



Conceptualisations of multilingualism in early childhood teacher education: Ideological and implementational spaces in policy texts

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ABSTRACT: This paper explores how multilingualism is conceptualised in teacher education policy texts and discuss the ideological and implementational spaces for multilingual pedagogy in teacher education. The main focus is Norwegian early childhood teacher education curricula, and the qualitative oriented content analysis of teacher education curricula documents follows three steps. The first step provides an overview of how the content in Norwegian early childhood teacher education is regulated compared to Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Iceland. The second step takes a historical perspective, examining how the conceptualisations of multilingualism in Norwegian ECTE have changed from 1971–2018. The third step involves a close reading of local course plans from 12 different Norwegian higher education institutions. Findings show how curriculum content in Norwegian early childhood teacher education related to multilingualism is far more regulated than in the other Nordic countries. The historical analysis reveals how the ideological and implementational spaces have changed over the years by defining multilingualism differently, and how the current national guidelines open the ideological and implementation spaces for multilingualism. Furthermore, the analysis of the 12 local teacher education programs illustrates how these open spaces are implemented in different ways, either in narrowing further the spaces or broadening the spaces. The discussion revolves around how these spaces require different kinds of competencies for both practitioners and teacher educators.

Keywords: *early childhood teacher education, language ideologies, curriculum, knowledge base*

Introduction

The purpose of the present study is to explore how multilingualism is referred to and conceptualised in early childhood teacher education (ECTE) and how language ideologies and policies come into play in policy text guiding teacher education, illustrated by examples from Norwegian context. In line with societal changes, it is expected that curricula change accordingly. The proportion of children from linguistic and cultural minorities¹ in Norwegian early childhood education and care (ECEC) is increasing. In 2010, the proportion was 10% of all children enrolled, and by the end of 2022 it had increased to 20% (Statistics Norway, 2024). In response to this development, the Norwegian Government focused its attention on early childhood teachers (ECTs) and ECTE through expert reports, White Papers and revised curricula for both ECEC and ECTE. The Norwegian Official Report (NOU) highlighted that “*change of attitude is needed in the education system, and in society in general, so that multilingualism is seen as a value for the individual and for Norway’s opportunities to succeed in a global labour market*” (Østbergutvalget, 2010, p. 12). In line with these suggestions, multilingualism and multilingual pedagogy may include teaching and use of multiple languages in educational settings, aiming to create socially just learning environments for all children no matter their linguistic backgrounds (Bergroth et al. 2022; Cummins, 2021). The role of the ECTs as well as the type of competences ECTs should have, is a lively and ongoing public and academic debate in all Nordic countries. Johansson (2006, p. 52) points out how ECTE is taking different paths in the Nordic countries and expresses concern that ECTE may lose its pedagogical distinctiveness. Multilingual pedagogy is a research-based approach initially used in schools (Cummins, 2000, 2021; García, 2008), and consequently it is relevant to question how multilingualism is expressed the knowledge base in early childhood teacher education, which is rooted in another educational tradition. This educational tradition is sometimes referred to as “the Nordic model”, but rather than being one common model, it is more precisely described as approaches with an emphasis on a play-based, child-centered approach, with a combined focus on care and children's holistic learning and development (Pramling & Pramling Samuelsson, 2011).

The current national curriculum for early childhood teacher education in Norway (as per 2023) is governed by the Ministry of Education, and every higher education institution

¹ Statistics Norway (2024) defines children from linguistic and cultural minorities as children with ethnic languages and cultural backgrounds other than Norwegian, Sámi, Swedish, Danish or English. Immigrant children includes immigrants and Norwegian born to immigrant parents exclusive children from Denmark, Sweden, Ireland, United Kingdom, United States, Australia and New Zealand.

providing teacher education programs, is supposed to develop a local curriculum based on the national curriculum. There have always been guidelines for pedagogical work involving children, although there are not always governmental or national guidelines (Pramling & Pramling Samuelsson, 2011, p. 2). For example, in an analysis of gender perspectives in Swedish curricula for ECE, Vallberg Roth (2006) shows how curriculum guidelines are periodically guided by contemporary values and attitudes. She operates within four different eras: the Curriculum of God, circa 1850–1890; the Curriculum of the Good Home, circa 1890–1930/40; the Curriculum of the Welfare State, circa the 1950s to the mid-1980s; and finally, the Curriculum of the Situated World Child, from the late 1980s to 2000. These guidelines and text are embedded in different educational ideologies. Language ideologies, in terms of systems of ideas, perceptions and beliefs, a way of seeing the world in a group, a society or individual to a given time or time period (Woolard, 1998), and in particular how languages are valued, implicitly or explicitly, are also embedded in texts that govern the knowledge base in teacher education.

Previous research on language ideologies and multilingualism in Nordic teacher education

According to McKinney (2019), research on language ideologies is a fairly new field of enquiry in teacher education. Studies carried out in the Nordic teacher education context are particularly relevant for this study. In addition to the geographical proximity and cultural similarities, initial teacher education takes place in universities² and the role of research in education, as well as practice, is emphasised (Forsström & Munthe, 2023). Furthermore, they are all based on the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), with curricula emphasising a knowledge base including knowledge, skills and competence (knowing what, why and how).

Studies that have carried out document analyses and interviews show that teacher education programs seem to reproduce traditional discourses about multilingualism, and that there may be a potential conflict between small countries' protectionist, monoglossic language policies for the national language(s) and the need for knowledge about multilingualism and a renewed heteroglossic orientation. For example, in 2009, Carlson (2009) conducted a discourse analysis of multilingualism in primary teacher education in Sweden and found that multilingualism was a missing perspective in governing documents and among teacher educators and student teachers. Later studies have revealed similar findings, and a number of studies conducted in the Nordic context have

² No rule without exception: Teacher education in Denmark is provided by university colleges, not universities.

researched student teachers' development of their professional knowledge and their perceptions of multilingualism or encounters with multilingualism (Iversen, 2022; Thomassen, 2021). Studies have involved both students and teacher educators with and without language minority backgrounds. Students and teacher educators without a language minority background considered multilingualism a resource and a means for inclusion but concurrently saw challenges in balancing the protection of the minority language and empowering multilingual practices (From et al., 2022). Studies involving students with language minority backgrounds reveal that their language skills and experiences are used to a relatively small extent in teacher education (Economou & Ennerberg, 2020; Kanstad, 2013; Rosén & Wedin, 2018; Wedin & Rosén, 2021), and that student teachers end up positioned as *others*: "*students are expected to add value to the pre-school teacher training programme, but at the same time, they are expected to perform like everyone else in the programme, reproducing a discourse of diversity as a positive asset*" (Rosén & Wedin, 2018, p. 52). These studies thus indicate that a monolingual norm seems to dominate initial teacher education in the Nordic countries.

Recent studies on in-service teacher education show that there is often uncertainty associated with developing multilingual pedagogy in terms of the use of multiple languages for educational purposes, aiming at developing multilingualism, and that there is a need for support and follow-up to integrate new perspectives into already established practices. Bergroth and Hansell (2020) advocate an action-research based pre-service and in-service teacher education, because a more action-oriented approach may be the key to openness for both minority and majority languages in ECEC operational culture. They emphasise that both cognitive and affective aspects should be included in future in-service training for added value, but most importantly, that these should be connected to the operational culture and reflection on the teaching practices taking place. This emphasises the need for pedagogical skill (know *how*) and not just epistemic knowledge (know *that*).

Several studies are discursively oriented and use observations, diary notes, individual interviews and focus group discussions with teachers and students, while other studies have been conducted as text studies of curricula. Paulsrud and Lundberg (2021) are examples of the latter, investigating course syllabi at two different teacher education institutions in Sweden. Their analysis shows how knowledge about linguistic and cultural diversity is mainly addressed in language courses (English and Swedish) but also, to a certain extent, in courses within the educational sciences core. Despite the presence of learning objectives and content that highlight linguistic and cultural diversity in the curricula, the authors question whether student teachers are being prepared for work in today's preschools and schools. A similar analysis was carried out by Hermansson et al.

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(2021), who analysed 192 syllabi courses at two Swedish universities. Their study included both preschool, primary and secondary school teacher programmes. Similar to Paulsrud and Lundberg (2021), Hermansson et al. (2021) found that topics on linguistic diversity and multilingual pedagogy are primarily linked to linguistic topics. They pointed out that the risk is high that student teachers are not prepared to support multilingual education for multilingual and nondominant groups. These studies thus show that multilingualism may seem to have insufficient space in teacher education in Sweden.

Bergroth et al. (2022) conducted a larger comparative study of European teacher education that explored ideological and implementational spaces for mainstreaming multilingual pedagogies in initial teacher education in nine locations across seven European countries (including Finland making it relevant for the present study). The findings from their study reveal a trend for open ideological spaces for multilingual pedagogies in the current language-in-education policies at the (sub)national level in most countries; however, the practices at the higher educational institutions (meso level) do not always seem to align with policies at the national level (macro level). The authors point out that there is an implementational inconsistency between the different levels: *“the macro and meso levels are not aligned in other cases because either LST [language sensitive teaching] is included in the macro-level policy but not reflected in ITE [Initial Teacher Education] curricula or the other way around”* (Bergroth et al., 2022, p. 816). The various policy levels put the ideological and implementation spaces into play when there is no alignment, either by narrowing them or challenging and expanding them. This underlines the importance of examining the various layers in policy documents and how ideologies are put into play.

Although most of the contributions mentioned above, regardless of country context, considered primary or upper secondary teacher education, some of the studies embrace ECTE (Bergroth & Hansell, 2020; Hermansson et al., 2021; Kanstad, 2013; Rosén & Wedin, 2018; Wedin & Rosén, 2021). The overall impression from previous studies is that there are few opportunities for student teachers to develop the necessary professional competence to work with multilingualism in ECEC or schools. Furthermore, previous studies show that the monolingual norm prevails in teacher education. Previous studies also suggest that future research should address the knowledge base itself (the learning outcomes) and what kinds of professional competence should be emphasised.

There are many possible approaches to exploring the content of teacher education, such as studying teaching practices or negotiating of language ideologies. This article investigates conceptualisations of multilingualism and language ideologies in the curricula and the political governing of teacher education, particularly the ideological and

implementational spaces that occur at different levels of governance. Overall, the following research aims to identify whether the language pedagogy knowledge base in Norwegian ECTE, stated through the learning outcomes, reflects the distinctiveness of the ECEC context, compared to other Nordic countries, in this case Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Iceland.

The research questions that guide this article are as follows:

1. What characterises the political-ideological governing of the current curriculum content of Norwegian early childhood teacher education concerning multilingualism, compared to similar education in Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Iceland?
2. How are curriculum content changed over time in Norwegian early childhood teacher education national curriculum concerning multilingualism?
3. How are the national guidelines concerning multilingualism implemented in curricula in local higher education institutions in Norway?

The first research question resulted in a comparative overview of content management in the Nordic teacher education context, while the second and third research question invited a closer reading of Norwegian ECTE, in both historical and contemporary terms. All three research questions are linked to the ideological and implementational spaces in the regulation of the content of Norwegian ECTE.

Ideological and implementational spaces

As mentioned in the introduction, the increasing number of children from linguistic and cultural minorities in ECEC has led to a growing political interest in both ECEC and ECTE. Schools and ECEC are often considered the most important arenas for implementing language policy (Alstad & Sopenan, 2020). Language policy is governed by either explicit or implicit views on language (language ideologies) and by what is valued and does not necessarily need to be explicitly formulated. Language ideologies can be defined as “*the sets of beliefs, values and cultural frames that continuously circulate in society, informing the ways in which language is conceptualised and represented as well as how it is used*” (Makoe & McKinney, 2014, p. 659). Language ideologies can involve, for example, monoglossic (monolingual) or heteroglossic (multilingual) norms. These norms may imply that some languages or language varieties are valued more highly than others in given contexts, exemplified by statements as all children must learn Norwegian before entering school (Alisaari et al., 2023; Alstad & Sopenan, 2020). Other language ideologies

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may be linked to language use; for example, some modes of language use are considered better than other modes of language use (such as advanced vocabulary or academic language). Such ideological aspects of language can be expressed in the curriculum, in the form of both implicit and explicit language education policy in curricula.

Focusing on spaces in language policy offers a way to understand the complexity of how macro-language policies relate to teaching practices and how agents (such as educators, institutions, etc.) engage with language policy processes (Johnson, 2010, p. 63). Ideological spaces are conveyed in legislative instruments, such as laws, core curricula and other prescriptive legal documents. Furthermore, discourses and practices may take advantage of the ideological space and can encompass spaces beyond the learning environment at every level, from face-to-face interactions in schools and communities to national educational policies and beyond (Hornberger, 2006). The types and levels of political governance of curricula have the potential to influence the possible implementational spaces of language ideologies in education.

Political governance of curricula

A common tool used in political governance of teacher education is changing the content of teacher education. According to Karlsen (2006, p. 403), there are four main types of instruments of governance: *legal instruments of governance* (such as law, regulations, circulars and agreements), *financial instruments of governance*, *controlling instruments of governance* (including reporting, internal and external evaluation and accreditation) and *informative instruments of governance*, which are linked particularly to curricula and content management. Karlsen refers to the use of informative management tools through curricula in teacher education as a double mandate: “*a mandate for teacher education as independent professional education, but at the same time a mandate that links it to the social tasks assigned to the types of schools it educates for*” (Karlsen, 2006, p. 405, author’s translation). A double mandate is understood here as both the mandate which governs the content of ECT’s work, and the mandate given to the content of teacher education. Teacher education is to be regarded both as a management object and as a means of achieving political goals.

The Nordic countries have varying degrees of government involvement in and management of the content of teacher education. Johansson (2006) claims that there are growing differences between ECTE in the Nordic countries. He points out how Finland, Iceland and, to some extent, Norway have more traditional ECTEs: the programmes still exist as distinct programmes, while there have been more dramatic changes in Denmark and Sweden. Indeed, Denmark’s education program veers more in the direction of a generalist education in social work, not connected to primary teacher education, which is

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a different educational program. Conversely, ECTE in Sweden has evolved toward a general, teacher education, which according to Johansson, considers ECTE as a distinct education program to a lesser extent than earlier (Johansson, 2006, p. 52). Johansson questions whether the traditional ECT knowledge base is disappearing in favour of educating social workers (as in Denmark) or schoolteachers (as in Sweden). Broström (2012) makes a similar observation: *“the increasing governance and political control of preschools is resulting in adult initiated activities focused on a narrow preparation for school with less space for activities instigated by children themselves, like play and other spontaneous activities”* (p. 3). Such a concern for the “schoolification” of the ECEC field seems also relatively widespread in public discourse (Pettersvold & Østrem, 2018), which makes it timely to direct attention to the ECTE knowledge base in terms of learning outcome descriptions of multilingualism and multilingual pedagogy to consider if the pedagogical approach is in play.

A model for approaching the ECTE knowledge base

A recurring discussion in teacher education research concerns what teachers need to know to practice professionally. Within the field of language teaching, the words *what*, *how* and *why* are often used as seminal pedagogical content knowledge in the selection processes of subject content. García (2008, p. 385) highlights three conditions as being traditionally central to the knowledge base of language teachers: language skills, specialist knowledge of language and pedagogical practice. These are linked to teachers’ explicit linguistic awareness. García also highlights a fourth perspective that she considers crucial: *teachers’ multilingual awareness*, or their *“understandings of the social, political and economic struggles surrounding the use of two languages”* (García, 2008, p. 385), that is, the socio-political conditions linked to language, language use and language learning. Questions have also been raised about what teachers must know to teach in linguistically heterogeneous contexts. García’s point is that multilingual awareness is important when teachers do not share languages with the children: if teachers are not proficient in the children’s languages, it is important to have both knowledge of multilingualism and critical linguistic awareness. Table 1 below shows what kind of knowledge is important for teachers who actively use children’s multilingualism in teaching.

As is evident from the model, the teacher does not need to share language(s) with or have subject matter knowledge about the language(s) of the children. What remains a challenge in this model is the understanding of pedagogical practice and the connection between knowledge of language (subject matter) and pedagogical practice. Even if a teacher has knowledge of language and linguistic diversity, it does not necessarily follow that this knowledge is transformed into knowledge about pedagogical principles and

teaching. What García calls the pedagogical practice usually refers to teaching, for example teaching a school subject. However, Nordic ECEC pedagogy and didactics relates to another pedagogical tradition, which embraces a broader approach to teaching where children are understood in terms of their development. According to Pramling and Pramling Samuelsson (2011, p. 3), the different educational traditions can be described as the following: “*Perhaps one can claim that, traditionally, the child is the centre in preschool, while the subject matter dominates school*”. Pramling and Pramling Samuelsson argue that the current view of children in Nordic ECEC is characterised as the competent child, and the importance of the children’s voices and rights is highlighted significantly. Another central element, unlike school, is the focus on pedagogical processes rather than product. The Nordic understanding of ECEC pedagogy and didactics is recognised by its child-centredness. However, ECEC teachers’ role in fostering children’s language learning processes are widely discussed, in particular with regard to how teaching can be considered as an activity responsive to play, children’s agency, and language use (Kultti, 2022) or whether the teachers’ role tends to be more towards a “laissez faire” attitude towards children’s participation in play (Puskás & Björk-Willén, 2017, p. 446). As mentioned earlier, there is a concern that the distinctiveness of early childhood multilingual pedagogy is less visible than a more school-like approach with teacher-led and product-oriented pedagogy.

TABLE 1 García’s model for multilingual awareness for teachers in true multilingual classrooms

	LANGUAGE #1 ³	LANGUAGE #2/3	BILINGUALISM
Knowledge of (proficiency)	+		+
Knowledge about (subject matter)	+		+
Pedagogical practice	+		+
Understandings of social, political and economic struggles	+	+	+

Source: García (2008, p. 390)

Based on the perspectives in García’s model above (Table 1), in particular the knowledge about multilingualism and pedagogical practice relevant for ECEC contexts, the following analysis explores whether and how a distinct early childhood multilingual pedagogy appears in the learning outcomes in the Norwegian ECTE curricula.

³ García (2008) does not use Language #1 and Language #2/3 as identical to L1 and L2. Language #1 is “pointing to the language which is the object of attention of the teacher” (p. 386).

Methods

The present study is a qualitative study of the content in the ECTE knowledge base related to multilingualism, and the data consist of documents such as law texts, framework plans and curricula. The data and analysis comprise three levels, which refer to each of the three different research questions: first, the Nordic level with comparison between Norway and four other Nordic countries concerning levels and forms of content governance of ECTE concerning multilingualism; second, a historical overview at the Norwegian national level of content changes during the past 50 years; and finally, how the national level has been implemented at the local levels/local teacher education institutions. These three different steps and the documents used in the analyses are presented in Table 2.

In the first step of the analysis (the Nordic level), the article explores governance mechanisms in education, with a particular emphasis on legal and informative governance instruments (such as legislation and guideline types). The relevant sources include information and documents from official websites (university websites, government websites) about education systems in Denmark, Iceland, Finland and Sweden, and regulative and legislative documents related to both teacher education and ECEC.

TABLE 2 Steps in analysis, thematic focus and data sources

<i>STEP #</i>	<i>THEME</i>	<i>TYPE OF DATA SOURCE</i>
Step 1	The Nordic level: Content governance of Norwegian ECTE compared to Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Iceland	Legislative documents, national regulations, and/or national curricula in each country related to both ECTE and ECEC
Step 2	The national level: Historical changes in Norwegian ECTE from 1971-2018	Norwegian national curricula guidelines in 1971, 1980, 1995, 2003, 2012 and 2018.
Step 3	The local institutional level: the implementation of multilingualism in curricula in local higher education institutions in Norway	Local, institutional curricula at 12 higher education institutions in 2017 and 2020

The information about different countries' legislation and educational systems was verified by colleagues from the respective countries.⁴ All documents were read in their original language, except some of the documents from those from Iceland, which were

⁴ The verification implied that colleagues from the other Nordic countries read the table and confirmed whether this was correct information and relevant documents for their respective countries.

read in English. For Finland's case, the documents were read in Swedish (one of the official languages in Finland).

This initial Nordic framing of the Norwegian ECTE forms the starting point for the second step of the analysis, which offers a historical overview of how the knowledge base related to multilingualism has changed over time during the period ECTE has been regulated through national curriculum guidelines for teacher education (1971–2018). The same Norwegian national documents from 2018 are included in the analysis in steps 1 and 2. While step 1 has a comparative analysis of the current situation comparing Norway to other Nordic countries, step 2 includes historical national curriculum documents from Norway only.

The third step consists of a close reading of the content of the course plans in 12 Norwegian higher education institutions that offer ECTE programmes. This close reading includes content analysis of the course plans, with an emphasis on how multilingualism is expressed in the learning outcomes in local course plans and what kind of professional knowledge is valued. Documents were from 12 educational institutions that offer ECTE to investigate whether and how the plans have changed over time. For this reason, documents from two different academic years (2017–2018 and 2020–2021) were compared. The national guidelines for ECTE were changed in 2018 and implemented by institutions in the 2020–2021 academic year accordingly.

Selection criteria for course plans

A total of 13 higher education institutions offer ECTE in Norway, but the Sámi University of Applied Sciences was omitted from the sample; thus, a total of 12 institutions were included.⁵ For this study, syllabi for the course 'Language, Text and Mathematics' were selected. At institutions that offer several ECTE programs on different campuses, one campus was chosen to represent the institution (for example Campus Vestfold at the University of South-Eastern Norway and Campus Bergen at Western Norway University of Applied Sciences). Course plans intended for more than 20 ECTS were not included in the selection; rather, the courses compulsory for all students were chosen. In cases where educational institutions offered both full-time and part-time education, full-time

⁵ The Sámi University of Applied Sciences follows different legislation and consequently, the course plans are not easily comparable, as they are not implementations of the same regulations. There are not huge differences between the regulations for the 12 institutions and those for the Sámi University of Applied Sciences, but the differences are significant enough that it is not feasible to perform a fair comparison. Future studies might compare how Sámi languages are legitimized in the curricula.

education was chosen. After applying the selection criteria, 24 course plans from two academic years remained.

In total, 12 course plans for 2017 and 12 course plans for 2020 were collected from the institutions' official webpages. All the course descriptions follow a strict genre and are short texts of approximately 1.5 pages and follow a fixed order: first the learning outcome descriptions, then, if mentioned at all, a brief overview of the course content, followed by compulsory assignments and type of examination. It is primarily the learning outcome descriptions and the course content that provide information about the knowledge base; consequently, these are the subjects of analysis.

All the selected course plans were loaded into a searchable word document. The document was then searched for terms (including using truncations) such as *multilingual/bilingual*, *second language*, *linguistic diversity* and *mother tongue/first language*⁶. These search terms have been selected based on the terminology used in the framework plan for ECEC and regulations for the framework plan for ECTE (Forskrift om rammeplan for barnehagelærerutdanning, 2023), as well as the associated national guidelines (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2012; Universitets- og høgskolerådet [UHR], 2018). The course plans were also read closely to check for any alternative terms and whether multilingual perspectives were included and expressed implicitly in some ways. Similar terms have been used in studies of curricula in Swedish teacher education (such as Hermansson et al., 2021; Paulsrud & Lundberg, 2021) and in studies of other governing documents concerning ECEC in the Nordic context (such as Alstad & Sopanen, 2020; Giæver & Tkachenko, 2020).

It should be noted that the study plans were not examined in their entirety. For this reason, it might be possible that multilingualism is mentioned somewhere in the study plans but not in the course syllabi, although this is not likely. This is substantiated by previous research (Hermanson et al, 2021; Paulsrud & Lundberg, 2021), which shows that multilingualism and linguistic diversity primarily occur in linguistic subjects in teacher education.

After the search for relevant terminology was completed, the ways in which the different institutions concretised the content of the national guidelines were explored. The starting point was the identification of terminology from the first phase of the analysis. In this phase, the learning outcome descriptions in the course plans were considered in relation to the national guidelines to explore whether and how they were understood and

⁶ The Norwegian terms used in the search were, respectively, *flerspråk*/fleirspråk/tospråk**, *andrespråk**, *språklig/språkleg*, *mangfold/mangfald* and *morsmål/førstespråk**.

implemented. The purpose of this was to assess whether and how the ideologies changed and whether the understanding of multilingualism was the same at the 12 institutions and had remained so over time. The following section offers an overview of how Nordic ECTE is governed through legislation and national regulations before delving deeper into the course plans and exploring how multilingualism is implemented and understood.

Content governance of multilingualism in Nordic ECTE

The first topic in the analysis (research question 1) is oriented towards the national authorities' governing of the content in ECTE, including the legal instruments of governance (legislation and regulations). By using a comparative approach, the purpose is to shed light on the Norwegian situation in particular. Below is an overview of the current status of the type of education, legislation and regulation of ECTE and ECEC in the Nordic countries Denmark, Iceland, Finland, Norway and Sweden. All education programmes are offered at the university level, except in Denmark, where the education is provided in university colleges. All teacher education programs fall under the Department of Education in their respective countries; however, the degree and extent of governance vary. The boxes marked in grey in the table below indicate that terms such as multilingualism, bilingualism, first and/or second language, linguistic diversity are explicitly mentioned in the regulation or curriculum.

The terminology used to describe the teaching profession is different across the Nordic countries and indicates the field for which the candidate is educated. In Denmark, the candidate becomes a *pedagogue*, while in the four other countries Norway, Sweden, Iceland and Finland, the candidate becomes a *teacher*. In Norway, the candidate more precisely becomes a *kindergarten teacher*, in Sweden a *preschool teacher*, in Iceland a *playschool teacher*, and in Finland a *teacher in early childhood education and care*. While Denmark offers professional education that resembles a generalist education for social and pedagogical work, preparing students for both day care as well as for social and welfare services, Finland, Norway and Iceland have a clear orientation towards ECEC as a distinct kind of education. In Sweden, the integration into the school system is clearer: ECEC is referred to as preschool, and both ECEC and teacher education are integrated into legislation, (which means a separate chapter in the respective acts). Sweden is the only country that refers to its curriculum as "Läroplan" (curriculum) with explicit emphasis on learning, while the other Nordic countries, including Finland, Iceland and Norway, prefer terms such as "national curriculum guidelines" or "framework plans", which are less goal-oriented. Wagner and Einarsdóttir (2006, pp. 8–9) demonstrate how different terminologies reflect ideological differences. Preschool is avoided, for example, in most

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Nordic countries, because it suggests a prequalification before school, not a distinct pedagogical enterprise. Instead, terms such as kindergarten are used, which refers to in the Fröbel tradition (Wagner & Einarsdóttir, 2006).

Table 3 below illustrates the degree of governance achieved through legal regulation and informative management. In all Nordic countries, national governance of ECEC is achieved through legislation (see sections shaded in grey in Table 3); that is, all countries impose some kind of legal regulation of ECEC. All countries have content-related regulations related to multilingualism, which is accomplished through framework plans, national guidelines or curricula. Concerning the legislation for teacher education, the Nordic countries regulate the teacher education knowledge base in different ways. While Iceland, Finland and Sweden regulate the content of education through general subchapters in legislation, none mentions the knowledge base related to multilingual matters. Denmark and Norway are the only countries with detailed regulations for the content related to multilingualism in the teacher education knowledge base (marked in grey in Table 3). Norway goes one step further by implementing specific national curriculum guidelines for each course. Following Karlsen's (2006) reasoning of governance through double political mandates, Norway is the only Nordic country that regulates both the national framework curriculum for ECTE and the national guidelines for ECTE; thus, it is the country with the strongest degree of state governance and political mandates for working with multilingualism in ECEC, and this is governed both through ECEC regulations and regulations for ECTE.

In implementing the national guidelines, each educational institution must develop local study programme plans including specifications for course content. Accordingly, there are local variations in course plans that permit the content and the learning outcome descriptions to be emphasised somewhat differently from institution to institution. The following section analyses these Norwegian local variations, but first discusses the historical development of multilingualism in the framework plans for teacher education and how this knowledge base has changed over time.

TABLE 3 Legislation and regulations of ECEC and ECTE in Norway, Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Sweden

	<i>NORWAY</i>	<i>DENMARK</i>	<i>FINLAND</i>	<i>ICELAND</i>	<i>SWEDEN</i>
Title of education	Barnehage-lærer-utdanning (180 ECTS)	Pædagog-uddannelse (210 ECTS)	Utbildning för lärare inom småbarns-pedagogik (180 ECTS)	Leikskóla-kennarafræði (300 ECTS)	Förskol-läraryt- bildning (210 ECTS)
English title	Kindergarten teacher education	Bachelor of Social Education	Early childhood education and care teacher education	Play school teacher education	Preschool teacher education
National early childhood legislation	Kindergarten Act (2006)	Act on Early Childhood Education and Care (2022)	Act on Early Childhood Education and Care (2018)	Preschool Act (2008)	Education Act (2010) (Chapter 8)
National early childhood curriculum	National Framework Plan for Kindergarten (2017)	National Regulations for Local Curricula (2018)	The National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care (2022)	The Icelandic National Curriculum Guide for Preschools (2011)	National Preschool Curriculum (2018)
National regulation of teacher education	National Regulations for Kindergarten Teacher Education (2023)	Decree on the Education for Bachelor Professional as a Pedagogue (2017)	National Regulations for Teacher Education (Chapter 4) (2004)	Act on Education and Employment of Teachers and School Administrators at Play Schools, Primary and Secondary Schools (2019)	Regulations on Education for Teachers and Preschool Teachers (2021)
Curriculum for teacher education	The National Curriculum guidelines for Kindergarten Teacher Education (2018)	None	None	None	None

Changes over time in the ECTE knowledge base

Since 1971, for over 50 years, the knowledge base for Norwegian ECTE has been regulated in terms of its content. Insight into the changes supports an understanding of the knowledge and competencies that are constructed as legitimate, either to preserve

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existing views of knowledge or to promote new views of knowledge. Figure 1 illustrates how linguistic matters were addressed in Norwegian national curriculum regulations during the period from 1971 to 2018.

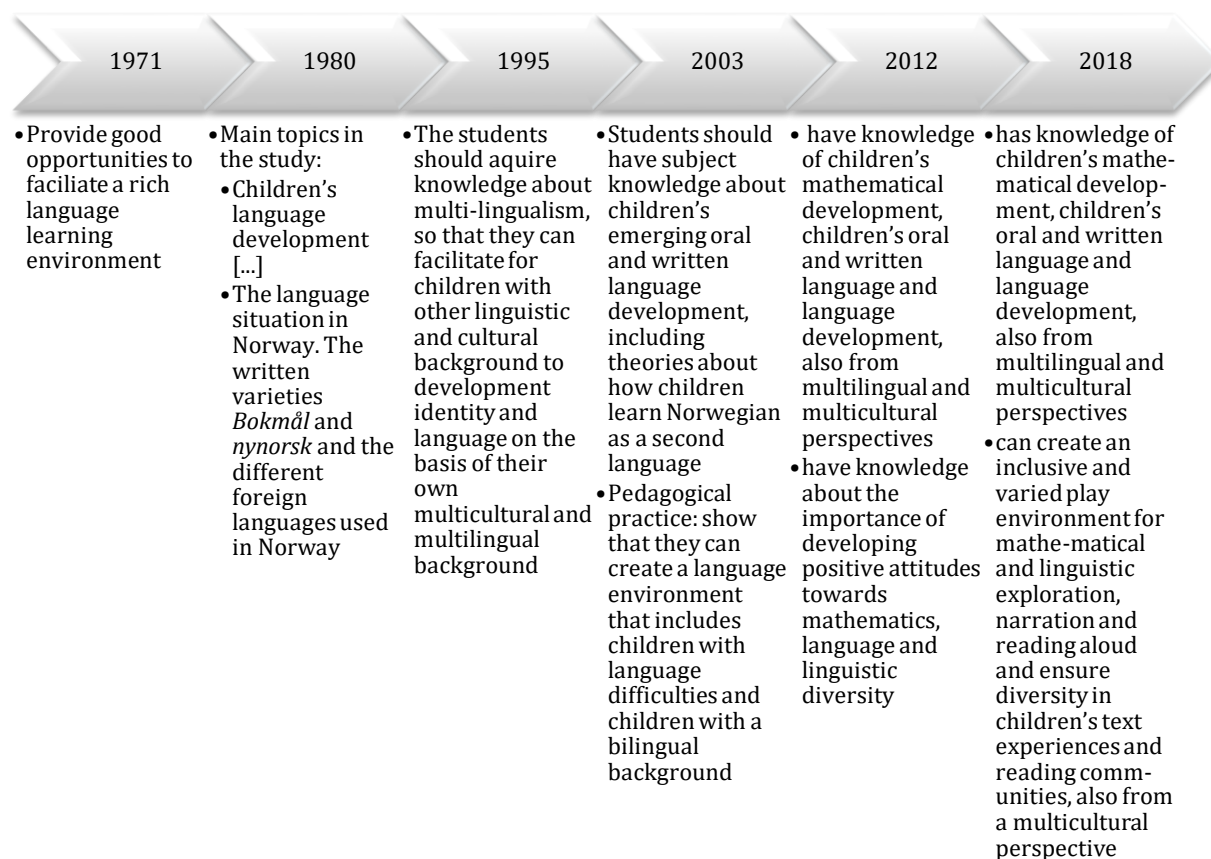


FIGURE 1 Historical development of the knowledge base for multilingualism in the Norwegian National Curriculum for ECCE, 1971–2018

The amount of text related to multilingualism over the years illustrates both an increasing attention to the topic and a willingness to govern in detail. Although there has always been language diversity in Norway, the Norwegian language has had hegemony. Demographic development, especially through immigration, has contributed to a greater degree of linguistic diversity, which is also reflected in the ECEC population. In 1971, multilingualism was absent in the sense that it was not explicitly mentioned in the Framework plan (Lærerutdanningsrådet, 1971). In 1980 (Lærerutdanningsrådet/Kirke- og undervisningsdepartementet, 1980) “foreign languages” are mentioned explicitly for the first time. At this point, there was a wave of new immigration in Norway. Also noticeable in the 1980 curriculum is that the emphasis was on knowledge about foreign

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language (epistemic knowledge), not necessarily on practical teaching skills. In the 1995 regulation (Kirke-, utdannings- og forskningsdepartementet, 1995), fifteen years later, the term “multilingualism” has found its place, dictating that teachers must develop knowledge about multilingualism and that children’s multilingual background must be used in language pedagogy. However, the Norwegian language seems to be the underlying norm, as languages other than Norwegian are specifically mentioned: “for children with *other* linguistic and cultural backgrounds” [author’s emphasis]. In 2003 (Utdannings- og forskningsdepartementet, 2003), the terminology was changed, emphasising a specific focus on Norwegian as a second language and expertise in how to facilitate the inclusion of children with bilingual backgrounds. In 2012 (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2012), multilingualism appeared again nine years later, as it had in 1995. At this time, emphasis was placed on the development of positive attitudes towards multilingualism, although multilingualism was no longer directly connected to language teaching or facilitation of the language environment. After a revision in 2018 (UHR, 2018), the skills orientation returned in the sense that teachers were required to know how to facilitate the play environment to promote linguistic diversity from a multicultural perspective.

In addition to changes in terminology over time, from not being mentioned to the introduction of terms such as “foreign languages”, “Norwegian as second language”, and “multilingualism”, pedagogical skills or practice (know *how*) is a recurrent knowledge topic, however it changes over time, being most prominent in 1995, 2003 and 2018. The focus on multilingualism and pedagogical practice in 1995 and 2003 coincides with a ten-year period in Norwegian schools (1987-1997), where bilingualism was an educational aim (Kulbrandstad, 2017). After 1997, transitional use of the mother tongue and the teaching of Norwegian as a second language is the norm in all White papers. When 2018 stands out with a focus on pedagogical practice, it can be seen in the light of the framework plan for ECEC from 2017, which has a stronger focus on linguistic diversity than earlier framework plans. With this historical background in mind, the article now looks more closely at how institutions have implemented the national curricula from 2012 and 2018 at the local level in their course plans explicitly focusing on language-related issues.

Implementation of the national guidelines in Norwegian ECTE

In this section, 24 course plans are analysed (one course plan for each higher education institution for each academic year) and how the national guidelines have been implemented is investigated. The analysis proceeds chronologically, starting with the 12 course plans from 2017–2018 and followed by the 12 course plans from 2020–2021, and assesses changes in the course plans between these two years. Based on the historical review, some

changes were expected to occur between 2017 and 2020 in response to changes in the national guidelines.

Local course plans: 2017–2018

In the 2017–2018 academic year, the national curriculum of 2012 (cf. Figure 2) set the following learning outcomes (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2012, p. 19):

“The student [...]

- *has knowledge of children’s mathematical development, children’s oral and written language and language development, and multilingual and multicultural perspectives.*
- *has knowledge of the importance of developing positive attitudes towards mathematics, language and linguistic diversity.”*

Both learning outcome descriptions are related to epistemic knowledge (knowledge about multilingualism), and the terms multilingual and language and linguistic diversity are used. Table 4 below shows the terms used in the local syllabi for the 2017–2018 academic year.

The term *multilingual* or *multilingualism* was used by 10 out of 12 institutions, while *linguistic diversity* was mentioned by eight out of 12 institutions. The terms *bilingual**, *first language* and *mother tongue* were not used by any of the institutions. The term *second language* was only used by one institution (Queen Maud University College). Neither Nord University nor Oslo Metropolitan University explicitly mentioned multilingual* or linguistic diversity. This absence may seem somewhat surprising particularly with respect to Oslo Metropolitan University, which is located in Norway’s capital. The proportion here of minority-language children in ECEC is high (28.9% in 2017) compared to the rest of the country (17.3% in 2017) and one may therefore reasonably expect that the higher education institution providing ECTE emphasise multilingualism in its course plan. However, it may be that multilingual perspectives are implicitly integrated into knowledge about language development in such multilingual contexts. In any case, the general picture for the academic year 2017–2018 is that the terms *multilingualism* and *linguistic diversity* dominates the learning outcomes, rather than the terms *Norwegian as a second language*, *bilingualism* or *mother tongue*.

Three different types of implementing the national learning outcome description at the local level have been identified in the analysis of the course plans. Figure 2 illustrates the three different types of implementational spaces: *continuation* (exact copy of national level and no actual implementation), *narrowing* (a narrower definition of multilingualism), and *broadening* (a generic understanding of multilingualism).

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TABLE 4 Terminology used in local course plans in Norway for the 2017–2018 academic year

<i>NAME OF INSTITUTION (Campus)</i>	<i>MULTILING*</i>	<i>BILING*</i>	<i>SECOND LANGUAGE*</i>	<i>LINGUISTIC/ LANGUAGE DIVERSITY</i>	<i>MOTHER TONGUE / FIRST LANGUAGE</i>
Queen Maud University College (Trondheim)	+		+		
Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences (Hamar)	+			+	
Oslo Metropolitan University (Oslo)					
Østfold University College (Halden)	+			+	
University of South- Eastern Norway (Vestfold)	+				
Western Norway University of Applied Sciences (Bergen)	+			+	
Volda University College (Volda)	+			+	
NLA University College (Bergen)	+			+	
Nord University (Bodø)					
University of Agder (Kristiansand)	+			+	
University of Stavanger (Stavanger)	+			+	
UiT The Arctic University of Norway (Tromsø)	+			+	

Continuation constitutes a copy of the learning outcome description at the national level. Thus, there is an absence of further operationalisation. In the 2017–2018 academic year, this was the type that occurred most often (nine out of 12 institutions). *Narrowing* occurred in only one case, where the multilingual perspective was concretised as “*The student has basic knowledge about children’s development of Norwegian as a second language*” (Queen Maud University College, author’s translation). In this case, multilingualism is understood as a “second language”. This is not surprising seen in the context of previous national curricula (from 2003) where this terminology is used. However, as the first language is not otherwise mentioned in the course plan or other learning outcomes, this implies a narrowing of the view of multilingualism, where

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monolingualism is the norm. *Broadening* is represented by two cases, one of which is Oslo Metropolitan University: “*The student can give an account of children’s oral language development*” (author’s translation). In this type of implementation, it seems implicit that monolingualism is not the default or norm but rather that multilingualism is embedded in children’s oral language development. The two latter forms of concretisation represent two different ends of the monoglossic and heteroglossic ends of the ideological scale. One implies a narrower understanding of multilingualism than the other, in which *language* is generically understood not specifically as multilingualism or specific languages. In this sense, it is based on a broader, generic understanding of language.

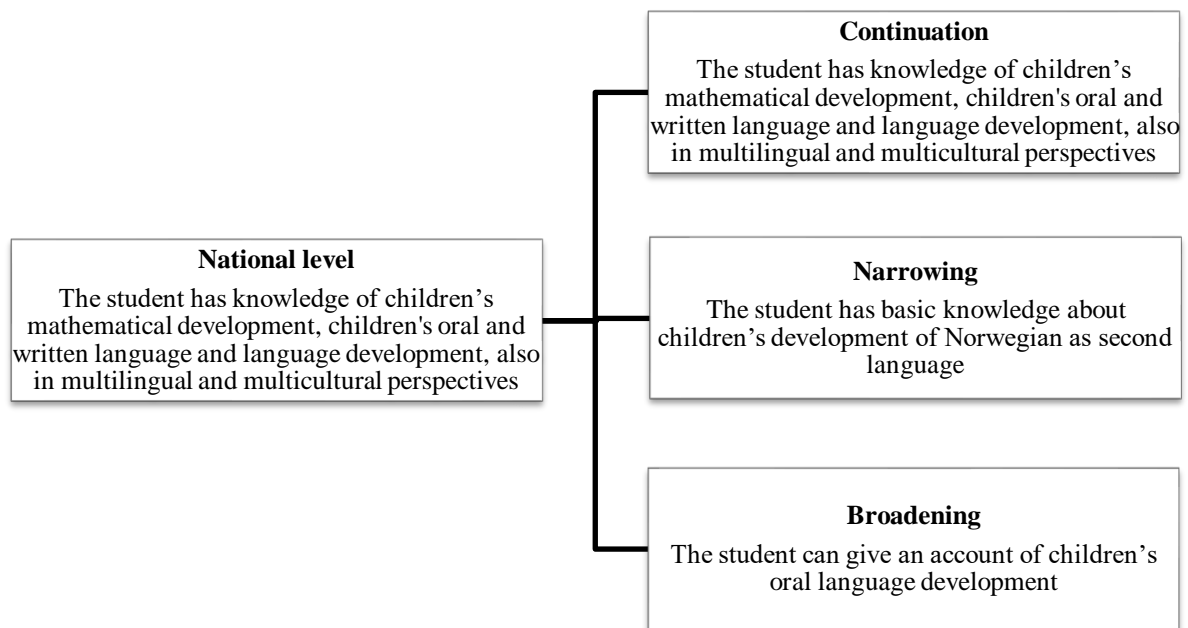


FIGURE 2 Three types of relation between national curriculum and local curricula: *continuation*, *narrowing* and *broadening*

Local course plans: 2020–2021

In 2018, the national guidelines were adjusted, and the content of the knowledge base therefore changed (cf. Figure 2). The learning outcome descriptions concerning epistemic knowledge about multilingualism remained unchanged. However, one of the major changes included more emphasis on practical pedagogical skills: for example, “[*The student*] can create an inclusive and varied play environment for mathematical and linguistic exploration” (UHR, 2018, p. 15). Additionally, the specific wording about language and linguistic diversity from 2012 was replaced by “*ensure diversity in children’s text experiences and reading communities, also from a multicultural perspective*” (UHR,

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2018, p. 15). Table 5 below presents the terminology used in the academic year 2020–2021.

TABLE 5 Terminology used in local course plans in Norway for the 2020–2021 academic year

<i>NAME OF INSTITUTION (Campus)</i>	<i>MULTILING*</i>	<i>BILING*</i>	<i>SECOND LANGUAGE*</i>	<i>LINGUISTIC/ LANGUAGE DIVERSITY</i>	<i>MOTHER TONGUE / FIRST LANGUAGE</i>
Queen Maud University College (Trondheim)	+		+		
Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences (Hamar)	+			+	
Oslo Metropolitan University (Oslo)	+				
Østfold University College (Halden)	+				
University of South- Eastern Norway (Vestfold)	+				
Western Norway University of Applied Sciences (Bergen)	+				
Volda University College (Volda)	+			+	
NLA University College (Bergen)	+				
Nord University (Bodø)					
University of Agder (Kristiansand)	+				
University of Stavanger (Stavanger)	+			+	
UiT The Arctic University of Norway (Tromsø)	+			+	

Multilingual and *multilingualism* are still the most common terms used, while terms such as *bilingual* or *bilingualism* and *first language* or *mother tongue* are not used. Since 2017, Oslo Metropolitan University has included multilingualism in the course plan's content description but not in the learning outcome descriptions. Similarly, as of 2017, Nord University uses the more generic term *language*, and there is also a link between the learning outcome and professional practice: “[*The student*] can exercise pedagogical leadership in the work to include and recognise all children’s linguistic, textual and mathematical experiences” (Nord University, author’s translation). In addition, the Sámi

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language is explicitly mentioned: “*can use fiction and nonfiction for children, modern text and media cultures, in Norwegian and Sámi, in play and learning*” (Nord University, author’s translation). Nord University differs from the other higher education institutions, as the Nord University course plans imply a broader approach to multilingualism (such as including and recognising all children’s linguistic experiences) and by mentioning specific languages such as Sámi languages and Norwegian. Apart from Queen Maud University College, which is the only institution that explicitly mentions Norwegian as a second language, none of the other educational institutions mention specific languages in relation to children but rather in relation to their mastery of Norwegian (including both written language varieties) as a professional language.

In line with the national curriculum guidelines, which do not mention “diversity” directly related to linguistic diversity, the terms *language/linguistic diversity* appear less frequently in the 2020 documents, with only four out of 12 institutions using the term in 2020, compared to eight out of twelve in 2017. However, knowledge about multilingualism remains explicit in all local course plans, except one higher education institution.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to develop new knowledge about how multilingualism is conceptualised in Norwegian ECTE and discuss the implications for the ideological and implementational spaces for multilingual pedagogy. Through a three-level analysis, this paper has critically explored how the knowledge base is governed and how multilingualism is constructed as legitimate. The first step in the analysis provided an overview of the legal instruments of governance of Norwegian ECTE compared to Nordic ECTE and revealed that ECEC is governed more through ECEC curriculum regarding multilingual content than ECTE. Additionally, this analysis showed that Norwegian ECTE is characterised by a large degree of content management in the form of a double mandate through both ECEC and ECTE. This double political mandate further invites a more in-depth analysis of Norwegian ECTE (the second and third stages of the analysis). This form of governance is not new in the Norwegian context, and the content of the knowledge base has changed over time, from virtually absent in 1971 to more detail-oriented in 2018, as has the related terminology.

Multilingualism is the dominant term and the one that occurs most often in the learning outcomes in the local syllabi. *Norwegian as a second language* and *mother tongue* appeared to a small extent in the learning outcome descriptions, with one exception in

2003. The use of terms such as *Norwegian* and *mother tongue*, on the other hand, is found in the framework plan for ECEC: Giæver and Tkachenko (2020, p. 262) found that the national framework plan for ECEC and other governing documents refer to Norwegian and the mother tongue as separate entities which can be understood as a monoglossic language ideology. This is not as clear in the ECTE curriculum, which does not refer to languages as separate, countable entities in the same way. It may thus appear that the dual political mandate at the national level points in different linguistic ideological directions.

In step three of the analysis, that is, the analysis of local course plans, the same tendencies were observed as in the historical review. *Multilingualism* is also used to the greatest extent locally, while *mother tongue* is not used as a term, which might reflect a broader view of language. Terms such as *Norwegian as a second language* and *bilingualism* were not prominent in the local curricula. This contrasts with previous studies showing an increasing focus on second language learning at the expense of the term *multilingualism* (Hermansson et al., 2021; Kulbrandstad, 2017; Nikula et al., 2012; Sickinghe, 2013). Linguistic diversity, on the other hand, was used less from 2017 to 2020. This marks a trend similar to the development observed in previous studies of education policy documents and curricula. Previous studies suggest that this trend is critical because linguistic diversity tends to focus on the group of language users, not just the individual's language development. The question here is whether the individual focus comes to the fore at the group level. This is reinforced by the observation that *multilingualism* often serves as a clarification of the term children's language development. In the same way that language ideologies at the national level diverge regarding the use of multilingualism terms, the double mandate here also points in different directions. While the topic of linguistic diversity appears to be more absent in the most recent local syllabi, it is clearly present in the national framework plan for ECE. Indeed, as Giæver and Tkachenko (2020) indicate regarding linguistic and cultural diversity as an enrichment for the entire group of children, the framework plan from 2017 "*opens up a "language as a resource" approach and heteroglossic ideology with a dynamic view of language competence*" (Giæver & Tkachenko, 2020, p. 263, author's translation). Thus, there are several observable contradictions in the dual political mandate.

Ideological and implementational spaces are wide and quite ambiguous (Alstad & Sopanen, 2020), and the analysis has demonstrated that higher education institutions operate within different ideological and implementational spaces: some continuing the spaces, some narrowing the spaces and some broadening the spaces. However, it should be noted that the spaces identified here are not necessarily inherent, but a result of reading between the documents' lines, trying to understand the curricula through

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contextual information, such as linguistic conditions in the institutions' surroundings (multilingual contexts in Oslo or a Sámi context for some institutions). The broadening of implementational spaces for working with language in ECEC without further concretisation may create space for many different interpretations and therefore require a high level of competence in multilingualism for ECTs (Bergroth & Hansell, 2020; Giæver & Tkachenko, 2020; Lindquist, 2019; Puskás & Björk-Willén, 2017). The same applies to teacher educators; competence in multilingualism is also required. Although higher education sets high competence requirements for teacher educators, teacher educators are not necessarily specialists in multilingual pedagogy nor able to model good practices. A study from Sweden demonstrated that ECT students with a minority-language background are both expected to contribute positively to linguistic and cultural diversity and, at the same time, be like 'the others' (Rosén & Wedin, 2018, p. 64). According to Hornberger and Hult (2008), policies have "*the potential to counteract hegemonic social processes and permit all students' languages to become valuable resources for themselves and their communities*" (p. 284). It may seem that there are conflicting ideologies in flux. In the double mandate in ECTE, the ideological and implementational spaces open to a certain extent.

All in all, is it possible to identify a language pedagogy knowledge base that reflects the distinctiveness of the Norwegian ECEC context, with a pedagogical approach that emphasises the child, the learning environment and learning processes more than it does the product of learning. The learning outcome descriptions at the local level (teacher education) are oriented towards knowledge about languages, what García refers to as knowledge about (subject matter) languages and multilingualism (García, 2008, p. 390). This usually involves knowledge about children's multilingual development. However, few learning outcome descriptions of multilingualism linked to pedagogical practice were identified in this article; consequently, there appears to be little focus on the distinctiveness of early childhood multilingual language pedagogy. Studies have highlighted that there is a need for knowledge about pedagogical practice (Lindquist, 2019; Puskás & Björk-Willén, 2017). Although there are other learning outcomes concerning general language pedagogy that reflect the particularity of ECE, it may appear that the students themselves need to undertake the transformation of knowledge from epistemic, theoretical knowledge of multilingual development to knowledge of multilingual pedagogical practices. There is a certain danger that either the multilingual pedagogy of the school context will be transferred to the ECEC context in the absence of this empty or open space, or that there will be an absence of multilingual pedagogy. In sum, it is difficult to define what constitutes a distinctive knowledge base about multilingual pedagogy based on the analyses of the curricula, because these primarily cover knowledge *about* while engaging with knowledge about *how* to only a small extent.

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This study focuses on teacher education curricula. It provides new yet somewhat limited insight into the complexities of the many educational policy layers of which teacher education is a part. To gain further insight into knowledge about multilingual content in ECTE, it is necessary to look more closely at important aspects such as teacher educators' teaching practices, textbooks and syllabi, practice placements, and public discourses. Furthermore, future studies ought to consider these elements with a view towards assessing how policies are negotiated and how knowledge bases related to multilingualism are understood dynamically rather than as fixed entities.

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