who participated in the master’s and interviewed the four teacher educators. Both the curriculum materials (brochure and module) and the interviews with the four teacher educators informed her about the curriculum as it is designed.

The Dutch context

A country within the EU, the Netherlands has a colonial and (im)migration history. During the second half of the last century, migrant workers and people from the former Dutch colonies started to settle in it. As schools welcomed their children, they initiated experiments in intercultural education. Intercultural education became compulsory by law for all schools in the 1980s, when official policy determined that the Netherlands was a multicultural society. Emphasis was placed on knowing each other, mutual respect and acceptance. This was legitimised by the perspectives of human rights, equal educational opportunities and cultural and social justice. In ethnically diverse schools, in particular, intercultural education became part of the curriculum and school culture, while it remained merely an extra-curricular activity in other schools and in teacher education.

However, times changed. In the new millennium, intercultural education was replaced by citizenship education (Leeman & Pels, 2006). The emphasis was placed on common values, such as democratic values, and on societal participation and the integration of immigrants. This corresponded to developments at the national political level, in which a perspective of mutual integration was replaced by one-sided integration. This led to the marginalisation of an educational approach aimed at living together
in a just and inclusive multicultural society (Leeman & Wardekker, 2013). There was a general trend towards individualisation, which was symbolised in education by concepts such as “appropriate education” and “personalised education”. This may have supported a tendency to reduce cultural differences to the characteristics of a person, thereby stripping these differences of their political components, such as asymmetrical societal power relations. In addition, the general professional identity of teachers and school leaders has been increasingly shaped around values such as utility, efficiency and accountability, which provide few openings for a moral political agenda. There is a preference for “evidence based teaching”, which provides little room for teachers’ agency. Meanwhile, a simplistic, instrumental type of intercultural education survived, which is well-suited to a preparation for global citizenship that focuses on general knowledge about other cultures. It provides skills for intercultural contacts for those studying, travelling and working abroad for short periods.

Education for inclusive intercultural co-existence is currently highly sensitive politically. The Netherlands has become a polarised society on immigration issues, and immigration is high on the political agenda. The official policy message on integration is: “Become Dutch and behave like a normal Dutchman”. Radical right-wing parties feed the fear of strangers, and use language such as “The Islamisation of the Netherlands”.

New immigrants
The recent processes of globalisation have resulted in permanent inward and outbound migration and mobility with regard to work, study, internships, tourism, family reunification and emergencies (Castles, 2006). Since 2014, Syrian refugees, who came to the EU by boat, have become an important new group of emergency refugees in the Netherlands. Educational provisions for them are necessary as they include families with children. These refugee children attend school in a centre for asylum seekers (AZC) until their families are assigned a permanent address. After settling, they attend regular schools at which they are expected to learn Dutch and to integrate into Dutch society. This led to demand for expertise in teaching refugee children, which was the reason why Windesheim University designed a new master on “Education for refugees”.

Theory on intercultural professional development

Three approaches
The following three approaches can be analytically distinguished in the literature on intercultural education: An indifferent or culture- and colour-blind approach, a caring and cultural responsive approach, and an inclusive approach (Kasl & Yorks, 2016; Ramaekers, 2010). Each approach corresponds with specific professional competences and identities of teachers.

The first approach is assimilationist, and is mono-cultural and mono-language oriented. The learners are newcomers. The preferred strategy in, for example, teaching Dutch as a second language, is a combination of separate lessons that are quickly followed by immersion in the (for newcomers) foreign language. The second approach also tends to mainly focus on teaching minorities. It aims to make education culturally
just and relevant to them, and it seeks to establish a caring school and classroom climate for all (Blitz, Yull, & Clauhs, 2016; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). This approach could include language-based subject teaching, including scaffolding with the mother tongue (Gibbons, 2015; Hajer & Meestringa, 2015). The third approach focuses on all the children in the classroom. It encompasses a moral and political perspective on education that emphasises the balancing of communality and diversity, and strives for an anti-racist, inclusive, intercultural education (Abram, 2008; Allan 2004; Banks & Banks, 2001; Bhatti & Leeman, 2011; Byram, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Leeman & Wardekker, 2013; May, 1999; Pollack, 2013; Veugelers & Leeman, 2018). This approach argues for inclusive integration, which presupposes acceptance by all of the ethnic and cultural differences involved in living together. It demands the building of inclusive identities. This is not just something intellectual. Rather, it needs to be coupled with a feeling that this is right, and with an acknowledgement that this is a politically sensitive endeavour. As such, it is aligned with a critical pedagogy that aims to establish social justice through knowledge development, critical and reflective thinking, and socio-participative and democratic political activities (Biesta, 2011; Hess & Mcavoy, 2015; Johnson & Morris, 2011), while taking account the exclusive forces, asymmetrical power relations, and intersectional inequalities along colour, ethnic, cultural, language, religious, and socio-economic lines.

**Teachers’ professional development**

Using an inclusive perspective on intercultural education, we are interested in teacher education that surpasses a knowledge and skills-oriented approach by including emotions and a normative, inquisitive stance towards education, and in an approach that takes personal, social, and societal aims into account. Such education is connected to teachers’ personal professional beliefs, and touches on their engagement, agency, and moral courage, and includes reflexivity on their own socio-cultural embeddedness.

There is a small body of empirical knowledge on educating teachers who are aware of the personal, social, and societal aims of education, and who are able to realise these aims in their teaching practices. Tirri and Kuusisto (2017) provide a theoretical basis and practical methods for teaching purposes. Based on the idea of holistic professional development, they prefer to start with recalling and examining meaningful personal educational experiences. This is followed by paying attention to the quality of the didactic relationship between the teacher, the student, and the content of purposeful teaching. Others have worked on reflecting on the aims of education, and on using an inquisitive stance to teaching in combination with micro-political competences and a democratic attitude to realising the intended aims (Berger, Boles, & Troen, 2005; Biesta, 2011; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Kelchtermans, Ballet, & Lot, 2009; Kemmis, 2009; Leeman & Wardekker, 2011).

Personal professional beliefs play an important role in teachers’ work, but the contexts that teachers work in also have an important influence (Biesta, Priesley, & Robinson 2015; Oolbekkink-Marchand, Hadar, Smith, Helleve, & Ulvik, 2017). The professional agency of teachers is crucial for an inclusive approach to intercultural teaching and intercultural school development. Teachers’ agency is concerned with the active contribution of teachers in shaping their own work and with the conditions
necessary for the realisation of the education desired. However, this agency is bound by standardised practices and dominant views of the educational aims. Velon (2016, 2017, 2018) describes the actual and rather instrumental knowledge base of Dutch teacher educators. This is predominantly shaped around values such as utility, efficiency, and accountability, which do not provide many openings for a moral and political intercultural agenda.

**Teachers’ intercultural development**

An extensive and contextualised knowledge of strategies for the intercultural professional development of teachers does not exist. Four strategies were identified in the literature, and the main strategy used is a cognitive approach that focuses on knowledge development concerning the newcomers and issues of living together.

Another approach stresses the importance of teachers’ reflective and inquisitive stance in an intervention-based approach towards the realisation of intercultural education, which is accompanied by broader competencies such as being a change agent at school. This approach includes, for example, using practical wisdom in striving for change while also convincing one’s colleagues (Forghani & Phelan, 2012).

Most research has focused on the development of cultural sensitivity and feelings of respect and empathy through real encounters with others in programmes of international exchange, or through service learning and internships in inner-city schools with a diverse student composition (Bringle, Hatcher & Jones 2011; Schutte, 2018). In developing cultural sensitivity among teachers, Savva (2017) discovered the importance of focusing on teachers’ feelings of discomfort in their own experiences of exclusion and in their experiences of learning a new language through an immersion strategy in a foreign context. In their workshops for in-service teachers, Zembylas and Papamichael (2017) discovered the strength of a pedagogy that combines discomfort and empathy.

In their research on professionalising in-service teachers to enable them to guide a classroom dialogue on intercultural issues, Radstake and Leeman (2010) point to the importance of the teachers’ own critical socio-cultural awareness regarding inclusivity in intercultural teaching, together with their experience of living in ethnic-cultural diversity. This finding corresponds on a theoretical level to the work of Boler and Zembylas (2003), Byram (2014), and Ramaekers (2010), who all stress the importance of reflexivity on the own socio-cultural embeddedness, in addition to a knowledge-oriented and an emotions-focused approach.

**Methodology**

This study was conducted in an inter-professional collaboration (Leeman, van Koeven, & Schaaafsm, 2018) between a university-based researcher (the first author) and a teacher educator (the second author). The second author was a member of the team of four teacher educators who had participated in the design and teaching of the master’s programme, while the first author had not been involved in this. The study was initiated by the teacher educators of Windesheim University. The research aims were twofold: To evaluate and further develop the master, and to add to the existing
knowledge concerning pedagogical strategies and challenges in teacher education in order to develop inclusive intercultural education.

The data collection consisted of the following steps:

(1) The first author collected the master brochure and the materials of the three modules in order to be able to describe the curriculum as designed, while focusing on the intercultural and pedagogical approaches used.

(2) She collected the four written assignments per teacher (an assignment per module and the final evaluation of their professional development) in order to get informed about the curriculum as learned by the six participating teachers.

(3) She interviewed each of the four teacher educators about the design, their evaluation of the teachers’ intercultural professional development, and the challenges experienced. During these interviews she asked contextualised questions for clarification, which were based on the data collection in the first two steps.

The results of the interviews were compiled together and sorted into a draft (teachers’ professional development, pedagogical approaches, challenges), which was read and commented on by all the teacher educators and was edited according to their comments.

The data collected was analysed, with a focus on inclusive intercultural professional development, supportive pedagogical approach(es), and the challenges experienced. The intercultural approaches were coded along the distinction made between an adaptive, cultural responsive, and an inclusive intercultural perspective. The pedagogical strategies were coded along the distinction made between new knowledge, critical self-examination, real encounters, and reflective interventions.

In triangulation with the teacher educator (the second author), the coding was discussed and, in order to refine the results, a triangulation of the data from the students and the teacher educators was conducted. An important topic in this dialogue was the discrepancy between the results of the analysis of the written work of the teachers concerning their professional development and the teacher educators’ evaluation of this professional development on the basis of classroom dialogues. Agreement was reached.

Results

The design

Brochure

The master is concerned with becoming an expert and a change agent in the education of refugees. The first year’s modules consist of the following:

(1) The educational needs of newcomers
(2) School language policies
(3) Language teaching

The course commitment is that the teachers will “learn how to teach this special group of children in the daily complexities of education”. However, the aims of
“newcomers-education” are not elaborated, and intercultural education is not mentioned. The language of the brochure suggests that it will provide useful knowledge that will enable teachers to solve practical problems in teaching newcomers. The instrumentalist practice-oriented approach is a striking feature.

Module-materials
The content of the modules proved to be based on an inclusive philosophy. Teachers are encouraged to stimulate interaction between first and second language Dutch learners and to generally teach them together. Multilingualism forms the theoretical base, and is seen as a possible advantage for language development and personal growth, rather than as an obstacle to it. A culturally responsive and inclusive approach to intercultural education is recognisable in the emphasis on meaningful language teaching, which includes the use of the mother tongue in scaffolding the learning of Dutch, and a whole school approach to the culturally sensitive subject-based teaching of Dutch (Gibbons, 2015; Hajer & Meestringa, 2015). It is also seen in the interactive and process-oriented approach to intercultural communication, which is embedded in a view of cultures that are seen as in continual change in a context of asymmetric power relations (Abram, 2008; Shadid, 1998).

The key elements of the professional development model are that it is multi-focused and encompasses a combination of pedagogical approaches. These include the development of knowledge about (im)migration and integration issues from an inclusive intercultural perspective on education, a critical socio-cultural self-awareness, a cultural sensitivity that is developed through real encounters, and the design of meaningful interventions in practice that is informed by theory.

With regard to cultural self-awareness, for example, the first module includes a reflective assignment that is guided by the questions: “Who am I?” “What kind of a teacher am I?” “What are my stereotypes concerning refugees?” and “What sort of thinking exists in my school regarding these children and their parents?” The development of cultural sensitivity is supported by the assignment to interview parents and children from refugee backgrounds about their personal histories and everyday lives, which is inspired by Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological model. The interventions in the third module are combined with reflective dialogues in class and are related to possible contributions to intercultural school development.

The final assignment of the module asks the students for reflections on their professional development.

Teacher-educators
The four teacher educators considered themselves to be experts in the relevant subjects, such as socio-emotional development, cultural diversity, bilingual and second-language development, mother tongue and second language education policies, language education, and action research. They designed the modules in pairs. Bob and Diana were responsible for the first module, while Eva and Gerald took care of modules 2 and 3. During the interviews, all the teacher educators emphasised the importance of introducing new knowledge to the students from an inclusive intercultural perspective. In this they showed their preference regarding the substantive perspective.
Bob was critical about the title “newcomers”. He suggested broadening the content to subcultural differences within the Netherlands, and introduced a contextualised approach to studying the lives of pupils and their parents. According to him, “You do not need refugees to make students sensitive to cultural differences. By broadening the topic and by working in a contextualised manner, it is possible to avoid the dichotomy of Dutch/refugee”. Diana and Bob wanted the teachers to become very aware of their own attitudes towards refugees, and to combine this with a broad approach towards cultural differences. In order to develop the teachers’ cultural sensitivity, they sought to develop knowledge, insights, and attitudes on delicate issues, such as the processes of image formation about ethnic cultural groups. Diana referred explicitly to touching both the heads and the hearts of the teachers. She said that she felt emotionally involved in the subject: “I understand the strict rules in immigration policies, but those rules do not feel good.” Both Bob and Diana displayed a caring and inclusive approach to intercultural education. Particularly at “white schools”, it is important to them to open the eyes of all the pupils to all existing differences and to the common humanity of all. This includes a focus on creating a safe school climate for all.

Eva and Gerald were responsible for the two language modules. They wanted to present their students with an alternative to the current instrumentalist approach to Dutch as a second language based on immersion in Dutch and the programmatic teaching of language skills. Eva on this:

I wanted to realise inclusive intercultural education. In the design we emphasised meaningful language teaching in a context of diversity and multilingualism. This meant the integration of the students’ mother tongue students in language teaching policy and practices.

Gerald explained the choice of literature.

Gibbons (2015) offers a scientific base for teaching a target language in a multilingual context, with a central role for scaffolding and the transfer of language knowledge from the non-target to the target language. The basic idea is making use of the cultural and language background of the pupils, instead of forcing them into a straitjacket.

One of the aims of the module on language policies was to make the students read an international scientific text in English, in order to confront them with a perspective on language education that differs from the dominant one in the Netherlands, and to stimulate their curiosity and critical thinking.

The teachers’ evaluation of their professional development

With the exception of one, the six teachers were all experienced. One teacher had immigrated from Surinam during her childhood, while the others did not have a migration background. Three teachers (2, 3, and 4) were teaching at regular primary schools, which were mixed schools with newly-arrived refugee children from different countries, such as Somalia and Syria. One teacher (5) worked at a school in a centre for asylum seekers, and another (6) taught at a regular primary school where four children from Syria had recently arrived. One teacher (1) taught at an institute for senior vocational education, which had
mixed classes, and included students with and without a migration background who lacked a basic level of proficiency in reading and writing Dutch.

**Professional development in intercultural education**

In their assignments and the final evaluation of the programme, all the teachers wrote about their growth in self-awareness and reflexivity, and their increased awareness of “being ‘a cultural person’ themselves”. They all wrote about the new knowledge they had developed on the ecology of the newly-arrived refugees, and on teaching the newcomers Dutch as a second language. Reflection on meaningful language teaching, multilingualism, and scaffolding learning Dutch by using the mother tongue was found in the work of all the participants. Most of the teachers wrote about having developed a feeling for refugees. They had been emotionally touched and had changed their approach towards refugees. As a result, they experienced a gap between their own new views and those of most of their colleagues at school.

**New knowledge.** Their writing generally gave the impression that they were new to the field of intercultural education. They used theoretical terms that did not fit together well. They referred to the Netherlands as the refugees’ new homeland, and discussed integration as involving time, hard work, and simply learning Dutch. However, they also provided evidence that they had started to see the difficulties that the children and their parents face in reaching this aim, and they discussed negative stereotyping and problematic educational ecologies. With regard to integration, they did not consider any possible intercultural educational aims for those without a migration history, namely, the predominantly white majority children. In fact, they did not explicitly address the possible purposes of intercultural education with regard to inclusiveness and social justice.

The teachers appeared to have a rather reproductive approach to the study of literature, and they did not demonstrate the competence of critical questioning. They seem to have adopted the new knowledge presented without critical reflection. They did not explicitly question the dominant discourse on language education on the basis of the new theoretical insights, although they did start to do so during their intervention studies that were based on this theory. We could say the teachers had been informed by the theory, but that they were moved and convinced by a combination of the following three pedagogical approaches to professional development.

**Critical socio-cultural self-examination.** During the first module on newcomers and educational needs the teachers were invited to examine their own beliefs concerning refugees. They all wrote about the importance of these exercises for their personal professional development.

I had so far used my own culture as a starting point. This ethnocentrism was for me the guideline for judging others. Now I am ashamed of this. (1)

It was very confronting for me to experience that after 2 years of working at this asylum seekers’ school I did not know anything of the cultural background of the children and their parents. I now realise very well that parents are very important in our education, because they have knowledge about the child and it is in the interest of the child that there is a good relationship between school and parents. (5)
During this module I started to understand that I am not yet very experienced in teaching newcomers, and that I am insufficiently aware of the influence of my own culture on who I am, the way I interact, and the way I am in the world. (6)

**Real encounters.** During the first module the teachers conducted interviews with refugee children and their parents in order to develop knowledge about their ecology. All the teachers wrote about the emotional impact these encounters had on them. They became informed and were touched. In the words of teacher (2):

> I was very impressed in the talks with the pupils and their parents. I had never thought about the ecology of a pupil. I have known a number of moments of shame with regard to my image formation concerning newcomers. I have deep respect for the perseverance of the newcomers and their competence in switching between school and home.

Teacher (1) was touched by an interview with an Iraqi student, and stated, “I understood the importance of individual contact with a pupil. This created a bond between us and my understanding of his situation improved.” She became informed about her pupils’ lives and “about feelings of exclusion in the Netherlands, isolation at school, and fear for their future careers.” Teacher (5) wrote that, after having interviewed a parent, he really started to realise what the children had experienced.

> I admire their resilience. It touched me when a child told me that he sometimes does not talk about his experiences, that he keeps these to himself, because talking his first language is forbidden at school. The interviews have opened my eyes. I want to deal more flexibly with this prohibition.

Through the interviews the refugee children and their parents became more intimately known to, and understood by the teachers. During the module they experienced themselves what it means to have to learn in a foreign language. The module on language policies prescribed the reading of scientific literature in English. Teacher (6) commented on this:

> I changed my views about the use of mother tongue at school. Based on the experience and knowledge of my colleagues, I was convinced that newcomers’ education had to take place in Dutch only. By having to read literature in English, I experienced what it does to you when you don’t understand a text. I started to translate words into Dutch to make the understanding of the text easier. The children told me that they think in different languages and I realised myself that the use of one’s mother tongue can be an important addition to the process of learning a new language, and can make it possible to utilise to a higher level of thinking.

Teacher (2) had a similar experience. “Now I understand the effort it costs to have to learn in another language. I understand now why children get frustrated and I recognise the tears of anger and powerlessness.”

**Inquiry based intervention study.** According to all the teachers, the assignment (module 3) to design a mother tongue inclusive practice on language education, and to share this with their colleagues, proved to be a supportive approach to curriculum renewal and made their colleagues reflect on inclusive intercultural education. For example, Teacher (3), who teaches pre-school children, noticed that, ’It is difficult to engage some children in reading stories aloud. They turn on their chairs and do not listen attentively.
They even say: “No, not reading a book.” Together with an assistant teacher, she translated the key words of a story into Arabic and presented these words to the children in advance. According to her, “This approach proved to be very successful.”

The interventions influenced the opinions of the teachers’ colleagues. For example, Teacher (1) experimented with involving listening, writing, and talking in an assignment to ensure that the learning of a new language lasts. She consulted her colleagues in advance and received both positive and negative reactions, such as “This is too time consuming, and almost impossible in daily reality.” After the intervention proved successful, her colleagues became interested in this multi-sensory approach. For example, teacher (4), who teaches in primary education in a mixed group of 19 pupils, of whom three-quarters migrated from Somalia, Turkey, Morocco, Afghanistan, Iraq, Antilles, and Indonesia, focused her intervention on how to make her pupils have fun writing texts. The method she used was sub-skills and product oriented. Through the interviews (module 1) with two newly-arrived pupils she learnt about their feelings of incompetence and insecurity, and not knowing where to start or what to write about. She designed an intervention in which the teacher and pupils write together in a joint construction, using the mother tongue as a scaffold. The children were allowed to use their first language in helping each other. They had to write a letter to Vincent van Gogh about a piece of art they had made. “I noticed that the children were happy to be allowed to talk to each other in their first language and to express their experiences. I saw beaming faces and a lot more interaction in the class.” This practical example made her colleagues enthusiastic.

**Professional development in intercultural school development**

The teachers provided evidence that they understood that adopting a critical stance towards their own views and stereotypes regarding refugees is necessary in order to bond with them. They started to ask themselves how they could bring about the collective change needed in the teams of teachers at the schools in which they were teaching. Teacher (4) wrote:

> My colleagues think in terms of clear messages. They try to realise this by applying firm rules. Teachers should be critical of their expectations of individual pupils and of their own stereotypical thinking. To realise good education, the teachers’ connectedness with the pupils and their parents is very important. For me, it is obvious that we must put time and energy into that.

The teachers wrote about a lack of agency and of the competencies needed to realise this change among their colleagues. When working on the assignment on language policies in their schools, all the teachers started with typical “how” questions related to improving vocabulary education, and with quicker methods for learning to read and write in Dutch. In doing so, they adopted the language of usefulness and instrumentalism that viewed the aims of education as “neutral”. In the words of Teacher (4), “Changes have to be useful and applicable.” However, all the students reproduced the new approach to language teaching advocated in the programme. In their interventions they experienced a tension between lessons learned and the policies at their school. Most of schools that the teachers were teaching at had an “only Dutch allowed” language policy, which did not fit well with
the new insight that multilingual knowledge is beneficial. This experience made them see their lack of agency. Teacher (3) described this as follows:

What I still find difficult is to start a conversation about my view with colleagues who have a totally different view. This is because I don’t know how to explain why I am behind a certain vision.

Another stated: “My colleagues are hesitant about innovations. At our school they have space not to engage in these.” Other teachers discussed the agency developed. Teacher (2) wrote: “I became more aware of myself as a role model as a colleague and a teacher” and Teacher (6) developed “a new view of change through interventions instead of directly applying the theoretical literature.”

The challenges they experienced involved difficulties in changing the existing practices and in influencing the beliefs of their colleagues. The use of an inquisitive intervention-based approach was experienced as helpful in this respect. The new insights caused them to question aspects of the daily realities in their schools.

The pedagogical approaches used in the master’s programme provided the teachers with new knowledge and they touched them personally. The students made a start with personal professional identity development, and moved in the direction of an inclusive approach to intercultural education. The assignments on realising an intervention in language teaching and influencing the language policies at their schools made them see the complexities in the development of intercultural schools. Moreover, the intervention study enabled them to experience the possibility of change.

**The teacher educators’ evaluation of the teachers’ development**

All the teacher educators were satisfied with the teachers’ professional development. They referred to growth in the teachers’ cultural self-awareness, in their knowledge of the refugees’ ecology, and in their learning of a new inclusive approach to language teaching in a multilingual context. Beginning to be able to translate this theory into successful interventions was seen as important.

Bob and Gerald noted a certain disappointment with regard to the teachers not being used to abstract thinking when it came to the aims of education, and their inability to relate theoretical thinking to practice. Diana and Eva were positive about the practical insights of the teachers and their emotional involvement with the children. According to Diana, the most important lesson learnt was, “Refugees are just people looking for a better life.” Eva said that the films that the teachers made of their interventions, which were shared with their colleagues at school and with their fellow students in the master at Windesheim, led to interesting exchanges of views on didactics and on meaningful intercultural language education.

Watching one of those filmed lessons, we were touched seeing the surprise of the children being allowed to talk in their mother tongue, saying “Really? That is normally forbidden at school. I don’t know whether I dare to use my language in class.”

**Pedagogical approaches**

With regard to the pedagogical approaches that were important for teachers’ professional development, all the teacher educators referred to the classroom reflections at
Windesheim, together with the real encounters stimulated by the assignment to interview the parents and children. During these classroom reflections, a personal encounter with one of the teachers who had migrated from Surinam to the Netherlands during her childhood deepened the process of professional development. In Diana’s words:

The teachers discovered that they discriminated in the way they communicate in a very direct way, without providing space for others to be different. … This insight made one of the students cry.

The intervention research, which gave the teachers an impression of possible inclusive educational improvements, was highly valued by Eva and Gerald, who experimented with this approach. They noted both their own and their students’ professional development in this respect. It was a new way for them to learn about practice.

All the teacher educators said that they were satisfied with the written work of their students. However, they added that more occurred during the lessons than was visible in their written work. They referred to the rich discussions and reflexivity of the teachers, which could not be found in their written work.

The teacher educators did encounter challenges. They were all concerned, although in slightly different ways, about the rather instrumentalist and uncritical way the teachers wrote. Bob and Gerald wondered whether they had reached any depth in their attitudes and views, and whether the teachers were able to connect the things they had learned to their daily practice. They noted the typical characteristics of the teachers in this respect. “They are practically oriented, using phrases such as ‘this does not work’. Only a few combine this with a reflective attitude” (Bob). Gerald, an academic researcher in the cognitive processes of language-learning in multilingual contexts, had never been a teacher himself.

The module was ‘a discovery trip’ for me in searching for possibilities to link theory to regular practice … That has been quite successful. However, we are educating teachers who ask for practical tips and a theoretical base. For me, that is a dilemma, because I choose to constantly question everything.

Eva, an experienced teacher educator, had the following reflection on the teachers’ written work:

All the teachers have a heart for educating children, regardless of the children’s background. In their reflections, the teachers write about participation in Dutch society as a matter of fact. I ask myself whether they ever think about the aims of education in their daily practice. Perhaps they don’t have the words and the experience to talk about education in an abstract way. When you see them teaching, it is evident that they work towards inclusive education.

Diana warned against having expectations that are too high. She was very aware that the first module she was teaching was just a start. “You cannot expect the students to have developed a thorough vision and a precise use of words and concepts after only 8 weeks.” She explained the instrumentalist and weak reflective character of most of the teachers’ written work by the tension the in-service teachers have been put in: “The problem is that our assignments were focused on the teachers’ contributions to daily teaching in their own schools, and were exclusively focused on teaching newcomers.” Bob underlined her words, and provided an example of the tension that the programme was in itself:
I participated in the final examination of the teachers’ competences. Practice was represented by two primary education school leaders. One of them was very practically oriented. She asked for skills in using methods, while we focused on attitudes, reflections on theory, and understanding the learning context of the refugee children. This made me understand that our approach does not always correspond with the dominant practice.

The teacher educators referred to the expectation of practical usefulness as the main challenge of the programme. The master’s programme was developed in consultation with the school field, and the field participates in the final examinations, and in service teachers need permission from their school leaders to participate. This explains why the text of the brochure is in contrast to the content of the modules.

All the teacher educators emphasised their own intercultural professional development. They said that they learnt from each other’s expertise by working in pairs on the modules. They were informed about the dominant approaches to cultural diversity and language teaching in practice. They experienced the importance of adding a personal, emotion-oriented, and reflective inquisitive approach to the dominant knowledge and skills-oriented approach. In addition, they discovered the challenges to the development of an inclusive intercultural master’s programme, which does not fit easily into dominant practice. Finally, they started to see the importance of the intervention-based development of the teachers’ change agency with regard to team school development.

Conclusion

This article researched the professional development of teachers with regard to both teaching and their contribution to school development from an inclusive perspective on intercultural education. This study offered empirical insights in the use of a combination of four pedagogical strategies in teacher education, which surpasses a knowledge and skills-oriented approach by including emotions and a normative, inquisitive stance towards education. This combination consisted of the following: new knowledge from an inclusive intercultural perspective on language teaching, real encounters with refugees, critical socio-cultural self-examination, and a reflective intervention-based approach to professional learning and school development. The combination of these four strategies influenced teachers’ intercultural professional development. In addition to these pedagogical strategies, the teachers noted the impact of the discomfort they experienced in having to learn from a scientific book written in English, which is a foreign language to them. This experience increased their sensitivity to the exclusive practice of language teaching in their classes (cf Savva, 2017). Programming relevant experiences of discomfort could be used as a fifth pedagogical strategy to teachers intercultural professional development.

The main challenge in intercultural school development the teachers experienced was that of the dominant mono-cultural practice, together with instrumentalist thinking about learning and the aims of education.

Combination of strategies

The incentive for bringing the issue of intercultural education (back) onto the Dutch educational agenda was a newly-arrived group of refugees. The master’s programme for
in-service teachers was designed by teacher educators who sought to educate for inclusive intercultural education. They offered the participants new knowledge about possible theoretical alternatives to the dominant mono-cultural practice. Among the alternatives offered was a general approach to taking cultural diversity seriously in teaching, raising awareness to processes of mutual image and stereotype building, as well as an inclusive approach to teaching Dutch as a second language.

We discovered some interesting discrepancies between our evaluation of student’s intercultural professional development and the evaluations by the teacher educators. Our evaluation was based on the written assignments and the evaluations by the teacher educators on the content of the discussions in class. According to the teacher educators the assignment to do an intervention study was most informed by new intercultural knowledge and insights. This assignment opened up the possibility of translating the new intercultural ideas into practice, and helped to experience the effect on the pupils. It also helped to convince their colleagues of the strength of the new approaches. The pupils’ happy faces made the teachers proud and determined to move in the new direction. This inquisitive approach to curriculum change on a delicate topic such as intercultural education proved to be a successful strategy. New knowledge alone would not have been able to cause this change.

The knowledge and intervention-based strategies were combined with assignments that addressed teacher’s emotions, such as exercises in critical socio-cultural self-awareness, and real encounters with the refugee children and their parents. These assignments brought an opening towards inclusive intercultural thinking and intercultural sensitivity. In line with the Radstake and Leeman (2010) study, the findings of this study gave evidence of the importance of teachers’ reflexivity on the own socio-cultural embeddedness for the development of intercultural agency. The combination of critical socio-cultural self-examination (cf Boler & Zembylas, 2003; Byram 2014, Ramaekers, 2010), with shared reflections among the teachers’ on their intercultural experiences in teaching, served as the crucial incentive to relate the initial professional attitude of the teachers with a more critical and inclusive attitude.

**Challenges**

The master programme aimed at the intercultural professional development of teachers and their contribution to the intercultural development of their schools. The team of teacher educators was theoretically well informed about intercultural teaching. However, they were less informed about educating teachers in developing intercultural teaching combined with the intercultural development of schools. In this respect, the very act of designing this new master’s was an incentive to their professionalisation. The findings suggest intercultural teaching should consistently relate and contribute to intercultural school development practices (cf Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016).

The main challenge for the teachers and the teacher educators proved to be the political and educational context in which they were working. According to the teacher educators, the programme is in a tension between the dominant practices and instrumentalist ways of thinking about teaching newcomers and their own normative beliefs and theoretical orientations. The participants were sent by the schools that they were working in, and the schools expect new models that work. In this way the dominant
practice influenced the professionalisation of the in-service teachers, which might explain the fact that they learnt new theoretical knowledge but were hesitant to apply it when advising their own schools. The results of the inquiry-based intercultural interventions turned out most successful in sharing intercultural teaching with colleagues. With the help of filmed lessons, the teachers were able to raise genuine interest among colleagues.

It proved to be a complex endeavour to educate teachers to become intercultural change agents in schools with mono-cultural teaching practices and refugee children in the classrooms. The professional development results of this master’s programme gave empirical support to the theoretical idea that developing new approaches to teaching and implementing these in schools need to be connected to the simultaneous working on teachers’ professional agency. It seems important that this is a type of agency in which teachers contribute in shaping their own work and in the school-wide realisation of the inclusive intercultural education desired (cf Priestley, Biesta, & Robinson, 2015).

This study generated practice informed knowledge concerning the complexities in the daily work of teachers. This knowledge proved important for the teacher educators involved. Simply by beginning to understand these complexities, teacher-educators are probably standing at the very beginning of a change towards inclusive intercultural education. In the case of Windesheim, the findings of this study proved to be important for the evaluation of the master’s and the design of the follow-up.

**Acknowledgement**

The authors are very grateful to Dewi Piscaer, Gerrit Jan Kootstra and Bé Poolman for their contribution to the research.

**Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

**Notes on contributors**

*Yvonne Leeman* is a sociologist, specializing in teacher’s professional identity development and in educational issues of diversity, communality and social justice. She is a Professor at Windesheim University and an Associate Professor at the University of Humanistic Studies in the Netherlands. She is the coordinator of the network ‘Social Justice and Intercultural Education’ of the European Educational Research Association.

*Erna van Koeven* is a senior lecturer and researcher at Windesheim University, the Netherlands. She combines this with a position as a researcher and intern advisor at Deltion College for vocational education. She is an expert in mother tongue teaching and in the reading curriculum. Her dissertation (2011) has the title: ‘That’s just how we do it’. Opinions on children’s literature at liberal protestant primary schools.

**References**

Abram, I. (2008) Het Arena model. Retrieved from [http://www.identiteitscirkels.nl](http://www.identiteitscirkels.nl)
Allan, D. S. (2004). *Talking to strangers. anxieties of citizenship since Brown v. Board of education*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Banks, J. A., & Banks, C. A. M. (2001). *Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives* (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Berger, J. C., Boles, K. C., & Troen, V. (2005). Teacher research and school change: Paradoxes, problems, and possibilities. *Teaching and teacher education, 21*, 93–105.

Bhatti, G., & Leeman, Y. (2011). Convening a network within the european conference on educational research: A history of the social justice and intercultural education network. *Eerj, 10*(1), 129–142.

Biesta, G. (2011). The ignorant citizen: Mouffe, Rancière, and the subject of democratic education. *Studies in Philosophy of Education, 30*, 141–153.

Biesta, G., Priestley, M., & Robinson, S. (2015). The role of beliefs in teacher agency. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice, 21*(6), 624–640.

Blitz, L. V., Yull, D., & Clauhs, M. (2016). Bringing sanctuary to school. Assessing school climate as a foundation for culturally responsive trauma-informed approaches to urban schools. *Urban Education, 2016*. Retrieved from doi:10.1177/0042085916651323.

Boler, M., & Zembylas, M. (2003). Discomforting truths: The emotional terrain of understanding differences. In P. Trifonas (Ed.), *Pedagogies of difference: Rethinking education for social justice* (pp. 110–136). New York: Routledge.

Bringle, R. G., Hatcher, J. A., & Jones, S. G. (eds.). (2011). *International service learning: Conceptual frameworks and research*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments of nature and design*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Byram, M. (2014). Twenty-five years on. From cultural studies to intercultural citizenship. *Language, Culture and Curriculum, 27*(3), 209–225.

Castles, S. (2006). Global perspectives on forced migrations. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal, 15*(1), 7–28.

Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S. L. (2009). *Inquiry as stance: Practitioner research for the next generation*. New York: Columbia University.

Forghani, N., & Phelan, A. M. (2012). Teaching in heterogeneous classrooms: The play of reason and unreason. In B. T. Schrötter & A. Pilch-Ortega (Eds.), *Transcultural spaces and regional localization: Social networks, border regions and local-global relations* (pp. 191–204). Münster: Waxman.

Gay, G. (2010). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research and practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Gibbons, P. (2015). *Scaffolding language. scaffolding learning* (2nd ed.). Portsmouth: Heinemann.

Goodlad, J. I., Klein, M. F., & Tye, K. A. (1979). The domains of curriculum and their study. In J. I. Goodlad and Associates (Ed.), *Curriculum inquiry: The study of curriculum practice* (pp. 43–76). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Hajer, M., & Meestringa, M. (2015). *Handboek taalgericht vakonderwijs (3e herziene druk)*. Bussum: Coutinho.

Hajisoteriou, C., & Angelides, P. (eds.). (2016). *School leadership for intercultural education*. UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hess, D. E., & Mcavoy, P. (2015). *The political classroom. Evidence and ethics in democratic education*. New York and London: Routledge.

Johnson, L., & Morris, P. (2011). Towards a framework for critical citizenship education. *Curriculum Journal, 21*(1), 77–96.

Kasl, E., & Yorks, L. (2016). Do I really know you? Do you really know me? Empathy amid diversity in differing learning contexts. *Adult Education Quarterly, 2016*(66), 3–20.

Kelchtermans, G., Ballet, K., & Lot, L. (2009). Surviving diversity in times of performativity: Understanding teachers’ emotional experience of change. In P. Schutz & M. Zembylas (Eds.), *Advances in teacher emotion research: The impact on teachers’ lives* (pp. 215–232). Dordrecht: Springer.
Kemmis, S. (2009). Action research as a practice based practice. *Educational Action Research, 17*(3), 463–474.

Khalifa, M. A., Gooden, M. A., & Davis, J. E. (2016). Culturally responsive school leadership: A synthesis of the literature. *Review of Educational Research, 86*(4), 1272–1311.

Ladson-Billings, G. J. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Education Research Journal, 35*, 465–491.

Leeman, Y. (2003). School leadership for intercultural education. *Intercultural Education, 14*(1), 31–45.

Leeman, Y., & Pels, T. (2006). Citizenship education in the Dutch multiethnic context. *European Education, 38*(2), 64–75.

Leeman, Y., & Reid, C. (2006). Multi/intercultural education in Australia and the Netherlands. *Compare, 36*(1), 57–72.

Leeman, Y., Van Koeven, E., & Schaalma, F. (2018). Inter-professional collaboration in action research. *Educational Action Research, 26*(1), 9–24.

Leeman, Y., & Wardekker, W. (2011). The moral side of education: Helping teachers to develop a moral perspective on teaching. In W. Veugelers (Ed.), *Education and humanism. Linking autonomy and humanity* (pp. 181–193). Rotterdam/Taipeh/Boston: Sense Publishers.

Leeman, Y., & Wardekker, W. (2013). The contested professionalism of teachers meeting radicalizing youth in their classroom. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 17*, 1053–1066.

May, S. (Ed.). (1999). *Critical multiculturalism. Rethinking multicultural and antiracist education*. London: Falmer Press.

Nieto, S. (2000). *Affirming diversity: The sociopolitical context of multicultural education*. New York: Longman.

Oolbekkink-Marchand, H. W., Hadar, L. L., Smith, K., Helleve, I., & Ulvik, M. (2017). Teachers’ perceived professional space and their agency. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 62*(2017), 37–46.

Pollack, T. M. (2013). Unpacking everyday “Teacher Talk” about students and families of color: Implications for teacher and schoolleader development. *Urban Education, 48*, 863–894.

Priestley, M., Biesta, G., & Robinson, S. (2015). *Teacher agency: An ecological approach*. London: Bloomsbury.

Radstake, H., & Leeman, Y. (2010). Guiding discussions in the class about ethnic diversity. *Intercultural Education, 21*(5), 429–442.

Ramaekers, S. (2010). Multicultural education: Embeddedness, voice and change. *Ethics and Education, 5*(1), 55–66.

Reid, C., & Major, J. (eds). (2017). *Global teaching. Southern perspectives on teachers working with diversity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan by Springer.

Savva, M. (2017). Learning to teach culturally and linguistically diverse students through cross-cultural experiences. *Intercultural Education, 28*(3), 269–282.

Schutte, I. (2018). *Ethical sensitivity and developing global civic engagement in undergraduate honors students*. Utrecht: University of Humanistic Studies. Dissertation.

Shadid, W. (1998). *Grondslagen van interculturele communicatie.[Fundations of intercultural communication]*. Deventer: Kluwer.

Tirri, K., & Kuusisto, E. (2017). How can purpose be taught? *Journal of Religious Education, 64*, 101–112.

Van den Akker, J. (2003). Curriculum perspectives: An introduction. In J. Van den Akker, W. Kuiper, & U. Hameyer (Eds.), *Curriculum Landscapes and Trends* (pp. 1–10). Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Velon. (2016, 2017, 2018). *Kennisbasis Lerarenopleiders [Knowledge base for teacher educators]*. Retrieved from [http://www.velon.nl](http://www.velon.nl)
Veugelers, W., & Leeman, Y. (2018). Pedagogical possibilities in culturally diverse educational contexts: Theory and practice of inclusive education in the Netherlands. In L. Claiborne & V. Balakrishnan (Eds.), Difference, ethics and inclusive education: Changing global policy and practice. Boston: BrillSense Publishers.

Villegas, A. M., & Lucas, T. (2002). Preparing culturally responsive teachers. Journal of Teacher Education, 53(1), 20–32.

Zembylas, M., & Papamichael, E. (2017). Pedagogies of discomfort and empathy in multicultural teacher education. Intercultural Education, 28(1), 1–19.