“Pulling from the world into the school”

Working with culturally diverse students in an international school setting in Iceland.

Jenny Laurence Pfeiffer

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Preface

This research “Pulling from the world into the school”, is a 40 credits thesis and partial fulfilment of my MA degree in International Studies in Education. My interest in multicultural education has developed over the years as a result of my teaching experiences in diverse countries —including Switzerland, Iceland, Vietnam and Austria. This research project presents an opportunity to theorize these experiences and to develop lessons learned that can be applied to my future goal of working in a culturally diverse school context.

My supervisor for this project was Susan E. Gollifer, adjunct and doctoral candidate at the School of Education. I want to give her my gratitude for sharing her expertise and knowledge with me. Her critical feedback has been very beneficial for my study and helped me to develop a deeper understanding of the field of multicultural education. Additionally, I would like to thank my specialist advisor, Hanna Ragnarsdóttir, for her expert comments and feedback in reviewing my thesis. Further my gratitude goes to my proof-readers, Evan Lewis, Halldóra Arnardóttir and my father Matthias Pfeiffer.

A very special thank you, as well, to the teachers, leadership members and students from the International School of Iceland who agreed to participate in the study. Thanks to the whole school for providing me access to their facilities, and my gatekeepers for helping me with everything I needed regarding this research.

Last but not least, I want to thank my parents Arlette & Matthias Pfeiffer, my sisters Kelly & Svenja Pfeiffer and Hallóðr Sánchez for their support and encouragement during the entirety of my master’s study.

Jenny Laurence Pfeiffer

Reykjavík, 2\textsuperscript{nd} of May 2018
Abstract

The increasing immigration rates in Iceland raise the question about the ability of the Icelandic education system to address the needs of its increasingly culturally diverse student population. Studies conducted in compulsory and upper secondary schools indicate that the educational system is struggling. Reasons include education policy which does not reflect a much needed critical multicultural education response (Gollifer & Trân, 2012), a lack of teachers’ education towards culturally responsive pedagogy and multicultural education (Karlsdóttir, 2013), lack of funding for schools to respond to the needs of immigrant students and for appropriate support systems (Ragnarsdóttir, 2015), and a tendency to promote assimilation of the Icelandic culture at the risk of loss of cultural heritage amongst immigrant students (Trân, 2015).

In response, this qualitative case study aims to achieve a rich and holistic knowledge of the work with cultural diversity in the International School of Iceland and to get an understanding of what works in terms of effective responses. The purpose of this case study is to develop a set of lessons learned to apply to my own teaching practice. The emphasis of this research is to investigate the implementation of teaching and learning practices, the role of the school’s curriculum and the role of leadership in addressing the needs of its student population.

Banks’ (2002) critical multicultural framework, represented by five interrelated dimensions, functions in this study as an analytical framework to inform the thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The findings are based on interviews with five teachers, two leadership team members and two focus groups with five to eight students in each. To support the findings from the interviews and focus groups, I draw on field observations.

Through the thematic analysis, I found evidence that Banks’ five dimensions of critical multicultural education are represented in the work of the International School of Iceland. This paper argues that the International School of Iceland has managed to create a culturally responsive schooling experience for its students. However, some of the dimensions are more implicit in the school’s response than others. I further discuss the factors that have facilitated the way the school and its staff address cultural diversity; such as its size, history and the visible diversity. These factors have implications for schools that do not share these characteristics.

This qualitative case study may interest teachers and administrators, and contribute to studies being carried out on the responsiveness of Icelandic state schools with regards to culturally diverse student populations.
Ágrip

Aukinn fjöldi innflytjenda á Íslandi vekur upp spurningar um hvort skólaherfið sé tilbúið til að koma til móts við þarfir nemenda frá ólíkum menningarheimum. Rannsóknir gerðar á stöðu grunnskóla og framhaldsskóla hafa sýnt að skólaherfið á í erfiðleikum með það að mörgu leyti. Ñeðal ástæðna fyrir því eru skortur á umfjöllun um fjölmenninu í kennslu (Gollifer & Trân, 2012), skortur á áherslu á menningarfjölbreytileika í kennslu í kennaranámi (Karlsdóttir, 2013), skortur á fjármagni til skóla til þess að takast á við þarfir innflytjenda (Ragnarsdóttir, 2015), og að innflytjendur eru hvattir til að tileinka sér íslenska menningu en um leið eiga þeir á hættu að glata sín num eigin menningararfi (Trân, 2015).

Til að bregðast við þessari stöðu, kannar eftirfarandi rannsókn hvernig Alþjóðlegi grunnskóllinn á Íslandi vinnur með menningarlegan fjölbreytileika með það að markmiði að öðlast heildsteypta þekkingu að hvernig megi koma til móts við og vinna með fjölbreytta menningarhópa í skólastarfi. Markmiðið með þessari eigindlegu rannsókn er að skoða kennslufræðilegar nálginar, hvaða hlutverki skólannamáskráin sinnir og kanna hlutverk stjórnunarr til þess að mæta þörfum nemenda sínna.


Eftirfarandi rannsókn, sem styðst við eigindlegar aðferðir, gæti vakið áhuga kennara og stjórnenda og lagt sitt að mörkum í gerð athugana á stöðu íslenskra grunnskóla og hvernig þeir koma til móts við menningarlega fjölbreytyni nemenda sínna.
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1 Introduction

Based on my teaching experiences in compulsory state schools in Austria, Vietnam, and Switzerland, I became aware of the importance of recognising and addressing the cultural diversity in the classrooms— in particular, in countries were increasing in-migration is a reality and school populations are becoming more diverse. My teaching experiences offered me insights in diverse approaches towards this increasing diverse student populations. This is the reason why I wanted to explore how schools and the education systems address cultural diversity in particular in countries where cultural diversity is increasing, such as in Iceland where I am currently living.

In accordance to national statistics (Statistics Iceland, 2017), the immigrant rates in Iceland have grown continually from 2009 to 2017. First generation immigrants make up approximately 10.6% of Iceland’s population (Statistics Iceland, 2017). First generation immigrants are people who are foreign born and with both parents and grandparents born abroad. Increased immigration into Iceland has caused its demographic landscape to become more diverse and has led me to question the role of the education system in addressing the needs of its increasingly diverse student population (Statistics Iceland, 2017). Studies conducted in compulsory and upper secondary schools indicate that the education system is struggling. Reasons include a lack of teachers’ education towards culturally responsive pedagogy and multicultural education, lack of funding for schools to respond to the needs of immigrant students and for appropriate support systems, and a tendency of schools to promote assimilation of the Icelandic culture at the risk of loss of cultural heritage amongst immigrant students (Gollifer & Trân, 2012; Karlsdóttir, 2013; Ragnarsdóttir, 2015; Trân, 2015).

Due to these challenges, I chose to focus on the International School of Iceland (ISI), given its history of working with a culturally diverse student population. Whilst working at the International School, I recognised the opportunity to develop a set of lessons learned for my own teaching practice. I do not assume that the lessons learned will respond to the challenges identified in the state schools; however, what the ISI offers is a view of a culturally diverse educational setting that Icelandic state schools seem to be heading towards. During a two-month internship as a class/teacher assistant at the International School of Iceland (ISI) I conducted a pilot study, which offered insight into the workings of the school and the pedagogical practices that many of its teachers were implementing in the classroom. During my internship, I carried out observations, took field notes and conducted interviews with teachers. The results of my pilot study led me to recognise the role of teaching and learning approaches; policies and curricula; and school management in
responding to a culturally diverse educational setting. Based on the research that I have carried out, it seems that there has been no research carried out on the International School of Iceland (ISI) and its response to its culturally diverse student population. Of the 90 students enrolled at ISI, only 20% have both parents who are Icelandic, 40% have one Icelandic parent, 18% are first generation immigrants, and 22% are temporary residents in Iceland from Belgium, Spain, Hungary and Norway (B. Faber, personal communication, November 13, 2017). In other words, 80% have at least one parent, typically the mother, who emigrated to Iceland. The result is that almost all of the children are bilingual, and many of them even tri-lingual (B. Faber, personal communication, November 13, 2017). In Icelandic mainstream primary schools the percentage of students with an immigrant background is much lower. 95% of students in Icelandic compulsory schools are of Icelandic heritage (Statistics Iceland, 2017). Although this percentage varies from school to school, cultural diversity is higher at the ISI than in Icelandic mainstream schools.

1.1 Purpose and significance of this study

The purpose of this case study is to develop a set of lessons learned to apply to my own teaching practice. The goal is to achieve a rich and holistic knowledge of the work with cultural diversity in the International School of Iceland and to get an understanding of what works in terms of effective responses. Although the purpose of this study is to inform my own practice, the findings will also potentially contribute to studies being carried out on the responsiveness of state schools about working with culturally diverse student populations.

My overarching research question is:

How does the Icelandic International School respond to its culturally diverse student population?

To support my overarching question, I developed three sub-questions:

a) How do the teaching and learning practices at ISI respond to its culturally diverse student population?

b) How does the ISI curriculum respond to its culturally diverse student population?

c) How does the ISI school leadership team respond to its culturally diverse student population?

1.2 Structure of the thesis

This Master’s thesis is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter introduces my research project and my personal motivation.
The second chapter provides information about the country’s context, where I will explain the Icelandic school system and draw on studies carried out on multicultural education in Icelandic compulsory and upper-secondary schools. Followed by an introduction to the International School of Iceland, their history and the current school structure and status.

The third chapter, theoretical framework and literature review, outlines the theoretical understanding of key terms that I use in my study, including culture and cultural diversity. This chapter further includes an introduction to multicultural education, Bank’s critical multicultural framework and draws on studies conducted internationally on teaching and learning practices, the role of curriculum and the role of leadership in multicultural education.

In the fourth chapter, I will describe the methodology of my research and discuss the choice of the case study method, data collection tools and data analysis. I also position myself as the researcher and address the ethical issues involved in my research. I conclude by discussing the limitations of the study.

The fifth chapter discusses the findings of my research. These are divided into three main themes that respond to my three sub-questions: Teaching and learning practice, the role of curriculum in working with culturally diverse students and the school leadership role in addressing the schools’ cultural diversity. In these three sub-chapters I discuss my findings in relation to Banks’s five dimensions of critical multicultural education.

The findings chapter is followed by a discussion chapter. In this chapter, I discuss the extent to which Banks’ five dimensions are evident in the teaching and learning practices; the curriculum; and the school leadership team approach. Although the purpose of this study is to inform my own practice, the findings will also potentially contribute to studies being carried out on the capacity and responsiveness of state schools with regards to work with culturally diverse student populations. I also discuss the facilitating factors and implications of applying Banks’ (2002) critical multicultural framework in mainstream schools.

In the final chapter I conclude by presenting the ways in which the lessons learned from this study have influenced my understanding of cultural diversity and informed my thinking about culturally responsive teaching and learning practices.
2 Background and context

In order to explain my choice of focusing on the International School I will introduce the Icelandic school system and draw on research that has been carried out in the Icelandic compulsory and upper-secondary state schools on addressing and working with culturally diverse students. Then, I will introduce the International School of Iceland and its history working with a culturally diverse student population.

2.1 The Icelandic school system

The languages, cultures and religious convictions of the population in Iceland have become increasingly diverse. The statistics show that especially in Reykjavik the immigration rates are higher than in other areas of Iceland. Immigrants tend to settle in the capital area, which leads to a higher diversity in Reykjavik’s schools (Statistics Iceland, 2017). Given the increase in global migration and changing demographics, multicultural student populations are becoming the norm. The Icelandic law warranties equal access to education for all children until the age of eighteen (Ministry of Education & Science and Culture, 2014). The Human Rights Policy of Reykjavík (2006) further states that “diversity and multiculturalism of the society should be introduced in activities with children and adolescents” (as cited in Þorsteinsson, 2014, p.8), including the opportunity for children to introduce their own cultures.

The Icelandic school system is divided into four levels, pre-school, compulsory school, upper secondary school and higher education. In this study, I will draw on research carried out on the compulsory school level, as the International School of Iceland is a compulsory school. Nevertheless, I also draw on research carried out in upper secondary school, which provides relevant information for this study. The operation of state schools is bound by the 2008 Compulsory School Act and guided by the 2011 National Curriculum Guide for Compulsory Schools (Ministry of Education & Science and Culture, 2014). The 2008 Act has been criticised in terms of offering minimal guidance on how to implement principles of multicultural education for schools and for not adequately responding to the demographic changes taking place in Iceland (Jónsdóttir & Ragnarsdóttir, 2010). The researchers criticise the fact that the 2008 compulsory school act sets the focus on visible aspects of culture such as language, therefore creating the risk that valuable invisible aspects of cultural diversity go unaddressed such as cultural values and beliefs.

However, the 2011 National Curriculum Guide provides an opportunity for these risks to be addressed. Six fundamental pillars were introduced that are intended to inform all aspects of schooling: literacy, sustainability, health and welfare, democracy and human
rights, equality, and creativity (Ministry of Education & Science and Culture, 2014). These pillars form the essence of the educational policy in Iceland and are aimed at providing an inclusive system for all children irrespective of cultural heritage, disabilities, race, age, class, language, religion, gender, nationality or sexual orientation. The fundamental pillar of equality emphasises education concerning culture, nationality, languages, religion and values, as one of the purposes of school is to help foster the development of Iceland as a multicultural society (Ministry of Education & Science and Culture, 2014). The most significant research project on multicultural education in Iceland is the Learning Spaces for Inclusion and Social Justice Project (LSP), which was led by Hanna Ragnarsdóttir (2015). The final report of this project states that...

...in municipalities where there are high numbers of students of immigrant background, educational policies ensure an education that is equitable and inclusive for this student population. They emphasize open communication and working closely with parents, promoting and supporting the children/students’ heritage languages, using multiple forms of pedagogical practices, encouraging interactive communication, and providing instruction in Icelandic as a second language. (p.17)

Nevertheless, the LSP project (2015) also raised challenges, which the compulsory school system is facing. Schools experienced a lack of funding, which led to downsizing the immigration education and support programs. This resulted in frustration amongst school leaders and concerns that they were not addressing properly the needs of the immigrant children (Ragnarsdóttir, 2015). Furthermore, the project pointed out the need for stronger cooperation between teachers and school leaders in the exchanging of ideas and the discussion of proper practices. This supports the results of the research done by Karlsdóttir (2013) who describes a lack of teacher education towards the philosophy of inclusiveness and application of culturally responsive pedagogy in upper secondary schools. Even though the principle of equality in education for all is stated in the national curriculum guides, this policy seems to support a mainstream orientation towards Icelandic cultural heritage and language (Gollifer & Trân, 2012). As Trân (2015) describes in reference to her research on the experiences of students of Vietnamese origin in Iceland: “immigrant students’ culture, language, and previous academic knowledge were resources left untapped in the host country” (p. 50). In other words, the school system emphasizes an assimilation to the Icelandic language and culture rather than recognising immigrant students’ culture as a learning opportunity for everyone.
2.2 The International School of Iceland

As research suggests, compulsory schools face certain challenges in terms of addressing the needs of immigrant students. For this reason, I chose to focus on the International School of Iceland (ISI), given its history of working with a culturally diverse student population. The setting provides an opportunity to develop a set of lessons learned for my own teaching practice. ISI states that their mission is to create a dynamic community of confident, creative and respectful learners in an environment that is academically stimulating and supportive for all members of the school community. The emphasis of the school is to value multilingualism, support an inclusive environment and encourage international-mindedness (International School of Iceland [ISI], 2015). To support its mission the school applies the positive discipline approach by Jane Nelsen as well as implementing a Personal Development program. In this program, the school focuses on monthly themes, which address issues such as health, careers and transitions. The philosophy of Positive Discipline focuses on “promoting positive attitude toward children and teaches self-discipline, personal responsibility, and interpersonal skills through principles of kindness, encouragement, and mutual respect” (International School of Iceland [ISI], 2017).

As I mentioned before, the implementation and operation of the laws at the preschool and compulsory school education level lay in the responsibility of the local municipality (Ministry of Education & Science and Culture, 2008). In the case of the ISI, the school falls under the jurisdiction of the municipality of Garðabær. Garðabær is responsible for ensuring that ISI adheres to all local educational laws, as well as the laws set out for schools using an international curriculum. As ISI is a non-profit private school, it means that the school needs to follow all laws and requirements established by the local Ministry of Education, Science and Culture but has autonomy in how they operate. Furthermore, since 2012 ISI has been authorised and inspected by the Icelandic Ministry of Education, Science and Culture.

The ISI originated from the American embassy school, which started in 1960. In 2004, the American embassy school closed and Reykjavík international school opened with 5 students in Grafarvogur. Two years later the school moved to today’s location in Garðabær and became the International School of Iceland, a private, non-profit school. Since 2006, ISI has rented a part of the public primary school building of Sjálándosekóli, with an especially designed open learning space approach. The student body initially included children whose parents were working in Iceland for 2-3 years in the diplomatic service, university or business community. These families were looking for an English-speaking program for their children. Over time, the student body changed, with more and more foreign students living in Iceland on a permanent basis. Today, the student body is composed of Icelandic children, bilingual children or children whose families are temporarily located in Iceland.
Due to this situation, ISI launched the bilingual stream in 2008. The school offers two streams; the English stream and the bilingual stream. The bilingual stream is intended for Icelandic or bilingual (Icelandic and another language) students whose home is Iceland. The English stream is designed for families whose stay in Iceland is contractual and, therefore, temporary. The students are in mixed grade classrooms, which usually accommodate students in two adjacent grades, such as three/four, or four/five. In some situations, there may be three or more grades in one classroom (ISI, 2015).

The academic program of ISI has been developed to suit the needs of an international student body. ISI’s relatively small student body allows for a personalised approach to education. Due to the fact that the students have different school and language backgrounds, pedagogical approaches at ISI are more personalised with emphasis placed on meeting students at their academic and developmental level. ISI follows the curricula “American Education Reaches Out” (AERO) and the “International Primary Curriculum (IPC) because of its private status and autonomy of operation (ISI, 2015). AERO is a standard-based curriculum which provides schools with a framework for curriculum consistency from kindergarten up to 12 grade. AERO aims for stability of curriculum in international schools. At ISI, AERO standards are used to develop curriculum units in all subjects except for IPC lessons and Icelandic. For the Icelandic as a mother tongue or bilingual class, the school is using the Icelandic National Curriculum for compulsory schools (ISI, 2015). The National Curriculum is also partly used for Mathematic lessons next to the AERO units. Students whose mother language is Icelandic, as well as students who have lived in Iceland for more than one year are required to take the Icelandic National Exam (samræmd próf) in mathematics in grades 4, 7 and 9. In 2007, ISI started using the International Primary Curriculum. The IPC, a thematic and creative curriculum intended for grades K-6, is used in more than 1,600 schools in 92 countries world-wide (International Primary Curriculum [IPC], n.d.). The IPC provides work units which are cross-curricula and cover art, history, geography, music, science, society, international understanding, technology, information and communication technology around one theme (ISI, 2015). Furthermore, IPC supports rigorous learning, which makes learning active, exciting and meaningful for children (IPC, n.d.). It takes learning into a global context and tries to connect learning to the students’ home and host countries. It also develops a multi-perspective approach to learning that considers the views and opinions of people in other countries (IPC, n.d.). The foundation of the curriculum is based on subject-, personal- and international goals that support the learning and personal development of students (ISI, 2015).

The team of ISI is made of nineteen employees, which include thirteen teachers, two language and learning support teachers, the website and social media manager,
administrator coordinator, the principal and the curriculum and instruction coordinator (ISI, 2017). ISI has organised a school council to ensure school development, discuss various school topics and hear the opinions of different stakeholders. This council is made up of nine members, including the principal and student representatives, parents and staff of ISI as well as other community members. Furthermore, the school board, which includes seven members, provides a great deal of expertise (ISI, 2017).

ISI has currently 90 students enrolled with a student/teacher ratio of 1:7, whereas Icelandic compulsory state schools show an average student/teacher ratio of 1:10 (Statistics Iceland, 2017). Only 20% of the 90 students at ISI have both parents of Icelandic heritage. 40% have one parent with Icelandic heritage, 18% are first generation immigrants and 22% are temporary residents in Iceland. First generation immigrants come from Serbia, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Israel, India, South Africa, Lithuania, Kenya, Singapore, Egypt, Denmark. Most families with one immigrant parent have national ties to Japan, US, Portugal, Rumania, Germany, and the UK. The temporary residents are from Belgium, Spain, Hungary and Norway. These temporary residents are working for diplomatic services, international companies or the university. Almost all of the children at ISI are raised bilingual and many are even tri-lingual at home (B. Faber, personal communication, November 13, 2017).

To ensure high quality learning opportunities, ISI has been evaluated by educational authorities. In 2012, ISI underwent an inspection process to ensure their fulfilment of all laws and requirements set forth by the Ministry of Education & Science and Culture. Furthermore, ISI is a member of the accreditation agency known as CIS, or the Council of International Schools. In July 2017, ISI received accreditation from CIS (Council of International Schools) and MSA (Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools) (ISI, 2017).

Due to the school’s history of working with culturally diverse students and its mission statement, I chose to conduct my research at the International School of Iceland. My focus in investigating how the International School of Iceland responds to its culturally diverse student population is on pedagogical practices used by teachers and the role of the curriculum and school leadership. This study aims to inform my own teaching practice.
3 Theoretical framework and literature review

This chapter includes the theoretical understanding of key terms that I use in my study, including culture and cultural diversity. This chapter further describes the critical multicultural framework of Banks (2002) and draws on studies conducted on teaching and learning practices, the role of curriculum and the role of leadership in multicultural education.

3.1 Defining cultural diversity

In mentioning cultural diversity, it is necessary to discuss the terms “culture” and “cultural diversity” to develop a common understanding of what I refer to when I speak about cultural diversity. The term “culture” is a complex and broad concept, which is often difficult to grasp. Many different definitions exist to describe what we understand as “culture”. All of these definitions cover different concepts such as: values, beliefs, attitudes, behaviours, norms, traditions, religions, races, ethnicity, and languages. I share Erickson’s (2010) opinion that the variation of definitions for “culture” has a negative impact on how to work practically with cultural diversity. How then should we know how to respond to cultural diversity if we do not have a common understanding of the term “culture”?

For the purpose of my master’s thesis, culture is defined as a variable, socially constructed product, which includes learned values, beliefs and attitudes through interactions (Bennett, 1998; Erickson, 2010; McDaniel, Samovar & Porter, 2009; Nieto, 2010). Culture as a socially constructed product means that culture is always in and around us. It influences our actions as human beings like software in a computer (Erickson, 2010). It can as well be seen as a set of social rules or a framework, which influences how the world works (McDaniel et al., 2009). These rules and framework are not inherited but learned through interactions with each other in family and community contexts (Nieto, 2010). It is in this way that schools have an influence on the students’ culture in that school is a community where students learn rules of culture through interactions. A community is a group of people who live together or share a common agenda. Schools are communities composed of principals, teachers, students and their parents, who share a common agenda; the education of children (Abbott, 2014). I acknowledge that socio-economic status, gender, sexual identity, race, disability, religion and values are important components of students’ cultural diversity (J. Banks, 2010; Grant & Sleeter, 2010; Holm & Londen, 2010). Therefore, I share Banks’ (1998) belief that “all classrooms are culturally diverse” (p.6). He stated that all classrooms are very diverse, but often we tend to conceal or ignore those differences. Diversity is represented by differences in social class, religion, ethnicity, race, sexuality,
gender, language (verbal- and non-verbal), and even individual views and perspectives. As teachers and educators, we need to uncover and explore diversity and its role in teaching and learning. My interest is in how the school works with children from different national backgrounds and the diverse cultural social rules and expectations that they bring with them. This study is focused more specifically on diversity represented by nationality and language within the context of ISI and the increasing immigration in Iceland but acknowledges the range and intersectionality of cultural diversity.

3.1.1 Shifting diversities
As I mentioned, I believe that cultural rules and frameworks are not inherited but learned (Nieto, 2010) through interactions in families and communities, including school. Cultural rules and frameworks are therefore not static; they are influenced by these interactions and the ongoing modifications of the immediate environment we live in. As Nieto (2010) points out, “culture does not exist in a vacuum but rather is situated in particular historical, social, political and economic conditions…” (p.10). Ethnicity and language intersect with factors related to socio-economic differences, gender and disabilities, which are often left out of the discourse. Nieto (2010) also points out that those aspects of cultural diversity often intersect with each other. Therefore, “cultural diversity”, opposed to monoculture, stands for recognition of the shifting and intersecting of cultures in a group, in society or in institutions like schools. For example, children can represent different diversities. A child can be a male migrant from South America to the USA, coming from a low socio-economic class and speaking only South American Spanish. In this example, the way these characteristics interact and intersect will influence the schooling experiences of the child (Nieto, 2010).

Additionally, I agree with Erickson (2010), that cultural diversity does not only exist in a social group or in society; it exists in all of us. Everyone has a multiple cultural identity that informs our own beliefs and values. One’s family may have different values and beliefs than the peers. Erickson (2010) stated that, “it is not possible for an individual to grow up in a complex modern society without acquiring different subsets of culture” (p.37). Therefore, the intersections of gender, race, ethnicity, social class, religion and disabilities exist in every individual and influence the way in which our identities shift in different contexts.

3.2 Critical multicultural education
It is important to look at how the concepts of culture and education are interrelated. Culture encompasses many different aspects as mentioned above in the previous section. Historically, schools emphasised cultural assimilation and eradication, which led to the marginalisation of cultural groups (Banks, 2009). Teachers and schools need to develop an
understanding of the term “culture”, gain knowledge of its multifaceted nature and develop cultural awareness in order to properly respond to cultural diversity inside the classroom (J. Banks, 2010; Gay, 2000). This is what the theory of culturally responsive teaching emphasises: “culturally responsive teaching includes teacher caring, teacher attitudes and expectations, formal and informal multicultural curriculum, culturally informed classroom discourse, and cultural congruity in teaching and learning strategies” (Gay, 2000, p.251). Nevertheless, multicultural education should go further and cover different dimensions, which schools and teachers have to take into consideration while working with a culturally diverse student population.

Critical multicultural education emphasises the inclusion of students’ diversity to provide quality education for all and reduce discrimination. All students regardless of their cultural characteristics should have access to equal learning. James Banks (2010) states that,

Multicultural education incorporates the idea that all students—regardless of their gender, social class, and ethnic, racial, or cultural characteristics—should have an equal opportunity to learn in school (J. Banks, 2010, p.3).

Although there are different conceptualisations and definitions of multicultural education as seen in the work of James Banks (2010), Gay (2000) and Nieto (2010), I will focus on Banks’ five dimensions of critical multicultural education: 1) content integration, 2) knowledge construction, 3) equity pedagogy, 4) prejudice reduction, and 5) an empowering school culture. These five dimensions support students in their development of multicultural competency and enable them to live in a culturally diverse global community (Banks, 2002). Critical multicultural scholars stated that effectively changing the educational system entails a comprehensive approach, where all levels of the education system are critically assessed, whereas multicultural education focuses mainly on curriculum reform (Gay, 2000; Nieto, 2010; Trân, 2015). I will use a critical multicultural perspective, where I will look at how the school works with a culturally diverse student population from diverse perspectives and within a larger socio-political context. In other words, I take the context of the school, the constraints and barriers, the status of the school in Iceland, the private school status, the laws and requirements the school has to follow, as well as the history of the school in consideration.
3.2.1 First dimension: Content integration

Content integration describes the incorporation of cultural content from a range of various cultures in subject areas to explain and exemplify key concepts, principles, generalizations and theories (Banks, 2002). This dimension does not only refer to the recognition and celebration of different cultural practices, which has usually happened in superficial ways. In Britain, for example, this was referred to as a multiculturalism of the three “S’s:” saris, samosas, and steel bands (Modood & May, 2001). Content integration is more than that and Banks makes it clear that all teachers can implement aspects of culture into their teaching irrespective of the subject that they teach (Banks, 1998). Banks (2002) points out that many schools and scholars have a narrow conception of multicultural education and refer to multicultural education primarily as content integration. Multicultural education is multidimensional.

3.2.2 Second dimension: Knowledge construction

Knowledge construction describes how culture can influence the way knowledge is created. Students and teachers should develop awareness of how knowledge construction is influenced by the racial, ethnic, gender and social class positions of individuals and groups. Because knowledge construction can be culturally defined, it is important to provide teachers and students with the opportunity to experience different ways to construct knowledge. Also, it is of great importance to develop students’ critical perspective on how
knowledge can be influenced by culture (e.g. authors of textbooks or school materials can be culturally influenced) (Banks, 2002; Banks, 1998). Knowledge construction emphasises the development of students’ critical thinking in terms of content used in the classroom, therefore placing value on diverse perspectives in the construction of knowledge.

3.2.3 Third dimension: Equity pedagogy
An equity pedagogy embraces a variety of teaching methods and approaches which consider the diversity of learning styles within culturally diverse groups. It is therefore important to offer culturally diverse students various choices of learning opportunities (Banks, 2002). This dimension emphasises the way in which teachers adapt their teaching in order to facilitate the academic achievement of all students from diverse backgrounds (Banks, 1998). Teachers should ensure equal access to learning and equity pedagogy facilitates this.

3.2.4 Fourth dimension: Prejudice reduction
Prejudice reduction describes the way teachers can support students to develop more positive racial and ethnic attitudes through teaching methods and materials. Teachers of all subjects should work to reduce prejudice in the classroom. Students come to school with prejudices toward different groups and all teachers should be sensitive to this fact (Banks, 1998). Furthermore, all teachers should use methods to help students develop more positive racial attitudes (Banks, 2002) and therefore contribute to reduce racism, discrimination and prejudice in the school.

3.2.5 Fifth dimension: Empowering school culture and social structure
The last dimension refers to an empowering school culture and social structure to ensure that students from different cultures experience educational equality and empowerment. This dimension widens the scope from the individual classroom to the entire school culture to see how to make it more equitable (Banks, 2002). It addresses aspects such as school organization, school staff, leadership, teachers, parents’ involvement and their role in creating and supporting a culturally sensitive and embracing school culture.

3.3 Teaching and learning practice towards culturally diverse students
I began the research by investigating the aspects of teaching and learning practices that are evident in the International School of Iceland. When it comes to teaching and learning practices in multicultural classrooms, many scholars refer to a wide range of strategies and teaching techniques. This wide range of strategies and techniques is important to cover the multitude of learning styles in the classroom (Banks, 2002). In multicultural classrooms, the range of different learning styles and the way knowledge is constructed is influenced by
different cultural realities. In other words, there is not only one teaching method that can be applied in a diverse classroom. Each student has a personal learning style that teachers need to discover and build on when teaching. In the section that follows I present the key features of teaching and learning practices that respond to a culturally diverse student population.

3.3.1 A set of characteristics

Although some research suggests that children need role models from their own ethnic and racial group (Dimmock, 2005), studies also show that the race or ethnicity of the teacher does not influence the effectiveness of the teacher in terms of responding to culturally diverse students (Ladson-Billings, 1994). There are fundamental characteristics that are considered essential for effective teaching in a multicultural classroom (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Noddings, 2012).

One of the identified characteristics is “caring” (Gay, 2000; Noddings, 2012) which manifests itself, as well, in the concept of “love” (Freire, 1998; Nieto, 2010). Nel Noddings (2012) describes the concept of “caring” as the foundation of education and especially important while working with a culturally diverse student body. Everyone has needs to be cared for and teachers should care about students and their cultural background, as well as, teach their students to care for each other and about their environment (Noddings, 2012). It is important to show students that one is caring and wants the best for them while at the same time having high expectations for them (Banks, 1998). The communication of high expectation helps students to believe in their capability and to develop a healthy self-concept (Banks, 1998). Gay (2000) calls it “the power of caring”. She said: “It is manifested in the form of teachers’ attitudes, expectations and behaviours about students’ human value, intellectual capability and performance responsibilities (p.152).” The feeling that someone cares for you and believes in your capabilities has shown to lead to higher self-esteem and better learning outcomes (Gay, 2000).

Another fundamental characteristic by Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994) is that teachers who are familiar with the culture of the students and who have lived in their communities are more effective. It goes beyond love and care and requires being able to relate to the students’ experiences. Teachers who understand the daily lives of the students can better relate to students’ experiences of oppression, racism and transitioning. However, this is more difficult in a highly culturally diverse class room, where it may be difficult for one teacher to share the experiences of all their students. Therefore, it is important for teachers to familiarize themselves with the different cultures in their classrooms to respond to them appropriately. Good teachers use diversity to enrich instruction instead of fearing or ignoring it.
Self-reflexivity and self-transformation are also essential qualities of teachers in the multicultural classroom (Gay & Howard, 2010; Hoffmann, 1996; Banks, 1998). Only with the process of reflection and self-analysis can teachers develop the right attitudes towards diversity and therefore teach effectively. James Banks makes clear, that in order to implement multicultural education effectively in teaching every teacher has to start with him or herself. He said: “I think teachers must start with the process of self-transformation, a process of reading, a process of engaging with the other, a process of understanding that the other is us and we are the other” (Banks, 1998, p.6). Only teachers who critically examine their position in the classroom, their teaching, the position of their students, parents and other teachers can successfully implement multicultural education.

3.3.2 Learning cooperatively and actively

Effective teaching strategies for a culturally diverse classroom facilitate the learning process. Learning is not seen as a simple transmission of facts and knowledge from the teacher to the students as passive receivers (Banks & Banks, 1995). Active involvement of students in the knowledge construction process is the key to effective teaching. The focus is more on the process rather than the results. Effective learning is not about the memorization transmitted by teacher. The goal is that students learn to generate knowledge and create new understandings that are rooted in their past experiences. Banks & Banks (1995) described it as an “integral relationship between knowledge and reflective action”.

Reflective action can be either an individual process or cooperative. Banks & Banks (1995) mention that through individualised instruction one can give the students an implicit message that they are special and important and, in this way, learning can take place. Individualised instructions are instructions that place the individual student in the centre of the learning process. Students get the opportunity to work at their level and according to their own ability, interest and speed. Individualised instructions are only possible through additional support in classrooms (Banks & Banks, 1995).

Nevertheless, learning should not only take place in an individualised manner. Many scholars also believe that cooperative learning is fundamental within the framework of multicultural education. Cohen (1994) stated that cooperative learning is an effective instructional technique, which involves active processes for students to create knowledge. In an interview with Michelle Tucker, Banks (1998) stated that, “Cooperative learning will enhance the achievement of a wide range of students from a wide range of groups” (p.2). Cooperative learning refers to group work, in which students come together to accomplish shared learning goals rather than an individual learning goal on their own. Cooperative learning has many benefits for students; it enables students to interact, listening to each
other and learn from other students, as well as promotes students’ abilities to cooperate in teams. Through a shared learning goal, the team gradually develops a sense of identity and purpose which contributes to positive group interactions and supports more positive racial attitudes among the group members (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Slavin, 2001). In culturally diverse groups, students learn about cultural differences while working with other students. This supports learning environments that embrace culture and are culturally sensitive. Cooperative learning manages to achieve greater cultural sensitivity through dialogue. Paulo Freire (1998) argues that dialogue develops critical thinking. In this way, the power dynamics between those oppressed in society and those who are the oppressors become evident. He refers to this realisation in terms of “conscientização”, which means a consciousness or increased awareness to fight against oppression and discrimination (Freire, 1998). Cooperative learning, which includes dialogue and critical thinking, therefore addresses not only effective learning, but it also challenges the systemic of culturally diverse environments.

To sum up, using a wide variety of strategies that accommodate a wider range of students is the main aim in multicultural pedagogy. Teachers should increase their repertoire of pedagogical practices to effectively respond to the multitude of learning styles that are apparent in diverse classrooms. One way is by creating opportunities to learn cooperatively and actively.

### 3.3.3 Global citizenship education as a response to cultural diversity

Since cultural diversity is increasing around the world, global identification is becoming more and more important (Banks, 2009). Based on the pilot study that I carried out in the international school of Iceland, I could see the potential of global citizenship education as an appropriate pedagogical approach in responding to the increasing reality of diverse student populations around the world.

I agree with Dower’s (2002) definition of global citizenship education, which says it is about “developing the abilities and competencies to empower students’ growth to become an informed, involved, active and empathetic global citizen” (p.7). It aims to increase awareness of existing opportunities and challenges in the global context (Clark, 2010). Goals of global citizenship education are to encourage people to think critically, make decisions and solve problems about global issues to minimise harm for our planet (UNESCO, 2014). OXFAM (2015), an English Charity and NGO, sees global citizenship education as a “framework to equip learners for critical and active engagement with the challenges and opportunities of life in a fast-changing and interdependent world” (p.5). Global citizenship covers aspects like sustainability, human rights, diversity, well-being, inequalities, injustice,
cultures, resources, ecology, industry, business, peace, conflicts and inequities of power in a
global context (Clark, 2010; Dower, 2002; Hickman, 2012; Nussbaum, 2002; UNESCO, 2014).
I believe that these aspects have to be taken into consideration when working with a
culturally diverse student population.

Banks (2009) stated that “an effective education for the twenty-first century prepares
students for thoughtful citizenship in their communities, the nation, and the world (p.109)”
This implies that students should develop a sense of cultural, national, and global identity. As
Collins (2008) stated, students need to see themselves as part of a global community, which
has the ability to change things. In a culturally diverse student population, it is important to
not simply set the focus on national identification, as this can lead to marginalisation of
certain cultural groups (Banks, 2009; Collins, 2008). Establishing a global community feeling
is the solution for culturally diverse groups to find a common sense of community and
belonging. As Geneva Gay (2000) stated “cooperation, community, and connectedness are
essential to culturally responsive teaching” (p.36). In other words, it is important that
students develop a sense of community in order to be able to connect to the learning and
teaching that is taking place. This sense of community can be achieved through pedagogical
approaches that actively involve students in the learning process and promote a cooperative
learning environment (e.g. group works, dialogues, class meetings and through the
described teachers’ characteristics like caring). These approaches support the development
of a community sense, sense of belonging and critical thinking skills, which are essential for
global citizenship education.

3.4 The role of curriculum in working with culturally diverse students

Many scholars have pointed out the significant role of curriculum in addressing the needs of
a culturally diverse student population. In my research, curriculum is one of the three
aspects I am investigating in my case study of the International School of Iceland. When
investigating schools’ curricula, one has to acknowledge the different types and dimensions
of curricula in schools.

3.4.1 Dimensions and types of curricula

Often, we refer to curriculum as a statement of the content to be taught in lessons (Hayden,
2006). However, it is possible to divide the curriculum into different dimensions (Kelly, 2004;
Robitaille, 1993).

1. The intended curriculum, which refers to the planned and designed curriculum.
2. The implemented curriculum, which covers the components of the curriculum which
are taught.
3. The learned or attained curriculum, understood as the skills and knowledge and attitudes that students have developed by the end of their schooling experience.

These three dimensions remind us that what is said on paper, is not necessarily the same as what is taught or learned or acquired. Eisner (2002) distinguishes between three types of curricula. The explicit curricula, the implicit curriculum and the null curriculum. With the explicit curricula, he refers to the intended curriculum. It is the stated curriculum which is found in curriculum guidelines, textbooks and standards of school. The implicit curriculum, also called the hidden curriculum, is not written down. It covers practices, outcomes and attitudes which are not explicit in curriculum guides or school policies. It covers aspects such as teacher-student relationship, classroom physical organisation, class room rules, routines and procedures. This is strongly influenced by the teachers’ attitudes and the schools’ mission statement. The hidden curriculum can be seen as part of the implemented curriculum, which is not stated in the intended curriculum. The Null Curriculum covers all topics and content that are left out or silenced. This last description of curriculum draws attention to the critical part of a schools’ curriculum (Eisner, 2002). Eisner (2002) points out that schools teach much more than they intend to teach but also much less. It is therefore important while conducting research on the role of the curriculum to be aware of these different dimensions of curricula. In this research, I am focusing more on the explicit curriculum, but I take into account the hidden and the null curriculum when discussing the role of the curriculum in responding to culturally diverse student populations.

3.4.2 A multicultural curriculum

Many scholars of multicultural education point out the importance of the implementation of multicultural education in a schools’ curriculum. Banks (2002) points out that a transformative approach towards curricula is needed in order to effectively address the needs of culturally diverse students. A transformative approach means that the structure of the whole curriculum needs to be changed based on the view that it is not sufficient to simply add concepts and themes without critically considering the impact of the institutional context. Banks (2002) describes multicultural curriculum reform in terms of four levels.
Figure 2: Approaches to Multicultural Curriculum Reform by Banks (2002).

Level 1 is referred to as the contribution approach. This level of reform is limited to celebration of different cultural holidays and awareness of discrete cultural elements. This Level addresses cultural diversity only in superficial ways. The additive approach adds themes and concepts of culture to an existing curriculum. The third level emphasises change in the structure of the entire curriculum to enable students to look at concepts, issues, events and themes from different cultural perspectives. If the third level of reform is successful, then social action can be achieved. This fourth level focuses on creating a space in curriculum reform that allows for students to participate in decision making processes that favour cultural diversity (Banks, 2002).

Many international programs, schools and curricula emphasise the development of pragmatic skills as well as more ideologically-focused skills (Hayden, 2006). Hayden (2006) refers to ideologically-focused skills as skills which enable students to be good citizens, develop global understanding, open attitudes, tolerance and respect for other citizens. The balanced curriculum which Thompson (1998) described in his model is the balance between the pragmatic skills and the ideologically-focused skills. Further in his model, one can see that this balanced curriculum is highly interlinked with two other aspects: the cultural diversity and the administrative style in order to create an international education that may flourish (Hayden, 2006). Hayden points out that IPC states explicitly the promotion of the pragmatic and ideologically-focused skills and fits into the model of a learning environment for international education by Thompson (1998).
The balance between pragmatism and ideology in the curriculum is up to the individual school. In the process of finding a balance for a schools’ curriculum Banks (2002) points out the importance of the integration of teachers in this process. The teacher needs to play a significant role in the implementation of a multicultural curriculum in the class room in order for this to become a dynamic process. If teachers do not have an understanding of the curriculum or of multicultural education the curriculum is ineffective. According to Banks (2002), well-designed staff development programs are essential in the implementation of an effective multicultural curriculum.

3.5 School leadership role in addressing the schools’ cultural diversity

The third aspect I am investigating in my case study of the International school of Iceland is the role of school leadership in supporting a culturally diverse student population. Studies show that school leaders play an essential role and have different responsibilities in the development of a multicultural school environment. Many scholars note that for successful leadership there is not one key or a single dimension. Leadership involves different responsibilities and skills (Banks, 2002; Dimmock, 2005; McLeskey & Waldron, 2015; Simmons, 2016). Scholars also agree that the competencies of school leaders in a globalised world and in a multicultural setting have changed in the last decade (Dimmock, 2005; Simmons, 2016). I have categorised the key skills and responsibilities of effective leadership
and discuss these from a critical multicultural education perspective in this chapter. The identified key skills and responsibilities are:

- Developing school policies and values
- Creating an inclusive school culture
- Involving parents and community
- Recruiting and nurturing staff members
- Professional development
- Monitoring and evaluation

### 3.5.1 Developing school policy and values

As I mentioned in the previous section on the role of the curriculum, school leadership plays a significant role in the development and implementation of a curriculum that addresses the cultural diversity of the student population. It is the responsibility of school leaders to transform the curricula to one that is inclusive and multicultural. It is also important for them to find a balance between pragmatic and ideologically-focused skills (Hayden, 2006). Scholars also point out the importance of school policy statements towards multicultural education. Schools should develop policy statements with guidelines and justification for multicultural education (Banks, 2002; Dimmock, 2005). A study on effective leadership in multi-ethnic schools by Clive Dimmock (2005) points out the importance of communicating and applying values which support equality, fairness and respect among the whole school community. He also mentions that it is important that these school values are coherent with the values of the teachers and other staff members. McLeskey & Waldron (2015) mention the role of active leadership to ensure that teachers share the core values of the school. Only then can the school develop an effective inclusive school. However, both studies also mention that effective leadership cannot guarantee teacher commitment. Trust is essential among school staff in order to come together and solve problems together (McLeskey & Waldron, 2015). With trust, the school staff can develop a sense of community which can lead to the successful implementation of school policies and values that support multicultural education.

### 3.5.2 Creating an inclusive school culture

As previously mentioned, only with explicit values and the commitment of teachers towards these values, can the school develop an inclusive atmosphere. Furthermore, the willingness of professionals and other staff members to “understand the cultures and background realities of their students and school community is important” (Dimmock, 2005, p.11). The leadership has to ensure that the school reflects an understanding and acceptance of
cultural diversity and should act as a role model in terms of multicultural competences such as cultural awareness and tolerance (Nieto & Bode, 2010; Simmons, 2016). It is important to focus on developing an inclusive culture where diversity is welcomed. The schools’ responsibility is to reflect this culture and act as a role model for their students, parents and wider community. For example, with events like an international potluck where the school emphasis on integrating culturally diverse parents into the school community. Further schools should provide parents with translations and translators for meetings in order to ensure all parents can play an active part of the school community.

3.5.3 Involving parents and community

Involving parents in school affairs is essential for school leadership – especially in multicultural school settings. Many scholars mention in their studies that effective leadership should encourage the parents and the wider community to contribute and be involved in the school’s life (C. Banks, 2010; Dimmock, 2005; Nieto & Bode, 2010). Nieto & Bode (2010) conceptualize involvement of the community broadly enough to include grandparents and other family members for cultural diversity to be addressed. Language, socioeconomic status and other issues can be barriers for such participation. For this reason, it is important to consider multiple strategies to overcome such barriers. It is important for school leadership to be aware of the children’s family background and cultural background in order to incorporate the successful involvement of parents and other family members. As Cherry Banks (2010) stated, “Working with parents from diverse backgrounds requires sensitivity to and an understanding of their circumstances and worldviews” (p.421).

Furthermore, it supports the teachers to develop more cultural sensitivity and awareness while working with a high diversity. Successful involvement of parents, family and community leads to higher achievement, motivation of students, students’ attendance and social behaviour and can be enriching for the whole school community (C. Banks, 2010; Henderson, Mapp, Johnson & Davies, 2006). The involvement of parents can be implemented in different settings and at different levels. It can be at home, in class or even in decision making processes. Parents and the community are important voices for school improvement and reforms. Educational reforms need the support, influence and activism of parents and broader community in order to succeed and fulfil a reform which takes the perspectives of parents into account (C. Banks, 2010).

3.5.4 Recruiting and nurturing staff

Another task of school leaders is to recruit and nurture staff members. It is important to recruit good teachers who fit into the school and share its core values, and who are qualified for the job. As mentioned previously, studies have shown that the race and ethnicity of the
teacher does not influence the effectiveness of the teacher in terms of responding to culturally diverse students (Ladson-Billings, 1994). However, there have been studies that suggest leadership in multicultural school contexts should aim to recruit and retain staff with similar cultural and ethnic backgrounds as those in the school community (Dimmock, 2005). Therefore, in schools with high cultural diversity, school staff should also reflect diversity. In this way, the school acts as a role model if it is able to demonstrate to students’ positive attitudes towards cultural diversity (J. Banks, 2010). In other words, school leadership has a responsibility to find ways to reflect the student body and its diversity in its staff.

3.5.5 Professional development

Many scholars like Banks, Dimmock and McLeskey & Waldron emphasize professional development as essential to support school staff in culturally diverse educational environments. Often the implementation of multicultural education fails because teachers feel a lack of expertise to address the needs of culturally diverse students (McLeskey & Waldron, 2015). Professional development can increase confidence and motivation amongst school staff as it supports the development of certain skills to improve practice and sensitivity towards a culturally diverse student population. In the case studies conducted by McLeskey & Waldron, evidence is found for the success of professional learning communities, where teachers exchange expertise, solve problems or study in groups. Furthermore, McLeskey & Waldron (2015) pointed out that most schools, which worked towards inclusion were successful when implementing their own professional development programs, which suited the needs of the teachers’ body.

3.5.6 Monitoring and evaluation

Banks (2002) and Simmons (2016) pointed out that monitoring and evaluation processes are essential with regards to responding properly to the needs of a continuously changing student population. The world and society around the school is changing constantly and schools need to adapt to these changes. Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) made this clear and stated that we need to prepare teachers for a changing world. In order to know which of the changes have an impact on the experience of students, schools need to carry out evaluations and monitoring. In this regard, school leadership should be open for new things and consider how monitoring and evaluation can inform change. According to Elena Rafaila (2015), the goals of evaluation are...

1. ... to raise awareness of the operational status of the didactic process and system.
2. ... to form the basis for the relevant decisions regarding the directions of the training activity.
3. ... to influence the development of the educational process in the sense of optimizing its components and the inter-component relations and to maximize results. (p.54)

With these three goals, Rafaila (2015) points out that evaluation processes have high influence on students’ learning. Furthermore, she mentions that in a changing world, where classrooms get more culturally diverse, it is important to monitor and evaluate educational processes to foster multicultural education.
4 Methodology

In this chapter, I describe the research methodology, data collection, sampling and participants, and data analysis procedures in detail. Furthermore, I situate myself as a researcher in this project and clarify various ethical issues and limitations to the study.

4.1 Research Methodology

Rather than focus on numbers or test a theory as in quantitative research (Merriam, 2009), I chose a qualitative approach and focused on interpreting my data in order to develop a deeper insight into and understanding of my research topic. The focus on investigating meaning and developing understanding of different ways to work with culturally diverse students is underpinned by the experiences of my research participants. In qualitative research the primary instrument of data collection and analysis is the researcher (Creswell, 2014), because the researcher can react and adjust immediately. Moreover, the qualitative process is inductive, which means that it is built from particulars to general themes (Creswell, 2014). In this research I collected different experiences, opinions and statements of teachers, students and leadership members in relation to teaching and learning practices, the curriculum and school leadership. The data around these specific focus areas was grouped into general themes and then analysed in reference to Banks (2009) frame of critical multicultural education. Regarding methodology, qualitative research is characterised by flexibility in understanding that the program can be changed and thereby customised to host new experiences and new challenges during the research process (Merriam, 2009). This flexibility allowed me to develop a deeper understanding for my topic and address the obstacles I came across. Nevertheless, qualitative research methods also face limitations. Due to the research flexibility it is difficult to duplicate and make generalisations from research findings (Creswell, 2014). My research does not provide me with a general insight into the work of all international schools in Iceland or state compulsory schools and their work with culturally diverse students. However, it offers a case which informs my own teaching practice and draws out the implications of these lessons for state school contexts.

4.1.1 Case study approach

This study seeks to gain a ‘holistic overview’ using the case study approach to qualitative research (Punch, 2005). According to Merriam (1998) case studies are settled in real-life situations and aim at a “holistic description and analysis of a single unit or bounded system” (p.12). In my study, the International School of Iceland represents a real-life situation in a bounded system, meaning that the focus is on the school. As Merriam (1998) suggests “the case study results in a rich and holistic account of the phenomenon and can be examined to
bring about understanding that in turn can affect and perhaps even improve practice” (p.41). The phenomenon of my study is the cultural diversity represented by the student population at the International School of Iceland. There are different types of case studies. This study is an instrumental case study that aims to provide understanding about a specific issue that may be generalised with the purpose of advanced understanding (Creswell, 2014). The specific issue researched in my study is how the International School of Iceland works with growing cultural diversity in their student population through teaching and learning, curriculum, and administrative and management approaches. As I mentioned before, the study cannot be used to make comparisons to other International Schools or to mainstream schools in Iceland without the risk of presenting generalisations. However, the instrumental case study offers an in-depth analysis of one particular case that can potentially contribute to studies being carried out on the capacity and responsiveness of state schools as regards culturally diverse student populations.

4.2 Sample selection

I took a non-random and purposeful sample for my research. Non-random and purposeful sample selections are those samples that are chosen in order to find answers to specific research questions (Merriam, 2009). In this case, I interviewed teachers, leadership members and students to explore how the International School addresses cultural diversity in their teaching approaches and school management. I interviewed two leadership team members, and five teachers; of these, one was a teacher assistant. One of the leadership members played an important gatekeeper role in this sample selection. I informed her about my research project and gave her my research proposal to read. She then informed the teaching team about my research and asked for teachers who would be willing to participate. She then sent me the names of the teachers who were willing to participate. I contacted them myself to set up the times and places for the interviews. My gatekeeper suggested I conduct the interviews on a staff day and parent conference day, because she knew that the teachers would then have free time on these days. To schedule the times, I had to sometimes write two or three e-mails in order to reach the teacher. Also, two teachers were sick on one day and we had to reschedule the interviews.

Additionally, I conducted two focus groups. The optimal number of participants for focus groups is according to Bloor, Frankland, Thomas, & Steward (2002, pp. 26-27), six to eight people. I followed this guidance and conducted one with eight students from seventh to tenth grade and the other one with five fourth grade students. I arranged the focus groups with students of similar ages and in the same grades to make sure that they knew each other in order to ensure students felt comfortable and at ease and to encourage contributions.
from all (Shaw, Brady & Davey, 2011). To ensure the children were willing to participate and understood what my research was about, I first informed their homeroom teachers about my project. I used homeroom teachers as gatekeepers and asked them to inform their students and ask for participants. According to Shaw et al. (2011) in order to gain access to children participants, it is easier to contact them through gatekeepers, which in my case where the homeroom teachers. It is less time-consuming and more effective than if the researcher directly contacts the children (Shaw et al., 2011). Two homeroom teachers then sent out a letter to the parents whose children were interested in participating. In the letter, I described my research and the process of the focus group. I attached a consent form, which the parents and the children had to send back to the teachers (see Appendix A). The teachers returned the signed consent forms to me before the focus groups took place.

4.2.1 Participants

Five teachers and two leadership team members were willing to participate in my research project. Two were homeroom teachers, one science teacher, one Icelandic teacher and one was both teaching and acting as a teacher assistant. The teachers that participated teach various grades from kindergarten up to 10th grade. All of the participants have been working at the International School of Iceland for some years: four of them for over ten years, the rest of them for five, eight and three years. The participants are from different countries, as well as from Iceland. Many of them have lived in another country or have had some kind of international experience. The age range amongst the participants was considerably wide. For confidentiality reasons and related to the small size of the school, I am not able to mention gender, age, nationality or information that may reveal the identity of the participants. In my findings, I make use of female pseudonyms for all participants irrespective of sex. However, I acknowledge the importance and influence of factors like gender, age, nationality on my findings.

Table 1: Overview of the interview participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Pseudonyms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Home room teacher Carolina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Home room teacher Lea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Science teacher Mia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Icelandic teacher Alice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Teacher and learning assistant Andrea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Leadership member Helga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Leadership member Barbara</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The first focus group was formed by eight students, from seventh to tenth grade. Two students from each grade participated in the focus group, four boys and four girls. The students all came from different places, except two of them who came from the same country. Students of Icelandic heritage were represented. The students knew each other very well, which made it easier to create a good atmosphere. It was a very talkative group, but they also knew how to hold constructive discussions and to follow communication rules.

The second focus group I conducted was with three boys and two girls from the fourth grade. They were also all from different countries, including students of Icelandic heritage. Also in this focus group, the students knew each other well and there was a pleasant atmosphere during the entire process. Due to reasons of confidentiality, I do not refer to the nationalities of the children.

**Table 2: Overview of the focus groups.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus group</th>
<th>Pseudonyms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Eight students. Four girls and four boys. Two students from each grade of 7th to 10th grade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Five students. Two girls and three boys. All of them are in the 4th grade.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3 Data collection

For the data collection process, I conducted interviews with teachers and leadership members, as well as, carried out focus groups with student participants. To support the findings of these data collection methods, I also conducted classroom observations in order to provide additional data that I could use for triangulation purposes. Triangulation aims to assuring the validity of the research in capturing diverse perspectives and dimensions of the same phenomenon by using data of diverse data collection methods and samples (Merriam, 2009).

4.3.1 Interviews

Interviews are the most common approach when conducting qualitative research (Merriam, 2009). I conducted interviews with four teachers, one teacher assistant and two leadership team members of the International School of Iceland individually between the 10th of January and the 18th of January. The person-to-person interviews were held with leadership members and teachers to get an insight into the perspectives of teachers and leadership on teaching approaches and the role of curricula and policy in responding to a culturally diverse student population. Before all of the interviews, I made sure that I provided refreshments for the participants in order to create a good atmosphere. Furthermore, I explained how I would deal with confidentiality issues and discussed anonymity, their right to withdraw, and
asked them to sign a consent form. During the interview, I made use of a semi-structured interview guide. I structured the interview to get responses to my sub-questions (see Appendix C).

I was aware that I would need to remain flexible and to respond with follow up questions. In order to establish breadth within the data that was collected I used open-ended interview questions. This allowed the participants to expound on the questions asked to them (Merriam, 2009). I made use of probing questions during all interviews. As Merriam (2009) states, “Getting good data in an interview is dependent on your asking well-chosen open-ended questions that can be followed up with probes and requests for more detail” (p. 17). The interviews were held in English and took between 30-85 min, depending on different teachers. The interviews took place in different locations and were recorded with a recording device after gaining the approval of the participant. I made an attempt to choose the best possible interview locations so that the distraction and anonymity issues would be minimal. With both of the leadership members, I conducted the interviews in their office. In the case of the three teachers, the interview took place in a closed conference room where there was no distraction. The two remaining interviews were in rooms where people passed through from time to time and slight interruptions occurred. This had an impact on the quality of the data collection as the researcher and participants seemed less focused during parts of the interview.

4.3.2 Focus groups
In addition to the interviews, I conducted focus group sessions on the 23rd of January and the 8th of February 2018. Focus groups help the “participants to engage in retrospective introspection to attempt collectively to tease out previously taken for granted assumptions” (Bloor et al., 2002, p.6). In other words, the focus group approach offers students the opportunity to reflect upon their own experience in a cooperative way. The participants interacted with each other, listened to each other’s opinions, and gave each other advice. The focus groups were also semi-structured, meaning that there were some predetermined questions regarding certain information that I was looking for. However, there was space left for new information to reveal itself as it pertained to the main topic. The questions I used were open ended and aimed at inspiring the interviewees to reflect upon the research problem. For the focus groups, I structured the question guide into different themes (see Appendix D). In both focus groups, I did not ask all my prepared questions because I found that they had already been covered in students’ responses or there was not enough time to ask all of them. I stayed very flexible during the interview and picked up questions that I thought would bring up new perspectives and aspects. The focus groups were conducted in English.
I tried to make the students feel comfortable and to create an atmosphere where the students could interact with each other on the topic of my research (Shaw et al., 2011). Moreover, I adapted the questions according to the age of the children and made sure that I used language that they understood (Shaw et al., 2011). Nevertheless, one has to consider that the results are socially constructed, and the participants need to be familiar with group processes and possible roles (Merriam, 2009). The first focus group took place in a bigger classroom space. It had enough table space and we could sit around two tables so that everyone could face each other. The second focus group took place on a long table in an open space, where sometimes people were passing by. There was space for six people on this table and everyone could face each other. To prevent problems during these interviews it was important to introduce and prepare the students for the focus group and explain in detail how the process would work and what the research was about. To ensure that all students were aware of communication rules during the focus groups, I asked them what rules we had to keep in mind to ensure respectful dialogues. The students came up with the most important communication rules. “The optimum length for focus group interviews is not more than two hours if the participants are volunteering their time” (Bloor et al., 2002, p. 53). Due to the age of the students of my focus groups this was thought to be too long. The focus groups were 45 minutes in length and were video recorded, upon the approval of the students and their parents, for the sake of clarity. The visual data was used to simplify the transcription process in order to know which student said what and to allow recording of non-verbal behaviour (Merriam, 2009). However, as Merriam (2009) also mentions, I experienced that this kind of recording can be more cumbersome and intrusive than tape recordings.

Additionally, to increase student input, I used the last 10 minutes of the focus group to ask them to present their school on posters. The participants had creative freedom in the poster design. I used the posters to better understand what they had said and to support the findings from the focus group interviews. It is a method to give the children the chance to participate actively, in a less language-based way than in the focus group. Children can “visually represent an idea or message through words and drawings” (Shaw et al., 2011, p.23). This creative method makes the research experience for the children more fun. However, the researcher has to “ensure the research questions can be adequately addressed, and the resulting data appropriately analysed” (Shaw et al., 2011, p.22).
Figure 4: Example of a poster from the focus group.

4.3.3 Observations

To support my data collection from the interviews and focus groups and to develop a deeper understanding of my participants’ experiences, I also conducted observations in the classrooms. According to Taylor and Bogdan (1998) no other research method “can provide the depth of understanding that comes from directly observing people and listening to what they have to say at the scene” (p. 90). I conducted the observations in an “observer as a participant” format (Merriam, 1998). During and after the observations, I took field notes. Within the field notes, class activities, teachers’ instructions, and material were recorded, along with observations on students’ participation, motivation, and behaviour. In this study, the observations were used to reinforce, challenge and support my findings from the interviews and focus groups. The observations took place on the 17th of January and the 2nd of February. In total I observed 6 lessons in Kindergarten and 1st grade, 2nd to 4th grade, and 7th-9th grade. The observations were between 30 min and 60 min long. I got introduced to the classes by the teachers, although most of the pupils remembered me as an intern. With the permission of the teachers I took photos of their classroom and materials. Additionally to these observations, I draw on observations conducted during my pilot project, where I observed as a class assistant 104 lessons of 50-60 min in all grade levels and took field notes.
4.4 Data analysis

Immediately after the interviews, I took field notes where I reflected upon the situation prior to the interview and pointed out the strengths and weaknesses of the interview. According to Merriam (2009) “post-interview notes allow the investigator to monitor the process of data collection as well as begin to analyse the information itself” (p.110).

Figure 5: Example of interview field notes.

For the data analysis of my interviews and focus groups I made use of thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a process of coding which according to Braun & Clarke (2006) contains six steps. The first step is to familiarize yourself with the data. While transcribing, reading and re-reading the data, the researcher develops a first understanding and overview of the data. During the word-by-word transcriptions, I made use of researcher comments. Researchers’ comments are explanations, reflections or speculations made in response to the collected data (Merriam, 2009). While transcribing the interview, it was important to
stay accurate in order to interpret the interviewees’ meanings and feelings (Merriam, 2009). Then, the data collection and analysis becomes a hand in hand process. The second step in the thematic analysis is to generate initial codes. I conducted line-by-line coding, which is a device that allowed me to take a closer look at the data and to study it in more detail (Charmaz, 2014). I went through all of the interviews and focus groups line by line and wrote down concepts, referring to and matching them with the content. I also developed a mind map to capture important concepts from the line-by-line coding.

Figure 6: Mind-map of initial codes and colour coding.

As a result of my pilot study, I had recognised the role of the five dimensions of Bank’s framework of critical multicultural education as a valuable tool to assess the extent to which critical multicultural education was evident in an institutional setting. That is why I made use of the five dimensions as my analytical framework. During the second step of thematic analysis I was more theory-driven than data-driven. I used the five dimensions to lead my analysis in relation to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This does not mean that my approach was deductive as an inductive approach was evident when I first used open coding. Inductive approach means that conclusions, theories or concepts are drawn from the data, whereas deductive approach test hypotheses and theories (Merriam, 2009). I then applied the analytical framework to colour code evidence of the five dimensions and to identify my main themes (see the mind-map in Figure 6).

These codes were then organised into smaller mind-maps representing the five dimensions of Banks (2002). This allowed me to identify overlapping themes.
In the third phase of my analysis, I grouped the themes into broader categories in order to make sense of my data (Charmaz, 2014). The three broader themes I first identified were: Global citizenship education, culturally responsive teaching and learning approaches, and the school culture and ethos. In the fourth phase, I reviewed these final themes and checked if they worked in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set. This is called axial coding (Charmaz, 2014). I went through my entire data to see if these three themes covered the data set. During this step, I decided to restructure my findings around my sub questions and discussed each of the three aspects in relation to the five dimensions. I acknowledge that the dimensions and the three aspects are highly interrelated, but I decided to separate them to better identify how the dimensions are evident. Step five was about defining and naming those themes. Some of the initial findings needed to be renamed to capture the key findings. The last step included the final analysis to identify the findings and write the report. In my report of the findings, I make use of literal transcripts as spoken quotes. In addition, field notes, diary entries of my classroom observations and the posters of the focus groups were regularly reviewed to critically engage with my findings from the interviews and focus groups.

4.5 Discussion of ethical issues

4.5.1 The researcher’s position

A fundamental part of qualitative research is to reflect upon the role and position of the researcher to prevent biased results, ensure openness and follow ethical rules. A researcher should be open to criticism and new ideas in order to develop and/or improve the research
project (Shamoo & Resnik, 2009). I have been aware of personal influences during the whole research process (Shamoo & Resnik, 2009). During my research, I was aware of the influence of my own teaching approaches and beliefs, personal background, insider role, experience and culture (Creswell, 2014).

My social constructivist worldview informed my approach to the research and the topic I chose to explore. As a social constructivist, I seek to comprehend the world in which I live and work. Due to my position as a teacher and my interests in how schools work with culturally diverse students, I wanted to develop a deeper understanding of multicultural education in practice in schools. According to social constructivist theory, reality is constructed through human activity. Knowledge is a human product and is socially and culturally constructed. Individuals create meaning through their interactions with each other and in the environment in which they live (Creswell, 2014). That is why I focused on the specific settings in which people learn and work to understand the historical and cultural context of the participants (Creswell, 2014). The focus of my research was to rely as much as possible on the participants’ views of the school, the curricula and their work. Therefore, I made use of open-ended questions. The questions were broad and general so that the participants could construct the meaning of a situation, typically forged in interactions with other persons. Subjective meanings are not imprinted on individuals but are formed through interaction with others (Creswell, 2014).

I was aware of the researcher’s location in a social space (Bourdieu 1988) as cited in Heijstra, 2013). As a Swiss person studying in Iceland I had to be aware of effects like language barriers or culture differences. Although I chose to do my research in an international school in order to reduce language barriers, I was aware that language and cultural barriers still existed, especially during the interviews. Furthermore, cultural factors such as hierarchy, authority, and age play a significant role in communications between people with different cultural backgrounds (Dray & Mrazek, 1996). Different cultural experiences can influence the data that is collected and how it is interpreted. These issues required constant attention during the entire research process given their ethical implications.

I was also aware of the role of interpersonal reflection within my study (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). While conducting, transcribing, analysing the interviews, and taking field notes I had to keep in mind that the relationship between researcher and participants always has an impact on the interviews and the information the participants offer. As I did an internship in this school, I knew most of the participants and worked quite closely with some of them. I believe that my relationship with the participants sometimes supported the flow of information and the trust between us.
As a former intern at this school, an experienced primary school teacher and a master’s student, I have an insider role in this research. This is what Bourdieu (1988) describes as the influence—how a researcher looks at and explains things according to the researcher’s academic discipline (as cited in Heijstra, 2013). I acknowledge that my background influenced the research process, especially while taking field notes and analysing data.

4.5.2 Ethical issues

Like Braun and Clarke (2013) said, “Ethics should be seen as an integral part of all stages and aspects of research....” (p.12). This is a very important statement and I kept this in mind during the entire research process. In my research project, I was aware of the four principles; autonomy, non-maleficence, beneficence and justice.

First, I registered my research officially at Persónuvernd, the Icelandic Data Protection Authority, and as stated previously, I obtained the necessary permission to carry out the study from the International School of Iceland. I also gained consent from the participants involved in the research before I began the data collection process (see appendix A and B).

When conducting research with children, the researcher needs to be aware of power imbalances between the researcher and the researched, which can have an impact on the data collection process (Shaw et al., 2011). Nevertheless, different steps can be taken to minimise the impact. First, it is important to create a relaxed atmosphere in a welcoming setting using informal chat, providing information about the research, and ensuring active involvement. It is very important for the children to understand that this process is not a test and there are no right or wrong answers. Furthermore, I had to keep in mind that children have shorter attention spans than adults (Shaw et al., 2011). This became apparent in the second focus group, where the students were much younger than the participants in the first focus group. I adapted the language of the questions and the task according to the vocabulary and age level of the children. The researcher’s responsibility is to ensure the safety and welfare of any child participating in the research (Shaw et al., 2011). This means that it is important to be mindful of the possible effects on the child throughout the research process.

In my data collection with all of the participants, I made sure that it was the participants’ choice to participate in my research and that they had the right to withdraw at any time. I made sure participants understood what the research was about and ensured their privacy and confidentiality (Creswell, 2014; Shamoo & Resnik, 2009). I am aware that I conducted interviews with teachers and leadership members whose names are published on the website of the school. To ensure their privacy and confidentiality, I changed all of the names, nationalities and any information that could potentially be tracked back to one
person. Additionally, it is important to ensure the physical, psychological and emotional safety of the researcher and the research participants (Braun & Clarke, 2013). I made sure that the participants felt comfortable and safe during the interviews. I am also aware of the impact my research can have on the school as a whole. I tried not to disturb the ongoing daily activities with my study. Additionally, I was aware that my research could impact me emotionally while attempting to ensure the wellbeing of my participants or if I came across sensitive data related to the research. I afforded the same degree of protection for the children regarding confidentiality, anonymity and data protection as I did for the adult participants (Shaw et al., 2011).

While transcribing the interviews and writing the report, I followed the rules of truth, carefulness, respect for intellectual property, following APA style and I carefully considered issues of plagiarism and anonymity. Due to the fact that Iceland is a small society, the participants’ anonymity was important to consider (Creswell, 2014; Shamoo & Resnik, 2009). I therefore used pseudonyms and changed nationalities and places mentioned by the interviewees.

Finally, research ethics also needs to address whom the research will benefit. The research benefits not only the researcher; it should also be regarded as a developmental process aimed at improvement for the school itself and other schools (Creswell, 2014). In this respect, I focus on lessons learned related to ISI that can benefit both myself and the school, and I also identify the facilitating factors that lead me to discuss the implications for mainstream school contexts that differ from the ISI.

4.6 Limitations of the study

This study had several limitations. One of the limitation was the language barrier. The researcher was limited in being able to only conduct the interviews in English. Conducting the interviews in Icelandic may have increased participation and added different perspectives into the data that was collected. It may be that fewer Icelandic heritage children participated in the focus groups because they did not feel secure enough using English or that some parents had difficulties understanding the letter I send out. However, given the context that ISI is an international school and the school focuses on English language acquisition I am not sure if Icelandic would have helped much. All students in the focus groups could speak English fluently.

Furthermore, one has to take into consideration that this case study is limited to the size of the school. The school is relatively small and one cannot make generalizations about other international schools or Icelandic state schools. However, as I mentioned in the ethics
section, the smallness of the school does not impact on the contribution that the findings may have on addressing cultural diversity in other schools in Iceland.

Time constraints were also a limiting factor in this research. I recognised during the focus groups the importance of giving the students a voice and listening to their perspectives and experiences. It is especially important in this kind of research on multicultural education to take their perspectives into consideration. However, due to the limited time for this research, I could not conduct more focus groups. Nevertheless, in the frame of this research the two conducted focus groups reached saturation, meaning it reached the point at which no new information or concepts were coming up (Merriam, 2009).

The involvement of gatekeepers needs to be taken into consideration while speaking about limitations. The gatekeepers’ involvement may affect the research process in that they may have chosen certain teachers and students rather than allowing the participants to respond to me directly. However, I tried to make the gatekeepers clear that I was looking for any kind of participants who were willing to participate. I encouraged them to present my research project and ask for willing participants. I interviewed all of the teacher participants and student participants which were interested in taking part.

The video recording device did serve as a minor distraction in the focus groups carried out with the child participants. However, in the focus group with the older students, it was not a problem. In the second focus groups with the 4th grade students, the children had difficulty focusing on the questions I asked them and were easily distracted by the camera. Although I already adapted the questions and duration of the focus groups beforehand according to their age, I had to make adaptations during the focus groups due to this distraction.
5 Findings

In this chapter I present my main findings, which emerged through thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The findings are organised under my three sub questions using the following headings: teaching and learning practices; the role of the curriculum; and school leadership. Under each heading I present how Banks’ five dimensions are represented. It is important to mention that the three headings and five dimensions are interrelated, a point that I will develop further in my discussion chapter. However, for the purpose of this chapter, I focus on Banks’ dimensions of equity pedagogy, knowledge construction and prejudice reduction to discuss teaching and learning practices. Next, I discuss content integration in relation to the curriculum of the International School of Iceland. This is followed by a discussion on the role of school leadership towards culturally diverse students in terms of an empowering school culture and social structure.

5.1 Teaching and learning practices towards culturally diverse students

One main focus of my research was the teaching and learning practices for a culturally diverse student population. In this regard, I asked teachers and school leaders about their teaching and learning practices at the International School of Iceland. I also conducted focus groups with students in order to be able to draw on their perspectives when analysing the teaching and learning practices of their teachers.

5.1.1 Equity pedagogy & knowledge construction

I found evidence of equity pedagogy and knowledge construction in the teaching and learning practices of teachers at the International School of Iceland. The dimension of equity pedagogy includes a variety of teaching methods and approaches which consider the diversity of learning styles within culturally diverse groups. In other words, it means that the teachers have to offer the students different ways to learn to ensure that everyone can reach their highest possible achievement irrespective of their cultural background. Allowing a wide range of different learning methods supports the dimension of knowledge construction, which describes how culture can influence the way knowledge is created. Students and teachers should develop awareness of how knowledge construction is influenced by the racial, ethnic, gender and social class positions of individuals and groups. In other words, teachers help students to understand, investigate and to think critically about how culture influences knowledge construction. These two dimensions are highly interrelated and support each other. Equity pedagogy emphasizes a range of teaching methods and considers a diversity of learning styles. This therefore facilitates the dimension of knowledge construction. Of course, these two dimensions are as well supported by the
school’s curriculum and the way the school is led. However, it is mostly evident in the daily teaching and learning practices of the school. Through in-class observations and interviews with students and teachers, three core features appeared that characterize the teaching and learning practices:

- Teaching methods that accommodate cultural diversity
- Teachers and students’ awareness of the role of these teaching methods
- Challenges teachers encounter

**Teaching methods that accommodate cultural diversity**

In the interviews with teachers and students, the participants mentioned a range of different teaching methods that teachers use in their practice at ISI. This finding exemplifies the dimension of equity pedagogy, which suggests a wide range of different practices. I have selected teaching methods that teachers referred to as important approaches when working with culturally diverse students. I found strong evidence of differentiation and a personalised approach as well as an emphasis on creativity and critical thinking.

Teachers often explained in the interviews that they make use of differentiated instruction and personalised approaches in order to support the students who are working at different levels of progress within the school. This differentiation approach is important due to the different language and cultural backgrounds of the students. They make sure that each student learns at their own pace and in a way that matches their learning style. One teacher stated that, “You always have to care for every individual student” (Mia). These teaching methods ensure that teachers meet the children at their level and build knowledge based on the students’ experiences and their learning capabilities. Teachers and students are aware of the benefits of differentiation to meet the needs of culturally diverse students. Through this approach, teachers ensure that children are fully supported and that cultural differences in constructing knowledge find their place.

One of the ways that teachers apply differentiation is through implementing different kinds of materials. One of the teachers, Alice, stated that she „tries to look at materials that I can differentiate as well” (Alice). Teachers often mentioned that they try to find a balance between English materials and Icelandic materials for their lessons. Most of the time students are strong in at least one of these languages.
Teachers mentioned that the language differences in the class can be challenging, a factor that needs to be taken into consideration while planning lessons. Teachers stated in the interview that they often differentiate by creating groups according to level and language abilities. With different material and support material, dictionaries or the help of I-pads for translation, teachers ensure that all children have the chance to learn.

“Everybody is on different levels. They give us other material. But also help us when we don’t fully understand or are on other levels than other people” (Anna). A younger student from the second focus group described his experience in another school as being different “Because you always learn, when you are maybe done with some missions, you just get a new mission instead of just having to wait and kill time […] until everyone else is done “(Henry). This is a good example of how teachers utilise equity pedagogy in the classroom. Teachers make sure all students can learn at their level and speed and can get the best possible learning outcome. The other children from the focus group agreed and a teacher describes this as well: “To challenge the ones who need challenge and can do it. And help the other ones to get there in little steps” (Carolina). Teachers take every student and their individual learning style into consideration and work to facilitate their learning in the best possible way.

Furthermore, this personalised approach of ISI supports important skills for the students’ future and supports the academic achievements for all students. Carolina explains that currently at the school students set their goals: “Yea and they are responsible for their […] learning. They set their own goals” (Carolina). She explained to me that each student has a
personal report card, where the teachers describe how, and on what level, they are working. This allows the student to take responsibility for their own learning. A student from the second focus group described this as a “pushing from the teachers”(Michelle). She described that the teachers are making an effort for the students to achieve their goals and develop new knowledge. She described it as a good thing, which she appreciates. Two teachers mentioned that with this personalised approach they try to focus on the strength of the students and try to encourage them in things they are good at. This supports the students’ self-efficacy. Positive experiences increase student confidence and fostering students’ self-efficacy ensures that learning can take place in every child.

As I mention in my literature review, Banks argues “cooperative learning will enhance the achievement of a wide range of students from a wide range of groups” (Banks, 1998, p.2). Cooperative learning focuses on research and the opportunity to draw on students’ own existing knowledge and the knowledge of others. This provides an opportunity for all students to be valued irrespective of their background and offers a wide range of learning opportunities. Although the teachers did not mention this teaching method explicitly, it was implied in the way that they described their teaching approach. For example, Mia described her views on teaching in this way:

I think we don’t believe that in one-way traffic children learn the best. We believe that learning is discussion. And learning is to question. And learning is not like sitting and writing. And doing exercises. Because of course you can do exercises and they are right. But deeper understanding needs your voice. Children should not be quiet the whole day. They should discuss it together they should learn together eh yea working groups and group works and you let go authority a little bit more anyway. Because and hands on activity. Hands on activity is like learning by doing. (Mia)

Mia’s description complements my own observations in which I saw an emphasis placed on discussion, group work and hands on activities. Students in both focus groups supported these findings and mentioned that teachers often integrate group work and discussions in their lessons. One student compared the International School of Iceland with schools in England and came to the conclusion that in English schools, there is little emphasis on “creativity or questioning”. In the International school of Iceland, she described the difference in terms of:
It’s more like so why do you guy’s think this happened? What are your thoughts on this? I want you guys going on this, I want you guys going on that and you take that and then teach each other like just teach each other stuff (Susanne).

She describes the way that teachers put emphasis on discussions and cooperative teaching, which supports the development of critical thinking. Paulo Freire (1998) stated that dialogue supports critical thinking when it allows for engagement with different opinions. The inclusion of research as part of cooperative learning encourages students to look at things from different perspectives and to be critical about existing and new knowledge as is exemplified in the slave narratives activity.

**Figure 9: Why is it important to read the slave narratives?**

In this example the teacher asked the students to reflect upon the question: Why is it important to read the slave narratives? The purpose of this exercise was to show the students that there are different perspectives about slavery, which are influenced by different aspects such as culture. The teacher used this exercise to encourage and develop critical thinking and to get students to analyse their own opinion and that of their peers regarding why it is important to read slave narratives. The students then used this critical analysis to create new knowledge. The teachers make students aware of the importance of critical thinking and its purpose, as one of the students stated the following:

> It is important to read slave narratives to understand someone else’s point of view and experiences. It is also a way to look back and see how we can improve.
It also helps us keeping track of our history and seeing things critically (Student from observation).

The students appreciate this emphasis on creativity and critical thinking, where they are given a voice, where they can express their opinions and thoughts. In the in-class observations, I was surprised with what the students came up with. I observed them as very critical thinkers, who are not afraid of sharing their thoughts.

This is also what I experienced in my focus groups. I could observe that the children were used to holding discussions, they shared their thoughts and critically engaged with the questions that I asked them. There were students who participated more actively than others, however, in general the students were very aware of the social rules while holding discussions. The students responded to my questions and made sure that everyone got the opportunity to share their experiences and views. This suggests that they are learning respect for each other and that they see each other as equals. This is a result of how they are taught. I could observe in the focus group the impact of the teaching on how they interact with each other and the fact that ground rules are part of this process and students are aware of these and respond to these. As the classroom is often a microcosm of the larger society, if the students are learning to recognize, work with, and draw on student differences, it is more likely that they see diversity as norm in their daily lives.

*Teachers and students’ awareness of the role of teaching methods*

Teachers are aware of how different teaching methods can develop cultural awareness and promote equality. However, sometimes this awareness is implicit and at other times it is explicit.

Some teachers referred to their teaching methods in an explicit way and expressed their awareness of the importance of these methods in terms of addressing cultural diversity. Mia explained that when teaching math, she is aware of the cultural differences of the students and gives them the space to do things in different ways. She mentioned that “there is not only one way to arrive at an answer. Multiplication all over the world, they do it differently and division as well. And I like it” (Mia). This is an example of explicit awareness of what students bring with them to the classroom. It describes how teachers can be aware of different knowledge construction and learning styles which are culturally influenced.

Also, the students expressed their awareness of the teaching methods and the relevance of the implemented teaching method was made explicit. They are aware how and why these methods are emphasised by the teachers. “So, it’s like more creativity than just memorizing things. We learn more” (Noah). In this way, there is an emphasis on getting students to think for themselves and problem solve as opposed to rote learning. Students acknowledge that
the teaching method used facilitates learning. Tim stated that, “Because those school, where you just have to copy and following order, that’s just to be in the industrial era. And for this school it’s more based on creativity which in modern era, or like now is more important” (Tim). This statement shows that students acknowledge the relevance of the implemented teaching methods like creativity and critical thinking for their future.

Although teachers referred to the teaching methods and placed an emphasis on discussions, group work and hands on activities, they often did not state explicitly how those methods support their work to respond to a culturally diverse student population. Teachers also connected the choice of teaching method to the specific context of the school, for example in terms of school size. Carolina mentioned the personalised approach in terms of working with what children bring with them to the classroom based on their previous schooling experience: “You have to work with what you get” (Carolina). She is referring to children’s existing knowledge, which they bring with them into the classroom and which she believes needs to be respected and worked with. She explains that this approach is embedded into the school ethos. It has developed because of the small size of the school and the need to differentiate due to the small student numbers and the age differences in one class.

The school was very small there are 12 students when I remember right it was one class from kindergarten to 7th grade. It was one big classroom and one small room maybe a bit longer than this. We sometimes took the kindergarten and first graders out. Otherwise they were taught in one room mostly with two teachers and everyone on its own level and ability (Carolina).

Carolina explains the approach in terms of a practical response that the school has implemented since its beginning to address the small number of students rather than to address cultural diversity.

**Challenges teachers encounter**

Despite the implementation of teaching and learning practices that respond to Banks’ dimensions of equity pedagogy and knowledge construction, teachers mentioned several challenges. Mia mentioned: “You always have to care for every individual student” (Mia). She explained that on the one hand she likes the personalised approach and finds it important, but on the other hand it can be challenging to pay attention to every single child. Teachers also pointed out that it takes more resources and that is why they often team-teach or have an assistant in their class. Andrea, a class assistant teacher confirmed that:
“So, it can be quite a lot for a teacher to try to manage everyone at the same time” (Andrea). That is why her task is to support the teachers and work with individual students.

Mia describes teaching as organic, something that is living and changing, which cannot be measured by numbers:

And we have to look at the individuals instead of the whole group. It's not a number. It's not like the end of the year I have 60% of my students to be fluent at this and this and this. It’s more like. It’s more organic I think (Mia).

She refers to seeing the child as a human with both strengths and weaknesses. In her opinion, it does not make sense to look at children as numbers and grades. It is important to look at the individuals and see how and what teachers can offer them. This is why the school does not use standardised tests to compare themselves to other international schools. Instead they use the results of tests as an internal evaluation process to see where the gaps are and what needs to be worked on. Through the personalised approach, teachers can ensure that students who arrive at ISI are able to start from where they are at and not be expected to have reached a certain benchmark. However, the challenge is when students leave again. Teachers commented that transition to school systems that do not focus on the individual child can be challenging to the student especially for those who are moving a lot from one place to another. One of the teachers, Alice, stated that, “The children who always move around, those ones they're always in transition. And this is not easy. It takes some time for the students to get used to different approaches and methods again, which can be challenging“ (Alice).

Another challenge many teachers referred to were the language differences within the school. Many materials are only available in English. Teachers have to spend much time translating or finding suitable material in Icelandic. Lea explained:

Because I'm teaching mostly in Icelandic it can be a little bit tricky. A lot of times I need to translate or make my own. I find materials and then I sort of adapt it. There are some books in Icelandic about different topics. It depends on the topic how much there is. So, here is not really like a curriculum in Icelandic which would fit for diversity (Lea).

This is a challenge for the teachers and one that is important to address. Teachers mentioned that the school struggles to foster the use of the Icelandic language inside the classrooms. Teachers should remind the children to speak Icelandic in Icelandic lessons. Although the school’s primary language of communication is English, it is important for the school to find a proper balance between English and Icelandic. This is important for students
so that they do not lose the connection to Icelandic culture, which is for most of the students the culture they live in as a permanent place. Further, the fact that English is the dominant language at the school, influences the acquisition of the students’ Icelandic skills, which can be a challenge when students transition to schools in Iceland.

5.1.2 Prejudice reduction

The dimension of prejudice reduction describes the way teachers can support students to develop more positive racial and ethnic attitudes through teaching methods and materials. Teachers should be sensitive to the fact that students come to school with prejudice towards different groups and need to use methods to support the development of positive racial attitudes.

The data that was collected for this research shows that the school is sensitive to racism and prejudice. However, this is not stated explicitly. Some teachers referred to the core values of the school—self-efficacy, creativity and respect, which help support the dimension of prejudice reduction. However, one of the leadership members explained that prejudice reduction is approached in an organic manner that is developed in the classroom. Themes like racism come up during classes and automatically become a theme. Teachers take these themes and try to build positive attitudes towards different cultures. Although I acknowledge the role of the curriculum and the role of school leadership towards prejudice reduction, my data suggests that it is more evident in the learning and teaching practices.

Teaching respect and supporting cultural acceptance

The majority of the interview participants, including leadership team members, referred to positive discipline as an important approach when working with a culturally diverse student. Positive discipline supports cultural acceptance and tolerance and therefore avoids stereotyping and racism. Alice described positive discipline as, “[…] respect for the way people speak to each other, so teachers to teachers, teachers to children, children to staff, children to each other so, it goes all the ways” (Alice). Students also felt that their teachers respected them:

Yea me, I like school because I mean you learn and you always meet friends and teachers, who care for me. There are teachers they always talk to me. My Icelandic is not as good and I like how they come to me and make me feel comfortable learning the language (Sina).

In the second focus group, two students completed each other’s sentences and agreed upon the statement from the first focus group.
I feel like our core values of the school are also very unique and is says a lot about... (Kathrin).
...how they teach us. Like they teach us with respect (Leon).

In these two statements, it is clear that teachers respect students’ culture and who they are as individuals. In order to develop respect, teachers implement class meetings and teach problem solving strategies. Teachers mentioned the wheel of choice, the class jar, and the positive time out in a time-out-corner as effective strategies. The wheel of choice and the class jar are tools to help students to deal with problems and conflicts. Commenting on these strategies, Mia stated that, “It is not to avoid conflict. But it gives children tools to deal with their own conflicts” (Mia). It shows students different ways of doing things and how to control themselves in situations of conflict. For example, on the wheel of choice there are different suggestions written down regarding what to do in a conflict situation. Based on my observation notes I witnessed an inclusive environment in which children were respectful to each other and this is what leads to less prejudice in the whole school.

Figure 10: Wheel of choice.

Lea stated that she thinks positive discipline is especially important to build up students’ resilience. She said that she believes that “resilience like self-efficacy, like not to give up is really important for kids that more often move or have to start in a new school” (Lea). She thinks that for every child this positive discipline approach is important, especially if you have to adapt to different cultures. It is important to develop self-efficacy and to know different ways of dealing with difficult situations and/or conflicts. This positive discipline...
approach, which supports a respectful and inclusive environment in the whole school, is a way to reduce prejudice amongst students.

Furthermore, teaching strategies, like cooperative learning can reduce prejudice. This shows how the dimensions of equity pedagogy and knowledge construction support the dimension of prejudice reduction. Teachers try to build up more positive racial attitudes for children through cooperative learning in which interactions support more positive racial attitudes (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Slavin, 2001). Many teachers mentioned that the cultural diversity present in their classrooms is a resource as students are able to share their knowledge and cultural experiences:

And I think by meeting more people from different cultures there will be less differences. We don’t have to- differences are beautiful. I mean it is great that everyone has its own celebrations that you have your own cultures. Yeah, we can learn from each other (Lea).

On the one hand, she makes it clear that to be different is a good thing and that we can learn from each other, and on the other hand she also says that meeting all these different cultures make us less different, because we all acknowledge the cultural diversity within us. This suggests that teachers are thinking about cultural diversity and that their practices are intentional.

To develop an inclusive school culture, it is important to draw on the cultural backgrounds of the students and refer to them in the teaching. This shows how the dimension of content integration supports prejudice reduction if it moves beyond cultural aspects such as celebrations and holidays, and the reinforcement of stereotypes.
Figure 11: Awareness of the languages that children bring with them to the classroom.
These pictures show that the teachers in the school are aware of the importance of drawing on students’ different cultural background as resources in the classroom. All teachers made clear that they refer back to the children’s culture and are trying to make them proud of where they come from. Carolina stated that she “always use their cultural diversity first of all to make them proud about wherever they come from and to never lose this connection” (Carolina). Students in both focus groups described this as a welcoming feeling, a feeling of inclusion and community. “Everyone is culturally aware. Or we are more culturally aware” (Tim). With “everyone” the student was referring to the teachers and added that the whole school is culturally aware.

5.2 The role of the curriculum in working with culturally diverse students
The second focus of my research was on the role of the curriculum to address the academic and social needs of a culturally diverse student population. In my data, I found evidence that the curriculum addresses Banks’ (2002) dimension of content integration. It is important to mention that teaching practices fall into this chapter as well and are highly interrelated with the curriculum. However, I decided to separate them to better identify how each dimension is evident within the school.

5.2.1 Content integration
Content integration describes the implementation of cultural content from a variety of different cultures in subject area to illustrate key concepts, principles, generalizations and
theories. One of the leadership members explained that the whole school curriculum supports the “developmental, academic, social, physical and emotional needs and fosters the development of skills and ability that prepare students for lifelong learning”.

Nevertheless, all of the interview participants referred explicitly to the International Primary Curriculum and the international mindedness goals in the unit planners to address the needs of the schools’ cultural diversity. The International Primary Curriculum (IPC) and the International mindedness goals support the dimension of content integration.

Supportive tools to raise teachers’ awareness of content integration

Teachers describe the IPC as a very supportive tool in responding to cultural diversity at ISI. “It’s kind of a ready curriculum” stated Carolina, “which go further than teaching the children about different cultural celebrations” (Carolina). It is taking learning into a global perspective, looking at learning content from different perspectives of the world and connecting the learning content to the home and host country. Different teachers described that there is an online year planner, where teachers can see their learning targets and fill their units in and see what subject areas are missing. It helps the teacher to assess and to plan their units and lessons. Furthermore, it provides them with suggestions, websites and connects the teachers with other teachers and classes around the world to exchange and reflect upon experiences with different IPC units. This connection to other schools around the world helps to identify different content from different cultures into your units and connect students around the globe. It is particularly useful in challenging stereotyping.

IPC is very flexible and adaptable as several teachers described it: “And you can tune it down, you can make it fit” (Carolina). She described how it comes with a structure but is still adaptable to different levels and the needs of the student body. This is very important given that the student population can change in International schools, therefore requiring a degree of adaptability and global awareness. “Within the curriculum there are sections in there, that can help reflect on international mindedness and making international connections” said Alice. The majority of my interview participants mentioned that there was a change made in their unit planner, which made it more explicit for teachers how their units are supporting international mindedness and global awareness.
This change was done due to an accreditation for international schools, which the school underwent for three years ending in the summer of 2017. Many of the teachers affirmed that they were aware of this new dimension and that they were always looking for an opportunity to make an international mindedness connection. It helps “[…], that children can relate to it and we can learn from each other and […] especially now when the world is just like connecting with everyone” (Mia). Mia points out the importance of making the children able to relate to the learning content. This helps them to understand and to process the learned content. That is why integrating aspects and themes of different cultures in every subject is important.

**Encouraging global perspective and awareness**

Teachers explained how one of the major benefits of an international curriculum like IPC is its ability to make global connections. “I think, I like about IPC, the International Primary Curriculum is that they focus on the world” (Helga). This is one aspect of the IPC that supports the dimension of content integration. The teachers choose one topic and relate the topic to the students’ home and host countries, as well as looking at learning from a global perspective. With this connection to different places, teachers make sure that diverse cultural aspects are integrated into different subjects. One of the leadership team members described that the ISI emphasises teaching about Iceland and Icelandic culture also because that is the home of the students. She said, “we are introducing it and trying to integrate within our own culture” (Barbara). While learning about Iceland and Icelandic culture, they make comparisons and connections to their cultural backgrounds and experiences. Carolina
described this with a good example from her current IPC Unit. The topic was houses and homes, where students learn about different materials, about the structure, and why these aspects vary in different places around the world. Carolina asked the students questions like: “Do they look everywhere the same? Why are the materials different? How are houses in your country? How did the house of your grandparents look?” (Carolina). This shows us how IPC facilitates cross-curricular learning, which in turn facilitates global awareness. Alice stated that, “[…] In IPC it’s the whole world and then you connect to where you are and to your reality. […] So, it’s every culture, every nature you know every country. You know, so, where does this lead us and connect us to” (Alice). This suggests that a global community feeling is developed, which is especially important while working with cultural diversity.

To make every student relate and connect to the learning content it is important to emphasise this global perspective. “When I teach IPC, I always use this to make them proud about wherever they come from and to never lose this connection” said Carolina. Making this connection to their home countries is important for the children to develop a sense of their own culture, then through knowing other cultures, it is possible to learn even more about their own culture.

The international mindedness and global awareness part of the unit planner emphasises the global perspective and awareness. Carolina described this international mindedness not only as referring to different cultures, but she also sees it as an important aspect of the children’s future towards global citizenships:

But I like this […] open mindedness thing. It's a big word and there are lots of things going on about it. But this is one of the things which 21st century children should have for the future which is really important (Carolina).

Children need this global awareness and international mindedness in order to work together on global issues.

Some teachers mentioned that in some subjects and themes the international connection is more obvious than in others. However, two teachers talked about the real-world Math project, where teachers take examples from different places of the world and let the students solve problems, calculate things which can be compared with each other. These teachers wanted to point out that even in math, international mindedness can be implemented and raise global awareness. Mia described those experiments as eye-openers for the children. She explained to me some of the examples she has taught:

Compare the price of bus tickets worldwide. And or energy bills worldwide. Waste, how much waste each country produces per capital. Or what was the last
one? Oh yeah, angles of [...] solar panels. They have to be on a certain angle to catch the most amount of sun, to be the most productive. And everywhere on our planet of course it is different. Cause if you go more north in the country, it is steeper. Or at least, it was something like measure the angles of the sun, when do you get the most energy and link it to [...] on our planet (Mia)

The majority of my interview participants stressed the importance of the unit planner and its focus on international mindedness and global awareness. With this global community feeling students can relate to the learning content and learning is more effective.

5.3 School leadership role in addressing the schools’ cultural diversity

The third aspect I investigated in my research was the school leadership role. Within the data that I collected, I found that the role of school leaders in establishing an empowered school structure and social structure was crucial. All participants described an open minded and welcoming school culture with a strong community feeling. Lea said: “And [...] the culture is definitely you know they are very accepting people from different places” (Lea). The culture welcomes people from different places and encourages the students to keep their culture. Also, the students described that the school and the whole school culture is very open-minded and welcoming the diversity. One student said: “I think the school is more colourful and open-minded. Colourful, because there is just more culture and diversity (Susanne)” Many teachers and students described the school culture as a community feeling or even as a family feeling.

5.3.1 Empowering school culture and social structure

The dimension of empowering school culture describes the social structure and organization of the school to ensure educational equality and empowerment experience for all students from diverse cultural background. “A school needs so many variables to work and to be a good school” (Helga). In order to develop a cohesive school culture and community feeling many different factors that work together are needed.

I mean I can tell you it's our student body, it's our teacher body. I can tell you it's our curriculum. And it is all those things, what have to be on there to, but it has to be more than just that. It has to be in your real ethos (Barbara).

In this statement, the school leadership points out the importance of the school ethos. Multicultural education has to be part of the curriculum and reflected in school policy. However, the most important part is that the whole school community, including teachers,
students and parents believe in the same ethos. The leadership team plays a significant role in empowering the school culture and social structure. I will focus on four identified ways:

- Benefiting from a diverse school community
- Trust and open communication
- Flexibility and teachers influence
- School layout and environment

**Benefiting from a diverse school community**

All participants pointed out that cultural diversity is not only evident in the student body, but that it is also represented in the staff. According to school leadership members there is an emphasis on hiring culturally diverse teachers and teachers with multicultural experiences. One of the leadership members also mentioned that they consciously hire non-native English-speaking teachers, because it’s their belief that English is an international language. The leadership team focuses on creating a culturally diverse teaching and staff team, because they believe that the teachers should be open minded and bring some cultural competences with them. Teachers who themselves come from another country or who have lived in another country can better retrace the needs of a culturally diverse students and their parents. By hiring culturally diverse teachers the school leadership is strengthening the cultural awareness within their school culture.

Teachers described in the interviews that this culturally diverse teacher team creates a community feeling. The teachers share common experiences and a common belief towards multiculturalism. Most of the teachers said that they were very happy with their job because of the school culture and the community feeling they experience. Andrea stated that, “it helps that we all come from different places” (Andrea). All interviewees revealed that through this diversity in their student and teacher body there is a school culture created that embraces diversity.

Another aspect of hiring culturally diverse teachers is to focus on teachers who can offer different talents and passions. The students also recognize the value of having a variety of teachers at the International School of Iceland. Lea stated that she thinks it is “great for the kids and great for the teachers. Because we tend to pick things we are passionate about or really interested in” (Lea). Another teacher mentioned that having a variety of teachers at the school has led to more content teachers and has aided in the student learning process. The school leaders stated the importance of developing positive teacher attitudes as they believed this increased the quality of teaching. The emphasis of the school leadership is to have a diverse teacher team, with different cultural and language backgrounds and different strengths and talents, so that they can learn and benefit from each other the most. This
leads to an empowered school culture, where students feel welcomed and where good quality learning can take place for all students.

Students also felt that the diversity within the school fosters mutual understanding. Sarah stated that, “because it’s an international school, we all have like different cultures. So, we understand each other more” (Sarah). Students feel more welcomed in ISI than in other schools they have been to. There were at least two students that shared their bullying experiences in Icelandic schools. They felt that they were not understood in their schools and did not like the way they were taught. The fact that the cultural diversity is more visible in the International School of Iceland in the student and teacher body connects the students to a common community.

Additionally, the leadership members see the diversity in their student, parents and teachers’ body as enriching and as a learning opportunity for everyone. Barbara expressed this sentiment when she stated that, “Through this diversity we are wealthier” (Barbara). Another member of the leadership team suggested this as well: “To connect and to try to show them we are much more the same than different and that different cultures can just enrich our lives. Really, it is a gift” (Helga). Both leadership members pointed out that this diversity is a good learning opportunity for everyone. We can learn from each other and about our own culture through this diversity.

Diversity amongst parents is also an important factor that the leadership team identifies as significant in establishing a learning environment that accommodates the needs of its students. Carolina points out that the school values its parent-teacher association as a way of supporting new parents and children, organizing events and building up a sense of community. Also, other teachers mentioned that the school emphasises school events, where the school benefits from the parents’ diversity, which this school context offers.

Nevertheless, many of the interviewed teachers mentioned that the work with parents from different cultures can be challenging. Everyone brings their own cultural beliefs, understandings, ideas, expectations and experiences with them. One of the leadership members described it as an invisible contract. Parents bring their own backgrounds with them and have a certain idea about how their children should be educated. She explains that if this invisible contract breaks, some serious problems can emerge. Her solution for this challenge is to create open and transparent communication. She said: “Sometimes we just seem very alike until we ran into the differences” (Barbara). To avoid conflicts, the other leadership member also stated that communication is very important because 95% of all problems are misunderstandings. The school tries to introduce parents to the schools’ philosophy and core values from the beginning on:
I think we are just all aware that we come from different places but then at the same time we have a common goal. It’s very, very important, when you have all these different cultures. To have a common goal. And make sure everyone knows about that and everyone is on board on that goal (Helga).

Parents, teachers, students and leadership have to work together to function well. Within this cultural diversity of parents, students, teachers and leadership members, different values are being shared. The whole school community benefits from engaging with different beliefs, values and perspectives in order to create a new culture outside of their existing cultural boundaries.

*Trust and open communication*

Trust seemed to be another important factor in ensuring that the school culture supports its diversity. One of the leadership members made it clear that she places an emphasis on motivating the teachers, keeping an eye on the bigger picture and hiring trusting professionals. Teachers mentioned that they feel that the leadership team gives them a lot of trust, freedom and autonomy. All of the teachers explained that they received freedom to try out different approaches, methods, curriculum etc.: “I as a teacher have a lot of autonomy in how and what I teach. But you know I have to reach certain learning targets and things like that but how I go about it it’s up to me to a large extent” (Lea). The leadership team encourages them to try out things and share their experience with the team. One of the leadership members mentioned that, “we do learn sometimes by doing and sometimes by making mistakes” (Helga). This positive attitude regarding mistakes is represented in the positive discipline philosophy and it is not only an approach applied to teaching, but it is also represented in the whole school culture.

Furthermore, communication and sharing concerns is emphasised during professional development meetings.

This kind of no shame no blame. And it’s not only the teacher’s responsibility for the success of a child or children. It’s all of our responsibility. I think that helps.

That shared responsibility vs. it’s your problem, figure it out mentality (Barbara).

The leadership team promotes a sense of team responsibility. They described the team as a chain, which is not stronger than the weakest link. They explained that together as a team, they can educate themselves while trying out new things, learning from mistakes, sharing experiences, communicating with each other, engaging in instructional coaching and visiting professional development courses. One of the leadership members stated that they try to maintain this teamwork and the mentality of “we work together, we will figure it out
together” (Barbara). She explained that this mentality was there from the beginning of the school. When the school was founded it was very small and experienced a number of challenges. It was necessary to work together, to be flexible and figure things out together. This mentality is still there and the leadership team is trying to maintain it with continuous communication, meetings, reflections and experience sharing. One of the leadership members also explained that the small size of the school makes it easier to maintain this mentality. She also suggested that it will be a challenge when the school starts growing. However, she believes that what the school has in its favour when working to maintain this mentality is that many teachers have been working at the school for a while. Those teachers keep the mentality alive and new teachers develop this mentality. One leadership member referred to other international schools, which are facing problems because of high turnover. She said that this does not support a community feeling as part of a school culture. Furthermore, she points out that she believes that the accreditation process, which took place over three years, has helped to keep the cultural awareness in the school culture alive.

**Flexibility and teacher influence**

The flexibility in the International School of Iceland was another theme that came up frequently in the interviews and focus groups. “It's not, not like this one road with walls on the side” (Carolina). Carolina describes further that the teachers are provided with a lot of freedom in form of how they do their jobs and freedom of trying out new things. Teachers have influence in school wide decision making and have a voice. They have influence in curriculum development, which is very important, because according to the leadership they have to make constant adjustments to the curriculum in order to fit the continuously changing student body. “So, having professional development you can adjust our curriculum to make sure that everyone can blossom” (Mia). Teachers mentioned that the curriculum is flexible and changes constantly in order to suit the changing student body. Mia noted that, “We are pretty flexible and our curriculum is always on the revision. It’s more an organic thing. And with the beginning of the year we try to include new things” (Mia). One of the leadership members sees it as a very positive aspect. She said that this constant revision keeps the school on its toes. They are always looking for a way to improve. This is an important aspect in that it suggests that the school is a living institution. Some examples include the school curriculum drawing on parts of a Spanish curriculum for its theatre and drama course, and on a Californian curriculum for arts. Teachers have influence in the curriculum and bring their experiences with them and integrate what works into the school. This is also a sign that the leadership team gives the teachers space. By giving the teachers decision making power a pleasant atmosphere is created in which the relationship between the school leaders and teachers is built on mutual trust and respect.
At ISI, half of the school is open plan, which means students are not taught in standard classrooms with walls and doors. The classes are mixed-grades, meaning that two to three grades work together in the same learning space. All participants made it clear that there are pros and cons for this way of working. On the one hand, teachers and students stated that it creates an open atmosphere and “community feeling”, where they feel closer to each other. On the other hand, it can lead to distractions and can have a negative influence on children who have difficulties focusing. Teachers said it requires flexibility and good communication between teachers to organize their classes next to each other without disturbing each other within the small space.

Students also mentioned that the open-space environment helped them to get to know each other better and build up a sense of community. As one student said: “When you come here everyone is just so close together. There is no uncomfortable feeling” (Peter). Teachers explained that the open space environment encourages teachers and students to develop open communication, trust, and a sense of security.

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In this findings chapter, I have identified aspects that facilitate the success of the International School of Iceland in creating a culturally responsive schooling experience for its students. The findings in this chapter indicate that there should be more discussions around how ISI builds on its culturally diverse school community; issues related to adaptability and flexibility; and the impact on the school context on the findings such as its history, size and specific situation. I will discuss these and how these findings contribute to studies being carried out in the Icelandic state school system in my next chapter.
6 Discussion

In this chapter, I discuss my findings in relation to the theoretical framework to inform my own teaching practice. It is important to mention that this research does not aim to provide a general insight into the work of all international Schools in Iceland or state compulsory schools and their work with immigrants. The aim is to achieve a rich and holistic knowledge of the work with cultural diversity in the International School of Iceland and to get an understanding of what works in terms of effective responses. However, as I present in this chapter, my findings can contribute to studies carried out on the capacity and responsiveness of state schools in their work with culturally diverse student populations.

First, I will focus on the key aspects of success in terms of how ISI utilizes their culturally diverse community; I will then discuss issues related to adaptability and flexibility in relation to the five dimensions presented by Banks (2002). Furthermore, this chapter discusses the factors that facilitate or constrain Banks’s dimensions, such as the school’s size, history, and visible multiculturalism. It will further identify the implications for schools that do not share these characteristics.

6.1 Building on the diverse community

Throughout the findings, it becomes clear that ISI recognizes the school’s diverse community and makes use of it. The school is benefitting from its diverse community, which is supporting the dimensions of prejudice reduction, content integration and the dimension of empowering school culture and social structure.

The dimension of prejudice reduction is not explicitly stated in the curriculum. It is more emphasised in the schools teaching and learning practices. The implemented positive discipline and cooperative learning approaches support the dimension of prejudice reduction. Furthermore, when referring to the students’ cultural background in the teaching practice, the teachers support prejudice reduction. Through teachers’ awareness of the cultural diversity and their reference to this, the teachers support an inclusive school environment, where every student feels welcomed and accepted. Teachers take care in showing the students that it is acceptable to be different and that we can learn from each other. In this way, cultural diversity is a learning opportunity for the whole school community (Banks, 2002).

The approach of referring to children’s home cultures is what the dimension of content integration is about. In other words, the dimension of content integration supports the dimension of prejudice reduction and is evident in the curriculum. The IPC and the
International mindedness and global awareness goals of the Unit planners raises awareness that teachers should be integrating content related to diverse cultures.

Furthermore, the school does not only make use of the students’ diversity, it also benefits from the parents’ diversity. The school emphasises involvement of parents inside the school. The parents’ diversity is a good learning opportunity for the whole school to develop good cultural sensitivity and open mindedness. Through the interaction with diversity, the whole school community gains intercultural competences. This supports the dimension of an empowering school culture and social structure. As described before, ISI has an exceptionally welcoming, open-minded culture with a strong community feeling. The culture welcomes people from different places and encourages students and parents to value their culture. The leadership’s task is to maintain this culture. The dimension of school culture is also supported by drawing on the diversity of the school staff. The responsibility of the school leadership team is the organisation of the staff. ISI emphasises a culturally diverse teacher team that supports this responsibility because it fosters mutual understanding based on individual and shared experiences.

To sum up, the school not only recognises the value of diversity in their students, parents and teacher’s body as enriching for the whole school culture, teaching practices and atmosphere. They also make use of it in ways that create a positive school experience for all their students.

6.2 Adaptability and flexibility

Aspects like adaptability and flexibility were represented in all three of the components that were investigated in this research. These aspects were especially evident towards the dimensions of content integration and an empowering school culture. Developing a flexible curriculum was essential in establishing proper content integration. The school culture and social structure benefitted from the flexibility and adaptability inside the school organisation and leadership.

One of the main findings was the role of IPC. This curriculum, which facilitates multicultural education, seems to have increased teacher awareness and prepared the teachers for the proper implementation of multicultural education as laid out by Banks. However, another significant characteristic of the school curriculum is its flexibility and adaptability. Teachers stated that they had significant influence on the school curriculum. The curriculum contains different parts of curricula from all over the world. Teachers also draw on their previous experiences, from countries that they have worked in. This decision-making and autonomy is an important aspect in curriculum development according to
Hargreaves & Fullan (2012). Furthermore, it promotes the professional capital of teachers, which leads to better quality teaching (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

The curriculum has to stay adaptable while working with cultural diversity (Banks, 2002). There needs to be a degree of flexibility and ongoing revisions due to the constantly changing student body. Banks (2002) also points out the importance of integrating the teachers in curriculum reforms and related decision makings. This is what ISI emphasises as well with high flexibility among the teachers. Teachers are encouraged to try out new things, stay up to date and adapt their teaching constantly and implement new, successful aspects in the curriculum. The school emphasises professional development and gives their teachers much freedom. Teachers are involved in decision making processes and school curriculum reform as well as in accreditation processes.

One aspect to discuss is the role of external evaluation. As I described in my findings, the school added a new part to their unit planner to raise awareness of international mindedness and global awareness amongst teachers. This external evaluation made the school reflect on its program and global responses. Scholars mention that external evaluation is important for schools to maintain schools’ awareness and reflection about their practices (Banks, 2002; Dimmock & Walker, 2005). Dimmock & Walker (2005), however, pointed out that it is important to take the context of the school into consideration when developing school assessments given that circumstances (country context, socio-political context) can vary considerably. ISI focuses on reflecting their teaching practices through instructional coaching within the school and taking part in accreditation processes of diverse councils and organisations. This is how the school keeps their awareness on reflection and their impact of practices alive.

6.3 The impact of ISI’s context on its success towards multicultural education

One essential lesson through this study is the recognition of the importance of the way that the five dimensions of multicultural education mutually support each other to respond to cultural diversity effectively. None of the dimensions can be implemented in isolation from the other dimensions as they are interrelated in a complex way. Some of the dimensions are more implicit in the school’s response than others. Therefore, it is important to consider the factors that influence the extent to which these dimensions are evident. To do this, I will consider the school context; its size, its history and the visible diversity at the school.
6.3.1 History and size

I found that the teachers within the school referred to many different teaching approaches, such as differentiation, personalised approach, creativity, and critical thinking as good methods when working with culturally diverse groups of students. Also, the students stated that these methods were effective and acknowledged their relevance for their future. These practices reflect aspects of equity pedagogy, knowledge construction and prejudice reduction. Furthermore, these teaching practices are supported by literature on culturally responsive pedagogies (Banks, 2002; Cohen, 1994; Freire, 1998; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

However, one key factor of the schools’ successful implementation of teaching practices towards culturally diversity is its size. As I presented in my findings, resources and materials played a significant role in effective teaching methods. Teachers stated that it was important to work to generate relevant materials to respond to the student body. ISI often works with team teaching or teacher assistants in class to meet student needs. This form of working together demands time, resources and energy (Banks & Banks, 1995). The school size at ISI facilitates this approach, as does its status as a private school. By this I refer to the fact that teachers know each other well, are used to working together, and seem to have access to finances and sufficient resources to support their teaching decisions. Therefore, the history of the school is an important consideration as regards the school’s multicultural education approach, especially in terms of assessing the extent to which their cultural diversity responses have developed as a result of its history and specific context.

The history of the school seems to have influenced and positively impacted the way in which it presents a school culture that reflects principles related to all dimensions, but in particular the dimension of an empowered school culture. The participants described an inclusive and welcoming school culture. We need to take into consideration that ISI started as a small school with five students. The school was founded in order to respond to these five students’ needs. It was the first international School in Iceland and there were no policies or regulations towards international schools. The start was challenging, and the school faced financial and organisational constraints in the first few years. However, the school managed to establish itself and continues to grow each year. To a great extent, this was influenced by its circumstances, which are constantly changing. In this sense, it is an organic development (Hopkins, 1994). Many teachers have been working for the school for many years and have gone through this process together. The school does not have high teacher turnover, as is the case in other International Schools around the world (Odland & Ruzicka, 2009). That is why the mentality among the teaching team and leadership helps to maintain a trustful and open culture with a strong community feeling.
Further, the schools’ history impacted other issues discussed in this chapter like the building on a diverse community, and flexibility and adaptability of the school. These aspects were strong findings due to the history of the school, which facilitated these aspects.

6.3.2 Visible diversity

The school’s visible diversity influences the dimension of content integration. As I described in the findings, the international School of Iceland integrates multicultural education in their content with the help of the International primary curriculum and the international mindedness and global awareness goals of their unit planners. Teachers are aware of making international connections and supporting global awareness amongst their students. Teachers try to make connections to children’s home countries and cultures. This supports a global community feeling and helps children to relate to the learning content. The explicit nature of content integration in the curriculum works well to respond to the students’ needs. It is important to note that content integration is possible because of the diversity in the school amongst students, teachers and the school community, parents included. In a context such as a school where there is greater homogeneity, as in state schools, this becomes a greater challenge because it may go unnoticed. ISI is an international school and therefore has a diverse student population that makes diversity more obvious and visible to teachers than in many state schools. However, scholars argue that also in national state schools, the diversity is high and needs to be taken into consideration (Banks, 1998; Erickson, 2010; Gay, 2000). One must bear in mind, international schools are mostly more diverse in aspects of race, ethnicity and language. But other aspects of culture like gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, religions and social class are as well highly diverse and exist in state schools (Erickson, 2010; Grant & Sleeter, 2010).

The visible diversity also has an impact on the dimension of prejudice reduction. As mentioned in my findings, there is evidence for prejudice reduction in the school, with their positive discipline approach, teaching methods, school values and culture. Regarding the positive discipline approach, which is part of the schools’ curriculum and the work of the school leadership towards an acceptance and culturally sensitive culture, one can see that all three aspects play a significant role towards prejudice reduction. However, as stated in my findings, the dimension of prejudice reduction is not explicit in the curriculum. One leadership member argued that prejudice and racism are addressed in an organic manner due to the more visible diversity. Nevertheless, studies that show an explicit statement of prejudice reduction to combat racism is important in schools (Banks, 2002; Dimmock, 2005). Many people and schools are afraid to talk about racism in an explicit way because teachers are afraid to go out of their comfort zones. Sonja Nieto (2010) argues that “one of the reasons schools are reluctant to tackle racism and discrimination is that these are disturbing
topics for those who have traditionally benefited by their race, gender and social class” (p.71). Often teachers deny racism and its effects in schools (Donaldson, 2001). However, Nieto and other scholars suggest that there is a need to address racism by making it explicit in the curriculum and in the classroom to support school practice that moves towards a racism free school environment (Donaldson, 2001; Nieto, 2010).

6.4 Implications and suggestions

The factors stated above facilitate the effective implementation of multicultural education at ISI and have implications for schools that do not share these characteristics.

As I mentioned in the literature review, the Learning Spaces for Inclusion and Social Justice Project (LSP), one of the most significant research projects on multicultural education in Iceland raised challenges, which the compulsory school system is facing. Schools experience a lack of funding, which has led to downsizing the immigration education and support programs. This has resulted in frustration amongst school leaders and concerns that they are not addressing the needs properly of the immigrant children (Ragnarsdóttir, 2015). Lack of funding makes the implementation of these culturally responsive teaching methods more difficult for Icelandic state schools. They do not have enough resources to spend as much time with each individual student – as is the case for teachers in ISI. We need to keep in mind the context of the International school as a private and small school. ISI has the financial resources to provide students with extra teaching assistants in class or to do team-teaching lessons. Additionally, ISI is still a small school, with approximately 90 students and tries to keep the class sizes as small as possible. This creates a dilemma for state schools and their need for more funding for the implementation of teacher resources, support programs and immigration education.

In comparison to the Icelandic national curriculum guide for compulsory schools, ISI has a more obvious and visible multicultural education curriculum. Although multiculturalism in schools is addressed through the six fundamental pillars in the national curriculum guides (Ministry of Education & Science and Culture, 2014), the context of state schools in terms of size, teacher turnover, finances, etc. seems to create an obstacle in terms of implementation of multicultural education. Through the explicit curriculum towards multicultural education at ISI, teachers seem to be aware and prepared to make this part of how they approach their work. Icelandic mainstream schools need to interpret and develop this aspect of the curriculum by themselves. One can argue that to provide teachers with a given curriculum has implications as well. Scholars like Hargreaves & Fullan (2012) argue that teachers should have decision making influence in curriculum development. However, the teachers at ISI referred to IPC as a supportive tool, which is flexible and adaptable. That is why I believe that
Icelandic state schools could profit from a curriculum, which supports multicultural education more explicitly. Trân (2015) describes the situation in Icelandic state schools, saying “immigrant students’ culture, language, and previous academic knowledge were resources left untapped in the host country” (p. 50). Although the principle of equality in education for all is stated in the national curriculum guides, the policy seems to support a mainstream orientation towards Icelandic cultural heritage and language (Gollifer & Trân, 2012). With an explicit multicultural curriculum, one could raise the awareness amongst teachers so that they can draw on the student’s backgrounds as resources and learning opportunities for the whole class and as well facilitate the needs of culturally diverse students. As I mentioned before, the curriculum needs to be reformed with a transformative approach, in order to be effective (Banks, 2002). It is not enough to include cultural aspects and content. The structure of the curriculum needs to be changed as well.

The school’s strong community feeling is reflected in its emphasis in dialogues and meetings, where teachers share their concerns and can ask for help. In comparison, the LSP (2015) pointed out the need for stronger cooperation between teachers and school leaders in exchanging ideas and discussing practices in Icelandic state schools. As mentioned before, one of the key factors for this strong community feeling is the history of ISI, which influenced the growing mentality in the school. However, there is strong evidence that ISI generates good cooperation through meetings, open communication, a positive mistake culture and the open space environment setting, which can be implemented in other state schools in Iceland.

Studies carried out in Iceland on teacher education describe a lack of education towards inclusion and application of culturally responsive pedagogy (Karlsdóttir, 2013). This leads to less expertise on how to address the needs of a culturally diverse student population in state schools. As Banks (2002) stated: “an effective preservice teacher education program is also essential for the successful implementation of multicultural education in schools” (p.117). One solution would be a teacher education reform informed by research. Another solution is to support teachers with professional development programs to gain knowledge of multicultural education and culturally responsive pedagogy. ISI provides their staff with professional development courses, meetings and trips. ISI is a small and private school and seems to facilitate this fundamental professional development to gain knowledge and new skills. However, both of these solutions require funding, which was mentioned to be problematic in Icelandic state schools.
7 Conclusion

Teaching experiences in diverse countries, where immigrant rates are increasing, informed my awareness of the importance of addressing the cultural diversity in schools effectively. Studies indicate that the Icelandic state schools are struggling in recognizing and addressing their constantly increasing diversity in schools (Golifer & Trân, 2012; Karlsdóttir, 2013; Ragnarsdóttir, 2015; Trân, 2015). I chose to conduct this research at the International School of Iceland to gain a rich and holistic knowledge of working with a culturally diverse student population. This research “Pulling from the world into the school”: Working with culturally diverse students in an international school setting in Iceland investigated the following questions:

How does the Icelandic International School respond to its culturally diverse student population?

To support this broad question, I divided it into three sub-questions:

a) How do teaching and learning practices respond to the culturally diverse student population?

b) How does the curriculum respond to the culturally diverse student population?

c) How does the school leadership team respond to the culturally diverse student population?

The five dimensions of Banks (2002) multicultural framework were used as a tool in the thematic analysis of the data that was collected in this study in order to find answers to the three sub-questions. The findings indicate that the International School of Iceland has managed to create a culturally responsive schooling experience for all students.

The school emphasises a wide range of teaching methods, which ensure that all students can learn. I found evidence of a personalised approach with differentiation; as well as creativity and critical thinking, which respond to literature on relevant and effective approaches for a culturally diverse student population. The teaching methods and especially the positive discipline approach of the school contribute to the dimension of prejudice reduction. With the help of the positive discipline approach and teaching practices the school emphasises respect in their whole school community, which leads to reduction of prejudice.

The curriculum, which includes the International Primary Curriculum, supports the dimension of content integration. It supports the culturally diverse student body to connect to the learning content, learn about different cultural aspects and gain global perspectives.
Furthermore, one of the findings in my study was the importance of the school leadership role towards multicultural education. It played a significant role in empowering the school culture and social structure. School leadership emphasises trust, open communication, flexibility, professional development meetings and courses and supporting the diverse school community.

The research indicated as well, that for a successful and effective multicultural education the school needs to take all five dimensions in consideration. Based on these findings, I discussed aspects like the diverse school community; and adaptability and flexibility as these aspects played a significant role throughout my findings with regard to Bank’s five dimensions.

The success of ISI can be attributed to all five dimensions being evident; some more explicitly than others. However, it is important to consider other factors such as the history of the school, the size and the visible diversity. These factors have implications for schools that do not share the same characteristics as the International School of Iceland. That is why this case study and its findings cannot be used as representative of other international schools or Icelandic state schools. However, if the given context of the school is taken into consideration when reading these findings, this study can complement other studies carried out on multicultural education in the Icelandic state school context. Hopefully, in this way, some lessons can be learned from this study to inform how other schools can work towards developing a critical multicultural education approach and meet the needs of the increasingly diverse student population. I believe it is important to raise teachers’ and school leaders’ awareness of cultural diversity within public schools. It is also important to teach them how to respond appropriately to diversity in order to ensure equal and positive schooling experiences for all students. Further, school leaders should place an emphasis on trust, open communication, professional development, strengthening the school community and giving teachers a say in school wide decisions in order to achieve an inclusive school environment.


Dear Parents,

With this letter, I am asking your permission for your child to participate in my Master research project “Pulling from the world into the school”: working with culturally diverse students. This project will be conducted at the International School of Iceland (ISI) until February 2018.

Before explaining the research project, I would like to introduce myself. My name is Jenny Laurence Pfeiffer and I am a primary school teacher from Switzerland. I am currently doing a Master in “International Studies in Education” at Háskóli Íslands. Teaching experiences in Austria, Vietnam and Switzerland raised my awareness of the role of multiculturalism in schools. In my internship at the International School of Iceland last winter, I got to know the school, teachers and some of the students. Now, I would like to investigate further and conduct my Master Thesis research at ISI about their work with culturally diverse students. My overarching question of my research project is: How does the International School of Iceland responds to its culturally diverse student population? One of the three sub questions, to this broad question is: How do students experience the teaching and learning practices at ISI?

The project in which your child has been invited to participate is expected to be an enjoyable experience. However, the decision about participation is yours. To help you in this decision, a brief description of the project is provided. Children will meet with the researcher (only myself) in groups for not more than 45 minutes. In those sessions, they will be asked questions about their school, their experiences and their views. Additionally, I will conduct a small group poster activity with each group to get the children actively involved. This group interview and activity will be recorded. All the information collected will be confidential. The way the information will be stored and processed makes it impossible for individual children to be identified. Only children who have parental permission, and who themselves agree to participate, will be involved in the study. Also, children or parents may withdraw their permission at any time during the study without penalty by indicating this decision to the researcher. There are no known or anticipated risks to participation in this study. I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and approved by Personuvernd. In addition, it has the support of the leadership team at your child’s school. However, the final decision about the participation is yours and your child’s.
I would appreciate it if you would inform your child about this study and fill out the attached permission form. I would highly appreciate to get your consent for your child to participate in my research, because I believe it will contribute to furthering our knowledge of multicultural education in Iceland. Please complete the attached permission form, whether or not you give permission for your child to participate, and return it to the class teacher by 23<sup>th</sup> of January 2018.

If you have any questions about the study, or if you would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision, please feel free to contact me, Jenny Laurence Pfeiffer at jlp2@hi.is or 761 17 97 or my faculty supervisor, Susann Elizabeth Gollifer, at seg12@hi.is.

Thank you in advance for your interest and support of this project.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Jenny Laurence Pfeiffer
19<sup>th</sup> of January 2018
Education Faculty
University of Iceland
Consent Form – Child

(Accompanies the information letter about the study)

I have read the information letter concerning the research project entitled “Pulling from the world into the school”: working with culturally diverse students conducted by Jenny Laurence Pfeiffer of the department of education at Háskóli Íslands. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and receive any additional details I wanted about the study.

I acknowledge that all information gathered on this project will be used for research purposes only and will be considered confidential. I am aware that permission may be withdrawn at any time without penalty by advising the researchers.

I realise that this project has been reviewed by and approved by Personuvernd.

If I have any questions about the study I can feel free to call or contact the researcher Jenny Laurence Pfeiffer (761 17 97, jlp2@hi.is).

☐ Yes – My child would like to participate in this study and I agree to my child’s participation in this study

☐ No – I would not like my child to participate in this study/ My child doesn’t want to participate in this study

Child’s Name _____________________________________________________

Child’s Birth Date __________________________ Gender of child ☐ Male ☐ Female

My child is currently visiting ________grade at the International School of Iceland.

Child Signature __________________________ Date ________________

Parent or Guardian Signature ______________________ Date ______________

Researcher’s Signature ________________________ Date ______________
Appendix B: Consent form for teachers and school leadership members

Consent Form – Leadership team

(Accompanies the information letter about the study)

Title/working title of the project: “Pulling from the world into the school”: working with culturally diverse students.
Research investigator: Jenny Laurence Pfeiffer

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of the above research project. This consent form is necessary to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you agree to the conditions of your participation. Please read therefore the information letter and sign this form to certify that you approve the following:

- I am voluntarily taking part in this project and I understand that I have the right to withdraw from this research at any time.
- I have read the information letter/the research proposal concerning the research project entitled “Pulling from the world into the school”: working with culturally diverse students conducted by Jenny Laurence Pfeiffer of the department of education at Háskóli Íslands. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and receive any additional details I wanted about the study.
- I acknowledge that the interview will last approximately one hour. If, however, I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.
- I agree that the interview will be recorded and a transcript will be produced.
- I acknowledge that all information gathered on this project will be used for research purposes only and will be considered confidential.
- I have been given the explicit guarantee that the researcher will not identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure.
- I acknowledge that this project has been reviewed by and approved by Personuvernd.
- I understand that I am free to contact the researcher with any questions I may have in the future- Jenny Laurence Pfeiffer (761 17 97, jlp2@hi.is).

Name of the participant

___________________________________________________

Signature of Participant _____________________________ Date ______________

Researcher’s Signature _____________________________ Date ______________
Appendix C: Interview guide for the interviews with teachers and school leadership members

Interview guide- Teachers & Leadership

Before we start- Briefing
- Provide food and drink
- Research topic and reason
- Explain what I will do with the information I gather; I destroy data after my Master Thesis
- Time
- Informed Consent - Paper
- Recording
- Explain confidentiality, anonymity and pseudonym- Inform consent and the right to withdraw from the interview at any time.

Research questions: How does the Icelandic International School respond to its culturally diverse student population?

| a) How do teachers describe their teaching and learning practices? |
| b) How do students experience the teaching and learning practices? |
| c) How does the school leadership team describe the role of the curriculum in addressing the academic and social needs of its culturally diverse student population? |

Questions

| a) How do teachers describe their teaching and learning practices? |
| c) How does the school leadership team describe the role of the curriculum in addressing the academic and social needs of its culturally diverse student population? |

Teachers’ and school leadership background
1. For how long have you been working at this international school?
2. Where did you work before?
3. Have you worked in another international school or in an international context before?
4. What were the reasons you chose to work in an international school?
5. What is different between working at ISI than in other schools or to your school you went to?

Teachers’ and school leadership understanding of terms

6. How do you understand the term “cultural diversity”?
7. How is the ISI culturally diverse?

Teaching methods and approaches (teachers)

8. How do you respond to this cultural diversity in your teaching?
9. What type of materials do you use and how do the materials address the cultural diversity of the students?
10. What are the main challenges you face in terms of working with a culturally diverse student population?
11. How does the curriculum support your learning and teaching practices?
12. Are there any other factors that you think support your response to working with the students that we have not covered? (Prompts: school location/environment/professional development etc.)

Curriculum (teachers and school leadership)

13. What role does the curriculum play in addressing the academic and social needs of your culturally diverse student population?
14. Are there any other factors that you think support the school’s response to working with a culturally diverse student population? (Prompts: school location/environment/professional development etc.)
15. What are the main challenges the school faces?

After the Interview

• Is there something you would like to bring up, mention or ask before we finish the interview?
• Thanks for your valuable time
• Interviewer: Take 10 min to write your feelings down, facial & bodily expression, tone of voice of the interviewee.

Probing questions during the interview

• Tell me about the time when….
• Give me an example of…
• Tell me more about that…
• What was it for you like when…
• Could you say something more about that?
• Can you find a more detailed description of what happened?
• Do you have further examples of this?
• What is your opinion …
• How do you feel about that?
Appendix D: Student focus group guide

Student focus group guide

Rules
I will ask students to come up with some ground rules in order to break down the typical power issues involved. Possible rules could be:

- no interrupting
- listening and respecting other people’s views
- no shouting or swearing
- allowing one person to speak at a time

b) How do students experience the teaching and learning practices?

Questions
General openers:
1. Do you like to go to school? If yes, why? If not, why not?
2. What is special about your school?
3. How is this school different to other schools that you have been to?

Pedagogical practices:
4. Are there special activities/methods/events at school that you like especially? Why do you like these?
5. What do you like about the way that your teachers work with you?
6. How do your teachers help you learn? Can you give me some examples?

Recognition of cultural diversity:
7. Do you know where your teacher(s) is/are from?
8. Does your teacher know where you are from?
9. How do you know your teacher knows that?
10. What different background do the other students in your class have? Are you all from different countries?
11. Do you know how many different nationalities you have in your class?
12. Do you know how many languages you can all speak in your class?
13. Do you like having so many different nationalities and languages in your school?

Understanding cultural diversity:
14. Have you heard the term cultural diversity? What does it mean? (Prompt: refer back to the previous questions)
15. Do you think your school is culturally diverse?
16. Do you think this is a good thing and if so why?