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Article

Discourses of democratic education in the preparation of teachers for international contexts: an analysis of curriculum documents

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Abstract

This article offers a critical and comparative view of democratic education as expressed in curriculum documents of ten teacher education programmes aimed at educating teachers for international contexts. Democracy and democratic education are concepts with contested meanings, and I use the discourses of democratic education identified by Sant (2019) as an analytical tool for mapping the understandings or approaches present in the documents. Intercultural competence, global citizenship, and International Mindedness are contested and overlapping concepts which intersect with these democratic discourses. The tension between a neoliberal discourse and a traditional focus on international-mindedness and global citizenship is often described as characteristic of international schools. The "internationalist" ethos dominates course descriptions and learning objectives. While several discourses of democratic education are present, the focus is mainly individual and geared towards intercultural understanding rather than democratic competences. The idea of the student as a citizen beyond the limits of the classroom walls is not very visible, nor are concepts of power and privilege.

Keywords: international education, teacher education, international schools, democratic education

Introduction

The overall aim of this paper is to map and critically interrogate elements of democratic education in international teacher education, as expressed through curriculum documents of ten university programmes aimed at educating teachers for international settings. In this sense, the paper places itself in the intersection between the research fields of democratic education and international education. The term international education has a plurality of meanings (Bray, 2010; Dolby & Rahman, 2008; Little, 2010). It is used in connection with comparative education, involving the exchange of knowledge between different national systems of education and aiming to understand how education works in different contexts (Steiner-Khamsi, 2010). In this paper, however, I am using the term in the context of education for "international mindedness" in international schools or other institutions (Bunnell, 2008; Cambridge & Thompson, 2004). Over the last two decades, the number of international schools worldwide has trebled, and some eighty percent of the more than six million students in international schools are now local children (ISC Research, 2021). An increasing number of universities across the globe have taken the opportunity to address this growing field by offering teacher education programmes that focus on preparing teachers for international settings (Haywood, 2015; van Werven, 2016). Ten such programmes, offered by European universities, are the focus of this study. Through an analysis of curriculum documents, I address the research question: What discourses of democratic education are present in the curriculum documents of international teacher education programmes, and how does the international perspective of these programmes influence these discourses?

While democracy is under pressure across the globe (EIU, 2021; Freedom House, 2021), the democratic role of education is not a given, even in established democracies (Ávalos & Razquin, 2017; Edling & Simmie, 2020). Democracy itself is a concept with contested meanings, and there is no consensus on what a democratic education entails, nor on the precise aims of such an education. Several different versions or discourses of democratic education can be identified in the literature (Sant, 2019). The idea of a democratic education goes back at least as far as Dewey (1916). It holds that education has a purpose that goes beyond the teaching of skills for future working life – namely ensuring children's capacity for further development as humans and as democratic citizens. Dewey (1916) insists that this entails breaking down barriers of class, race, and national territory.

International schools, with their foundational values of international mindedness and intercultural understanding, are thought to hold a transformative potential; a possibility to promote democracy, peace, equality, and social justice (Gardner-McTaggart, 2021). The aim of educating children for international understanding is historically intertwined with the rise of international schools and international curricula (Hill, 2015; Sylvester, 2015). However, several authors have pointed out some enduring tensions, where

democratic values are under pressure from neoliberal forces of marketisation and commodification, with schools preparing students for a global marketplace (Bittencourt & Willetts, 2018; Dvir et al., 2018; Gardner-McTaggart, 2021). Cambridge and Thompson (2004) describe this tension in terms of an "internationalist" and a "globalist" approach to international education. The internationalist approach is concerned with international understanding and peace, while the globalist approach is concerned with internationally portable qualifications, international standards, and quality assurance (Cambridge & Thompson, 2004). Yeh (2018, p. 765) argues that the neoliberal culture of accountability is "counterintuitive to the goals and values of a democratic society and its education system."

This study is a contribution to investigating a field, international teacher education, that has received little research attention. International education in general is "unrecognised and underresearched" (Bunnell, 2016, p. 547). Levy and Fox (2016) and van Werven (2016) provide an overview of the field, addressing the structure and content of programmes that prepare teachers for international settings, including competences for the globally competent teacher. Concepts like global citizenship, intercultural competences, and international mindedness come into play here. These concepts are contested, understood in various ways, and partly overlapping (Barratt Hacking et al., 2016; Pashby et al., 2020). In this article, I take a critical perspective and an approach drawing on critical discourse analysis. Through identifying and unpacking some of the discourses of democratic education, and how they interact with the internationalist or globalist discourses of international education, I aim to investigate potential associations between democratic education and international or global education discourses. I hope to provide insight into how international teacher education contributes to the ongoing development of international education.

International teacher education is not a clearly defined field. The ten programmes included in this study vary along several dimensions: level (undergraduate/postgraduate), length (1-5 years), target school level (primary/secondary education), and organization (online/campus-based; full-time/part-time). What unites them is that they aim to educate teachers for international schools or other international settings. As there is no standardised international teacher qualification, attending an international teacher education programme is not a prerequisite for teaching in an international school. Most teachers in international schools have a teaching qualification from a national context, often from an English-speaking country (van Werven, 2016). Increasingly diverse domestic school settings also entail a demand for teachers who are prepared for teaching groups of students of various national or cultural origins and home languages (Levy & Fox, 2016; van Werven, 2016). The international school field is therefore not the only partner and recipient of graduates from the programmes, although it is an important one.

Theoretical and analytical framework

Within a critical framework, education can be understood as contributing toward democratic or antidemocratic principles. Education can contribute to socializing students into dominant ideologies and perpetuating existing power relations, but it can also be a liberatory process and a way to achieve a more just, democratic society (Apple, 2004; Carr, 2008; Freire & Ramos, 2000; Kincheloe, 2012). In my analysis of curriculum documents, I am drawing on critical discourse analysis, which sees language as a social practice that both mediates and constructs our understanding of reality, and is linked to the construction of social norms, identities, and structures. Discursive practices can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations, or transform them (Fairclough, 2001; Schiffrin et al., 2008). In this perspective, curriculum documents are shaped by social structures and practices on one hand, and by the agency of people on the other (Fairclough, 2011). At the same time, they have causal effects, mediated by meaning-making (Fairclough, 2001). In other words, these documents have social consequences – they help construct the professional identities of teacher educators and future teachers and the ideologies, knowledge, competences, ideas, and assumptions they take with them into the classroom. In this sense, the documents may help sustain and reproduce existing social conditions and power structures, as well as contribute to changing them. By exploring the discourses that frame practice in international teacher education, I intend to map and open up the concept of democratic education in the international context. I'm approaching democracy and democratic education as contested concepts. Different versions of democratic education respond to different ontological and epistemological assumptions, different normative approaches to democracy, and different conceptions of the relationship between education and politics (Sant, 2019).

The discourses of democratic education identified by Sant (2019) are used as an analytical tool. The liberal, the multicultural, the deliberative, the participatory, and the critical discourse (see below), are the most central to my analysis. In addressing the implications of the presence or absence of these discourses in the curriculum documents under study, I rely on a 'thick' notion of democracy which includes not only democratic institutions and structures but the agency of people on many levels and in many ways to effect change (Gandin & Apple, 2002). From this perspective, issues of equality and social justice are central, and it is necessary to consider the implications of political, cultural and socio-economic power structures, as well as issues of discrimination and other barriers to democratic participation and social opportunity. Therefore, notions of plurality, diversity, and interculturality are also important.

Sant (2019) conducts a theoretical review of how democratic education is conceptualised in academic articles on education. She finds that democratic education functions as a nodal point of eight different political discourses, and identifies pedagogical approaches linked to each of these discourses. Sant also discusses what she terms the cosmopolitan as another nodal point that might be explored as it intersects

with the democratic. This study is not an attempt at a large-scale mapping of cosmopolitan discourses. However, in addressing the little researched intersection of democratic and international teacher education, it investigates how Sant's (2019) democratic discourses show up in curriculum documents of international teacher education, and how elements of what could be referred to as international mindedness or global citizenship intersect with these democratic discourses. In the following, I will use the discourses of democratic education from Sant (2019) as the basis for a framework on which to map and analyse the content of curriculum documentation of international teacher education programmes.

Method

To obtain a workable scope, the study has been limited to European universities. The programmes under study fulfil the following criteria: 1) teacher education programmes aimed at either initial teacher education or both new and experienced teachers, 2) leading to a university-accredited degree or certificate, and 3) based on the course descriptions they are aimed at educating teachers for international contexts. I have included post-graduate teaching certificates that are offered as part of a Master's degree given that the programmes aim at educating teachers for international schools. Master's degrees in International Education that are not teacher education programmes are excluded from my sample. Given the lack of existing definitions of international teacher education as a field, I have chosen these criteria to limit the scope of my study. This does not mean that these are the only criteria possible, or that everyone concerned would see these programmes as constituting a 'field'.

Based on the International Baccalaureate's overview of partner universities[1] and internet searches for 'international teacher education,' 17 programmes were identified that fit these criteria. In some cases, course plans and other documentation were openly available on the university's website. In most cases, a request was sent to the university for access to the relevant documents. Three requests went unanswered, while four were denied for various reasons. The remaining 10 programmes cover six countries (Denmark, Finland, The Netherlands, Norway, Spain, and the UK).

Figure 1. Overview of programmes included in the study

Programme	Level/duration	Description
D(degree)-1	4-year BA degree	International teacher education for primary schools
D-2	4-year BA degree	International teacher education for primary schools
D-3	4-year BA degree	International teacher education for secondary schools[2]

[1] https://www.ibo.org/university-admission/universities-collaborate-with-the-ib/
[2] Students choose a specialisation subject; the analysed curriculum is the one for students specialising in history

D-4	4-year BA degree	National teacher education with international honours option
D-5	5-year integrated MA degree (BA 3 years+MA 2 years)	Intercultural teacher education for primary schools
C(certificate)-1	1-year postgrad certificate	iPGCE (international post-graduate certificate of teacher education)
C-2	1-year postgrad certificate	iPGCE
C-3	1-year postgrad certificate	iPGCE
C-4	1-year postgrad certificate / 2-year MA degree	iPGCE / IB teacher certificate integrated in MA in international education[3]
C-5	2-year MA degree	IB teacher certificate integrated in MA in international education

The postgraduate programmes are explicitly aimed at international schools, and some even demand that students are already in a teaching role in an international school. The full-degree programmes, meanwhile, are more diverse, with some also educating teachers for national schools. This is the case for D4 and D5. Some of the programmes are "related," e.g. D1, D2, and D3 which are based on a common framework; C1, C2, C3, and C4, which are all iPGCE programmes[4], and C4 and C5 which both include the IBO's IB teacher certificate.[5] The undergraduate programmes are directed at specific school levels (D1, D2, and D5 for primary schools, D3 for secondary schools, and D4 for primary/lower secondary). The distinction between "type D" and "type C" programmes does not indicate that either of these categories is internally cohesive, but is relevant in the sense that the "type D" programmes are more comprehensive, and if fewer examples of democratic discourses are identified in "type C" programmes, this should not be interpreted as a lack.

It is important to note the limits of the analysis. Firstly, the research is situated in and limited to a European higher education context, even as it is international in terms of educational aims and practice fields. Secondly, the analysis does not include teaching materials, course literature, lectures, or learning activities. The curriculum documents that have been analysed can be described as course descriptions, course plans, module descriptions, and learning outcomes. They vary in scope and character, but are in all cases "meta-information." To address this variety of material, I take a comparative case studies approach (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017), which uses a logic of "tracing across," where the central issue or idea is traced across sites and scales. In this view, the object of study is not the individual "case" or location, but rather the phenomenon of interest - in this case democratic education. This is in contrast to a view of a case as defined and bounded in time and space. The context is understood as open and emerging, where comparisons between different scales, types, and locations help explore the phenomenon as a process and a practice that involves different actors and influences. This means that rather than defining e.g. programme D-1 as a case, I set out to trace the phenomenon of democratic education across sites and to

[3] The two programmes overlap (the modules constituting one are also part of the other)
[4] Variously termed iPGCE, PGCiE, or PGCEi.
[5] https://ibo.org/professional-development/professional-certificates/

understand how it has been appropriated and transformed by different actors. There are several reasons why I find this approach relevant to my study. The programmes differ greatly along several dimensions. Juxtaposing them as cases to be compared directly one against the other would not be meaningful. And yet they have the common aim of educating teachers for international schools, and this is the context that is relevant for investigating my phenomenon of interest. Furthermore, international education by its very nature is not bounded by space. It influences and is influenced by international and global processes, its relationship with the international practice field, and international scholarship. Some of the programmes are themselves geographically unbounded, as teaching takes place online and students are physically located around the world. This logic of comparison allows for meaningful exploration of the various discourses of democratic education across these diverse institutions and programmes.

Using a 'thick' notion of democracy (Gandin & Apple, 2002), my analysis has not been restricted to passages that are explicitly linked to democratic education but has included all the text of the selected course plans. The analysis was conducted as a multi-step process with a mix of inductive and deductive approaches. To ensure that all important aspects of the data were captured, a first inductive content analysis identified any elements deemed broadly relevant to the research question. These were coded with descriptive codes. In the second stage, the initial inductively coded passages were used as a starting point for the subsequent deductive analysis. In this stage, the coded data were mapped onto an analytical framework based on the eight discourses of democratic education identified by Sant (2019), ending up with a matrix overview of each programme and discourse. A further iterative analysis process, moving back and forth between the matrix overview, the inductive codes, and the data, allowed me to tease out the particularities of the categories, compare between programmes, and establish the overall picture. The analysis was conducted at the level of individual sentences and phrases, as well as looking at the programme level to find which discourses appeared more strongly. Figure 2 is a simplified extract of the analytical framework, where key points for five of the discourses have been selected in order to illustrate the framework.

Figure 2. Extract of the analytical framework

	View of democracy	Focus of democratic education	Examples from the data
Liberal	Freedom is the primary democratic value; The individual is valued over the social; Rational citizens will use their freedom for the common good; Democracy guarantees individual liberty and equality.	Learning about democratic structures and processes, voting and representation; individual rights and duties Learning democratic values	*...a school culture based on freedom of thought, equality and democratic education (D5)* *...education in respect of rights and freedoms, in equality of rights and opportunities between men and women, in equal non-discriminatory treatment... (C5)*
Deliberative	Democracy needs forums where all citizens can discuss Inclusive deliberation processes	Communication skills Skills for deliberation Learning through problem-solving Focus on real issues;	*Knowledge and practice of a variety of discussion and debating skills (D-1)*

	Free and open communication to achieve fair consensus	Media literacy Emphasis on consensus	*Promote the values for discussion, argumentation and effective communication as innovative and fundamental learning axes. (C-5)*
Participatory	Democratic practices are not limited to politics Focus on action and praxis Emphasis on inclusivity and non-discrimination	Focus on participation Learning through problem-solving Focus on real issues and controversial issues Media literacy Democratic simulations Experiential learning Student participation and influence	*Co-operate with pupils on teaching aims, contents, and work forms on the basis of the children's ability and potential (D-2)* *...offer their students a safe, participatory, inclusive and sustainable learning environment (D-3)*
Multicultural	Emphasis on plurality Intersectionality Postcolonial debates Non-universalist Epistemological plurality	Communication skills Intercultural competence Controversial issues Reflecting on own biases and stereotypes Curriculum reflecting different cultures Combating institutional racism	*...acceptance, recognition and enhancing of diversity in the classroom (D-1)* *...identify and analyse a range of culturally diverse learning, teaching and assessment practices which help support progress for all learners (C-1)*
Critical	Social transformation Dismantling systems that reproduce inequality Emancipation of oppressed/marginalized Solidarity Focus on action and praxis	Focus on real issues and controversial issues Critical view on power and culture Combating institutional racism Student participation and influence Investigating social problems Self-empowerment and emancipation of students	*Analyze one's own possibilities to contribute to social justice (D-5)* *S/he knows and understands the political, legal and structural context of socio-cultural diversity. (D-1)*

As can be seen from the framework extract, several of the discourses have overlapping elements. Text that belongs in more than one discourse has been coded in both.

Analysis and Results

The results in this section are arranged into six sections. Firstly, some considerations on the course plans' conceptualisations of democracy. We then move to the five discourses of democratic education that I have identified as most prevalent, namely the liberal, the deliberative, the participatory, the multicultural, and the critical discourses.

Conceptualisations of democracy

The word democracy does not appear often in the course plans. Four of the programmes mention "democracy" or "democratic," while another two mention "citizen" or "citizenship." It is for the most part the D-type programmes that refer explicitly to democratic citizenship or democratic education. Being more comprehensive, they are more likely to include history or social studies modules where a more explicit discussion of democracy and citizenship is likely to be included. However, reference to democracy is not only found in these subjects. The D-4 module on physical education, for example, mentions "inclusion and participatory democracy." This indicates a deliberate and holistic engagement with democracy and democratic education as a concept. The shorter postgraduate programmes, for the most part, have more

minimalist course documentation, and with the exception of C-5, do not mention these terms at all. In line with the thick understanding of democracy, I am however including elements in the analysis that are not explicitly presented as "democratic education" like values, attitudes, competences, and practices that support people's agency and voice within as well as outside of democratic institutions. Looking at such a wider understanding of democratic education, all of the programmes have elements of some of the discourses of the framework.

For the most part, the course plans that do refer to democracy as a term have no explicit definition of how democracy is understood. However, some of the programmes implicitly (through closeness in the text) or explicitly link democracy with concepts like diversity, inclusion/exclusion, equity, culture, and peace, thereby implying a thick notion of democracy. For example, exemplifying democratic values as

> social cohesion, active citizenship and intercultural understanding (D-1)

Some of the programmes expect students to reflect on the concept of democracy or democratic citizenship. This is particularly the case of D1, D2, and D3, which are "sister" programmes in the sense that they have been developed based on a common framework:

> Reflect on the concept of democracy. (D-2)
>
> This course unit will lay the groundwork helping student teachers discover different ideas about democratic citizenship and its importance in international education (D-3)
>
> ...explain what they consider the goals of democratic citizenship to be (D-3)
>
> Making reflections on the concept of democracy (D-1)

Lexical choices like "reflect," "discover" and "what they consider" imply critical engagement with the concept of democracy. Students are not expected to just receive and reproduce, but take an active part in constructing their knowledge and opinions, which are valued. Exploration and reflection are examples of "open" epistemic practices (Markauskaite & Goodyear, 2016), which allow for insights that are not already established and defined.

The liberal discourse

The discourse of liberal democracy is often considered the dominant one (Carr, 2008), and we might expect that a corresponding liberal discourse of democratic education would be dominant in these course plans. At first glance, this is not the case. The liberal discourse entails a preoccupation with explicitly democratic systems of government (Sant, 2019). In other words, students should acquire knowledge of democratic institutions and procedures. There is however little explicit reference to democratic systems or institutions

in the material. Teaching about systems of government is often linked to national history and national structures. In an international context, the liberal discourse could be linked to teaching democratic principles, and international human rights, which are indeed the aspects we predominantly find in the course plans. D-4 is the programme that shows the most alignment with the liberal discourse, for example through the idea of individual liberty expressed as freedom of thought:

> … a school culture based on freedom of thought, equality and democratic education (D-4)

D-4 and D-1 both refer to human rights, as expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. However, with an overall look at the texts, a picture emerges in most of them of a mainly individual perspective, where values of tolerance, harmony, and equality dominate:

> … a classroom situation based on (…) mutual tolerance and understanding of each other's values and norms (D-3).

> Understand (…) some of the main factors which influence a learner's personal fulfilment (C-4).

The liberal discourse takes the equality of citizens as a starting point, values the individual over the social, and emphasizes democratic values and individuals' rights and duties (Sant, 2019, p. 663). From this perspective, most of the programmes can be seen as rooted in liberal discourse.

The deliberative discourse

The deliberative discourse of democratic education holds that people's active deliberation is central to democracy. Teaching communication and deliberation skills are therefore essential (Sant, 2019, p. 669). Most of the course plans emphasise skills related to communication and cooperation. These skills are among the most prevalent in the course plans, and strongly related to the international aspect in the form of "intercultural communication," or "intercultural competences." A couple of the programmes refer to discussion in the classroom as a skill or learning method:

> Knowledge and practice of a variety of discussion and debating skills; Pitfalls and challenges in management of discussion and debate (D-1).

> Promote the values for discussion, argumentation and effective communication as innovative and fundamental learning axes (C-5).

However, with these few exceptions as illustrated above, communication skills are conceived of primarily as teacher competences, necessary for teaching in an intercultural environment, and not as skills for deliberation, problem-solving or making your voice heard, as we might understand it in a democratic context. The course plans do not make any clear link between (intercultural) communicative and cooperative skills and democratic deliberation and participation.

The participatory discourse

The participatory discourse overlaps to some extent with the deliberative but emphasises participation as the key element of democracy (Hart-Davidson et al., 2005). Within this discourse, it is not enough to practice deliberation and prepare pupils for future democratic citizenship; the school itself should be a democratic space (Biesta, 2006). D-4 is the only course plan which refers explicitly to participatory democracy, but several of the programmes include learning objectives that view the classroom as a democratic space where learners should participate in decisions and have an influence on their learning. This may be in the context of the students themselves,

> We would like all students to play an active role in the way in which the programme develops and in the direction of their study careers (D-3)

or in the context of the classrooms they will manage as teachers:

> Co-operate with pupils on teaching aims, contents, and work forms on the basis of the children's ability and potential (D-2)

The participatory discourse is mainly evident in the type D programmes. D-1 and D-2, which are comprehensive, BA-level teacher education programmes with a common framework, directed at primary schools, are the programmes where this discourse is particularly visible. These programmes both have explicit mention of the classroom as a democratic space and education as a democratic practice:

> Create an active and sustainable democratic learning environment (D-2)

> Deal with issues related to bringing democratic theory into practice (D-2)

> Preparing schoolchildren of different ethnic or cultural background for participating in a democratic society (D-1)

There are also references to encouraging pupils' autonomy, giving them responsibility, and encouraging them to contribute. The participatory discourse pays attention to who is enabled to participate and who is not, and which mechanisms in society work to include or exclude citizens from participating actively. Even in a classroom setting, language, culture, and previous school experience may influence such accessibility (Sant, 2019), something which is highly relevant to the international context. Inclusion is a term that is used freely in the majority of the programmes, but for the most part without elaboration, and inscribed in a pedagogical rather than a democratic context. A quote from C-1, however, unpacks the notion of inclusion and connects it to various dimensions of diversity in the classroom and to reducing barriers to participation:

> This module offers a range of opportunities to explore the concept of 'inclusive practice', relating to areas such as Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, second language learners, children from a range of Socio-

> economic backgrounds and the associated educational interventions designed to support learners with any exceptionality. A consideration of strategies to reduce potential barriers to success, whilst promoting participation in the classroom, affords the opportunity for discourse around learning in diverse educational settings (C-1).

In their study of international schools, Barratt Hacking et al. (2016) find that a participatory approach, student voice, and student participation are practices across several of their case study schools, intentionally aimed at supporting the development of 'international mindedness' - both in the sense of student leadership of discussions and processes, participation in decision-making, and in the sense that students having their voice heard, expressing their opinions and identities, are a way of engaging and interacting with different others in practice.

The multicultural discourse

Inclusion is a term that may also be aligned with the multicultural discourse of democratic education, which puts importance on adapting teaching to diverse groups of learners, and ensuring that all groups of learners are empowered in school. The multicultural discourse prioritises debates on plurality and diversity and sees a democratic society as one that guarantees the plurality of ways of being (Sant, 2019, p. 670).

References to intercultural competence are common across all course plans. A few programmes refer to International Mindedness, which is a term central to the curricula of the International Baccalaureate. The term is related to intercultural understanding, global engagement, and multilingualism, but may be interpreted in multiple ways: "Like other related concepts of global citizenship education and global learning, IM is a broad concept and can be attached to different political and leadership agendas" (Barratt Hacking et al., 2016, p. 39). The programmes all contain references to diversity and teaching diverse groups of learners. Some (including all the type D programmes) explicitly state their focus on intercultural competence:

> Intercultural competence is of crucial importance and it permeates all modules (D-3).

> The intercultural viewpoint is present in all the studies in education (D-5).

A longer quote from one of the programmes defines intercultural competence in a way that clearly inscribes itself in the multicultural discourse:

> Intercultural competence in the teaching profession includes the acceptance, recognition and enhancing of diversity in the classroom, and eliminating mechanisms of prejudices and discrimination. Intercultural competence starts with the teacher him/herself, and his or her ability to reflect on and explore identity and diversity in relation to him or herself. The international primary school teacher helps in (together with self-reflection, knowledge and understanding of diversity in society, education and the individual) communication

> and relationship with pupils, colleagues and parents of diverse backgrounds in employing inclusive educational strategies, and in creating intercultural learning situations (D-1).

In this instance, we notice that while communication is an important part, the concept also includes attitudes (acceptance and recognition of diversity), self-reflection, and action (eliminating prejudices and discrimination). This multifaceted explanation is in line with the complexity and multiple understandings of the term International Mindedness, as found in a multi case study of international schools (Barratt Hacking et al., 2016). Such detailed description is, however, the exception - and D-1 is by far the wordiest of the course plans. Most of the course plans are more minimalist in style and do not expand on the content of the term 'intercultural competence.' In many cases, it is repeatedly 'tacked on' to a phrase without elaboration, like the following reference to 'intercultural classrooms':

> Design educational activities while focusing on all aspects of classroom management in intercultural and international classrooms (D-2).

In many of the programmes, intercultural competence is presented primarily as entailing dialogue and listening to cultural perspectives other than your own.

> [Students] are able to communicate across cultural differences, listening and entering into a dialogue (D-3).

There are few references to this as challenging, or to what this requires or entails. Primarily, intercultural competence is presented as teacher competence, and mostly with the pedagogical aim of achieving better learning for all pupils. However, some course plans assert that this is a competence that should also be taught in the classroom:

> [Teachers should work for] development of cultural awareness and intercultural communicative competences in the pupils (D-4).

Similarly, all the programmes mention diversity. The notion of diversity is also linked primarily to pedagogical aims and strategies, enabling a culturally responsive pedagogy, and adapting teaching to diverse groups of learners, which is central to the multicultural discourse (Banks & Banks, 2019, p. 19). For example, a teacher should be able to:

> create approaches to teaching and learning adapted to diverse learners (C-2)

> successfully identify and analyse a range of culturally diverse learning, teaching and assessment practices which help support progress for all learners (C-1)

A multicultural discourse in democratic education means that students should be confronted with the Other, and diversity should be visible and normalised. This also means that the curriculum should reflect different cultures (Sant, 2019, p. 671), which is something several of the course plans do refer to:

> S/he is able to critically evaluate diversity within teaching materials, e.g. textbooks, videos and media (D-1).

The multicultural discourse also focuses on who is the democratic subject, and on the consequences of intersectionality. This involves consideration of the "interconnectedness of categories of race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality, age, and ability," how they relate to power, and how systems of oppression overlap (Hill Collins, 2019, p. 22). Several of the course plans acknowledge the existence of different dimensions of diversity:

> Identify the existence of other group identities that relate to our culture as well as analyze the study of genders and the principles of equality (C-5).

> [Students] are aware of different representations of diversity, and of cultural and minority issues in education (including home/family issues, gender, ethnicity, language, sexuality, disability and social class) (D-3).

However, there is no explicit mention of intersectionality, or the notion that group identities might combine in different ways and might be connected to issues like oppression, disadvantage, and privilege. A central notion of the multicultural discourse is helping students investigate and understand implicit cultural assumptions, working to reduce prejudice (Banks & Banks, 2019, p. 19). This would also mean interrogating your own position. A few course plans explicitly include critical reflection on students' own identities, cultures, and roles:

> Demonstrate critical awareness of the dimensions of their own cultural and religious identity, critical thinking and individual reflection (D-2).

> This unit is critical [...], as it will enable us to look outside the bounds of our own international settings and to consider a range of cultural alternatives to our own situation (C-1).

However, critical analysis of one's own identity and possible bias does not appear clearly in most of the course plans.

The critical discourse

Rooted in, among others, the writings of Paolo Freire, the critical discourse is concerned with equality and social justice. Pedagogies of critical democratic education aim to achieve the personal and collective emancipation of students and the transformation of their social reality. They argue for a dialogical relationship of reflection and action, with schools considered sites of struggle and students ideally becoming activists in the struggle for the public good (Sant, 2019). A few programmes do indicate a concern with social justice, and with eliminating prejudice and discrimination. This may be interpreted within a critical discourse of democratic education but overlaps with the multicultural discourse as well as notions of inclusion, international mindedness, and intercultural competence.

> Intercultural competence in the teaching profession includes the acceptance, recognition and enhancing of diversity in the classroom, and eliminating mechanisms of prejudices and discrimination. (D-1).

> They are internationally minded and know and understand key international and global issues, political processes, and the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion in local, national and global perspectives (D-3).

D-5 in particular explicitly references social responsibility and social justice, and specifically how intercultural education and social justice are interconnected.

> Describe and critically analyse the interconnectedness of social justice, intercultural education and sustainability in education (D-5).

D-5 is also a programme that is more oriented towards global education development than any of the other programmes, with a focus on the UN sustainability goals that is not apparent in the other programmes.

A critical multicultural perspective entails a curriculum that investigates the relationship between power and culture, and concerns about institutional racism in educational institutions (Sant, 2019). Despite their focus on culturally responsive teaching and international mindedness, the course plans have few mentions of racism and none of institutional racism.

The critical as well as the participatory discourse see the pupil or student as a de facto citizen. This is not an idea that comes across in the course plans to any extent. What is evident in some of the texts, however, is a certain kind of empowerment in the form of acting competence – both empowering pupils as a task for teachers, and that teachers themselves can be agents of change:

> Be able to develop children's critical thinking and acting competence for new challenges (D-1).

> ...develop empowered, reflective practitioners and managers in education who can be agents of change (C-3)

In critical discourse, students should be able to critically interrogate and investigate structures in society, including school structures and curricula. Several of the programmes do include some degree of exploring systemic bias or injustice, e.g. through critical reflection on the possible inequitable effects of the curriculum. Some refer in various ways to the hidden curriculum, a concept denoting the "invisible" ways education can reproduce cultural hegemony and social inequality (Apple, 2004; Oztok, 2019).

> Study critically the influence of values and ideologies on the curriculum avoiding the differences between the planned curriculum and taught curriculum (C-5).

> The module will include consideration of the ideological, social, cultural and economic factors which give shape to the curriculum, together with critical analytical reflection upon aspects of curriculum in practice (C-1).

Understand the idea of the 'Hidden Curriculum' in terms of transmitted values, culture and traditions' (C-4).

This perspective of interrogating structures is however fairly limited, and there is no clear reference to notions like oppression or privilege. Few programmes refer to power relations, and the idea of students as activists, with agency beyond the limits of the classroom walls, is not visible.

Discussion

Language in use performs actions in the world (Gee, 2011). Curriculum documents frame and steer teacher educators' work with their students, and indirectly express what the sender (i.e., the institution) considers important in these students' future work in international classrooms. They reflect a message about what makes a good school, what is important in school, what democratic education entails, and which place it should have.

The analysis has shown that none of the programmes can be aligned with any single discourse of democratic education as defined by Sant (2019). Most express several different discourses, in parallel or overlapping. The course plans are characterised by dense text where potential nuances of meaning are not clarified. Sant (2019) asserts that different discourses build on different ontological and epistemological assumptions. However, this does not necessarily mean that they are contradictory or irreconcilable. Several of the programmes – mostly the full-degree/undergraduate ones – give the impression of a conscious inclusion of a variety of perspectives on democratic education. On the other hand, some of the programmes express few aspects of any democratic discourses. For example, the iPGCE programmes have no explicit reference to democratic or citizenship education, and are less oriented towards intercultural competence than the others, although there are references to various dimensions of diversity and inclusion. This is not surprising, as they are shorter programmes, catering to students who already have a degree, and are not intended to cover every aspect of a teacher's professional competence.

Neoliberal discourses and ideas are a strong factor in the globalized landscape (Cambridge & Thompson, 2004; Sant, 2019) in which these programmes operate. However, this is not visible to any degree in the curriculum documents that I have analysed. While the texts express a plurality of democratic discourses, they do so in a way that aligns with an internationalist, rather than a globalist ethos, as described by Cambridge and Thompson (2004). We might expect that neoliberal or globalist discourses are more strongly present in other types of texts, such as website descriptions and promotional material, as well as programme regulations, which may emphasise standards, assessments, and accountability measures.

The strength of the multicultural discourse in most of the programmes is reflective of this internationalist tradition, as well as of the reality of diverse classrooms in many international schools. This is expressed in

the language of a culturally sensitive education, one that provides equal opportunities for all irrespective of cultural background. This is not necessarily explicitly connected to democratic education. However, from the point of view of multicultural democratic discourse, equal opportunities, respect for diversity, and empowerment for all are part of democratic education. "Diversity," seemingly a neutral and inclusive term, appears frequently in these course plans. However, it is often used without definition and therefore lacks conceptual clarity (Åberg, 2020). Although the course plans show a general preoccupation with cultural awareness and intercultural competence, there is little sense in the texts of how this will be developed in practice, little reference to dilemmas, power differentials, or any challenging aspect of these notions. Instead, the course descriptions often show a conspicuous vagueness when diversity is mentioned. In most of the programmes, there is little reference to reflection on own identities and how dimensions of diversity interact with power and privilege.

The critical discourse is, however, fairly strong in some of the programmes. It consists of statements on promoting social justice and fighting discrimination and to some extent on awareness of possible bias of curricula. However, there are few statements interrogating power and privilege. This contributes to making such phenomena invisible. International schools are, in many ways, elitist institutions. They often cater to an international, cosmopolitan professional class, a national elite, and/or an ambitious upper middle class, all with the means to send their children to private schools. International schools are composed to a large extent of culturally diverse, but privileged students (Haywood, 2015). However, power and privilege constitute an area of tension not addressed to any great degree by these documents. While some programmes pay attention to self-reflection and critical interrogation of one's position and values, or de-centering one's perspective, this does not dominate the discourse. The focus is on "knowing how to" teach diverse groups, or about diverse cultures, and a liberal discourse of harmony and understanding, rather than critical engagement. This is in line with a review of IB documents which found students were not required to critically reflect on their values and beliefs, and which concluded: "It is difficult to see how a better world can be created if questions of equal opportunity, stereotyping, marginalization, race, gender, poverty, power and religion, and faith are not interrogated" (Castro et al., 2015, p. 193).

Conclusion

International schools exist in a tension between a neoliberal discourse on parental choice, students as consumers, standards, assessments, and accountability, an elitist discourse of education for an international cosmopolitan class, and the traditional "internationalist" focus on international-mindedness, international understanding, and global citizenship (Bittencourt & Willetts, 2018; Cambridge & Thompson, 2004; Gardner-McTaggart, 2016). This analysis of course plans of ten otherwise very different programmes

of international teacher education shows that it is the internationalist ethos that dominates, and which interacts with several different discourses of democratic education (Sant, 2019). While the deliberative and participatory discourses also appear, the multicultural and critical discourses are strong across most of the programmes, and overlap with internationalist concepts like global citizenship, intercultural competence, and international mindedness. There is a marked focus across the programmes on intercultural competences, inclusion, and diversity. Several of the programmes include a critical discourse exemplified by students' critical reflection on their own identity as well as their critical understanding of curricula, the various forces and structures which shape them, and the effects they might have. Meanwhile, the liberal discourse is a strong undercurrent, with an individual focus on human rights, equality, intercultural understanding, and tolerance. References to intercultural competence are more often linked to a pedagogical discourse of differentiated and culturally sensitive teaching, than to a democratic discourse of equality, non-discrimination, and social justice. A few of the course descriptions include learning objectives related to the classroom as a preparatory space for future democratic participation. However, the idea of the students as citizens beyond the limits of the classroom walls is not very visible. Nor do the texts touch on power and privilege to any great extent, or the possibilities for teachers and students to engage, participate, influence, criticize, and change the society they live in. International schools tend towards culturally diverse, but privileged student populations. We may ask whether the international teacher education programmes equip student teachers to challenge their perspectives or build awareness of privilege, or whether they teach intercultural understanding within the limits of an "international bubble."

Curriculum documents can be seen as texts shaped by social structures and practices on one hand, and by the agency of people on the other, while they also have social consequences (Fairclough, 2001, 2011). They help construct the professional identities of teacher educators and future teachers and the ideologies, knowledge, competences, ideas, and assumptions they take with them into the classroom. This study is a contribution to investigating a field that has received little research attention. It has mapped out some of the forms that the intersection between democratic education and international education takes in these ten different versions of international teacher education. By focusing on the democratic discourses of different teacher education programmes, I have outlined how democratic education is linked with the internationalist ethos and expressed in different ways. I have illustrated the variety of programmes educating teachers for international contexts. This is, however, only part of the picture, and further research is needed on the understandings, opinions, and practices of international teacher educators and student teachers across the world. Increased mobility of people ensures that classrooms are increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse, and cultural expressions and practices are spread through online networks in a way that influences the everyday lives of teachers and learners on all levels (Teekens, 2000). To participate effectively in democratic life in the 21st century, intercultural sensitivities and being able to

identify with a global community are essential (Matthews & Sidhu, 2005). In a globalized world, international teacher education programmes and the discourses of democratic education that they promote, invite interest, comparison, and exchange beyond the field that can be described as international education.

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