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The teacher's self-constructed approaches to collaborate with newcomer parents in the Norwegian elementary reception class

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In Norway, newly arrived immigrant children often start their schooling in special groups called reception classes. This study aims to examine one Norwegian reception teacher's perceptions and practices of collaborating with the children's parents. The empirical analyses are based on a qualitative approach with interviews and video observations of the teacher. Affirming earlier research about parent-teacher collaboration in Norway, the study shows that the teacher has developed her own practices of parent-teacher collaboration. Contradicting earlier research, the findings highlight that despite challenges, the teacher experiences collaboration with newcomer parents positively. This article presents activities the teacher engages in within and outside the classroom to foster mutual learning and parental involvement. In the discussion, the teacher's approaches are not judged as right or wrong, perfect or imperfect, but rather appreciated as self-constructed and self-initiated approaches to collaborating with newcomer parents. The main result is that despite challenges, if the teacher appears to be motivated and has positive/pluralistic perceptions of immigrant pupils and their parents, then s/he finds ways to collaborate with newcomer parents. This article concludes with teachers' practice recommendations for schools and some directions for future research.

KEYWORDS

immigrant parental involvement, new comer pupils' education, parent-teacher collaboration, teacher practices, new comer parents

Introduction

Parental involvement in pupils' education is important, and parent-teacher collaboration (PTC) is emphasized more in recent years as both teachers and researchers have become increasingly aware of the effect parental involvement has on children's education (Bäck, 2015). However, this factor becomes inevitable

when it comes to immigrant parents (Sibley and Brabeck, 2017) particularly newly arrived ones (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2010; Short and Boyson, 2012; Bajaj and Suresh, 2018). Thus, the introductory section of this paper presents the following two subsections.

Increased attention to parent-teacher collaboration

In recent years, parental involvement in school has been more emphasized than ever internationally and nationally (in Norway). The relationship between parents, schools, and teachers can be referred to with many terms, for example, parental involvement, parent-teacher cooperation, and partnership between schools and families (Epstein's, 2010; Willemse et al., 2016). All these terms refer to the diverse ways in which parents and teachers are involved in pupils' education. The term parent-teacher collaboration (PTC) will be used in this paper. PTC is one of the most important factors in a child's education (Bæck, 2010, 2015; Epstein, 2013, Epstein, 2018b). Due to the proven contribution of PTC to pupils' wellbeing, academic achievement, and socio-behavioral development, parents' general rights have been extended through the type of formal rights and the degree of parental authority in school differ in different countries (Bæck, 2015; Willemse et al., 2016). In Norway, parents' formal rights are stated in the Education Act (Opplæringsloven §1-1) and the national curriculum. Till 2006, only primary and lower secondary schools had to establish home-school collaboration. In 2006, home-school collaboration in upper secondary education was included for the first time. Primary and lower secondary schools are obliged to arrange two student-parent-teacher conferences each academic year. In upper secondary schools, parents have the right to at least one structured conversation with the teacher. The content of the student-parent-teacher conferences is the same for primary and secondary schools. It shall include the pupils' daily work and performance in the different subjects, and pupils' development is seen in the light of the Education Act and National Curriculum. Furthermore, in the conferences, both parents and teachers shall clarify how the school, pupil, and parents will collaborate in the development of the pupil. Increased awareness about the importance of PTC has pushed forward this topic at all levels of education. It is also clear that the responsibility to arrange for good home-school cooperation lies within the school. The Norwegian policy shows a will for PTC, and the inclusion of PTC in central policy documents makes it an important part of schools' mandate in Norway. The formal part of home-school cooperation is thus well institutionalized, and it is an established part of the school activities. Parent-teacher conferences make up the cornerstones of formalized home-school cooperation (Bæck, 2015; Faugstad and Jenssen, 2019).

Why parent-teacher collaboration in welcoming/reception classes?

Norway has a long history of minorities. With the flux of immigration in the early 70s, schools transformed into multicultural contexts. Increased immigrant populations in the educational system demanded the shift from the cultural and linguistic diversity of Indigenous and national minorities to the integration of immigrants. With the recent Ukrainian refugees, almost all municipalities in Norway have immigrants. These municipalities are responsible for providing equal education opportunities for all children. In the face of the constantly increasing number of newcomer pupils in Norwegian schools, it is important to know how PTC functions in reception classes. Migrant parents and particularly newcomer parents often struggle with challenges related to the host country's language, culture, economy, and adjusting to a new and different society. According to UNESCO, education for all aims to develop the pupil's personality, which includes respect for the language, parents, cultural identity, and values of one's own and other countries (UNICEF, 1989, §29). In Norway, despite educational efforts aimed at supporting immigrant pupils, they continue to perform poorly compared to ethnic Norwegian pupils (Rambøll, 2016). There is a consensus in research that a successful PTC has a positive effect on newcomer pupils' academic and cognitive development (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2010; Short and Boyson, 2012; Calzada et al., 2015; Bajaj et al., 2017; Sibley and Brabeck, 2017; Bajaj and Suresh, 2018). Research also shows that PTC has a positive effect on immigrant pupils' motivation, social competence, wellbeing, and quality of teaching (Lea, 2012; Trzcinska-Krol, 2020). Successful PTC also provides teachers with better insight into pupils' strengths and needs and a basis for adapting teaching to pupils' needs (Jenssen, 2012).

According to the Norwegian Education Act, §1-1, parents are mainly responsible for children's upbringing at home, and schools are responsible for children's learning. Learning in schools needs to happen in close collaboration and understanding with parents (LovDATA, 1998). The statutory guidelines are to be understood as a minimum requirement, and the individual teacher and school can choose a more comprehensive collaboration. Although the official documents set some framework factors, the same requirements can be both interpreted and perceived differently. Teachers and parents share responsibilities for collaboration, which is a prerequisite to creating a safe and good learning environment. The PTC will find its form in the astriction of different expectations, interpretations, and the teachers' ability and competency to establish a comprehensive and successful PTC. Teachers' ability and competency are one of the most important factors in successful PTC (Westergård, 2013). Most teachers do not have the required competency to work with multicultural pupils and their parents (OECD, 2021). Bæck's (2010) study,

conducted with Norwegian teachers from elementary and lower secondary schools, shows insecurity among the teachers when it comes to PTC. In another study, Bæck (2015) focused on understanding teachers' points of view about PTC, and she highlights that relating to parents be difficult, demanding, and stressful for teachers. Faugstad and Jenssen (2019) point out that Norwegian teachers, to a large extent, rely on their own experiences in developing practices for PTC. They further mention that teachers receive little support from the education system and their schools. Parent-teacher conferences are largely characterized by formalities that seem to hinder genuine collaboration. Research (e.g., Westergård, 2013; Walker and Legg, 2018; Faugstad and Jenssen, 2019) confirms that teachers are ill-prepared for PTC. Another reason for a challenging PTC with newcomer parents is teachers' perceptions about diversity and minority children and their families. Lea (2012) perceives Portuguese teachers' expectations and behavior toward immigrant parents as the main reason for "where cooperation does not function" (p. 112). According to Lea, teachers generally have the stereotypical idea that migrant parents are dysfunctional. From teachers' point of view, PTC with newcomer parents is often difficult and stressful (Sibley and Brabeck, 2017). For example, most of the parents cannot speak the host country's language. Many newcomer parents have either no formal education or are less-educated with limited marketable skills (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2010; Sibley and Brabeck, 2017; Norozi, 2019). Immigration tends to have a destabilizing effect on the family (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2010; Norozi, 2019), and parents are confronted with the simultaneous tasks of adapting to new land while still fulfilling traditionally expected familial roles.

Immigrant parents want their children to become well-educated for future prosperity in a new society (Lea, 2012; Sibley and Brabeck, 2017). At the same time immigrant parents, particularly newcomers, may be skeptical of some values in their host countries, especially regarding religion as part of their identity and culture (Barry, 2001; Vogt, 2016; Spernes, 2018). The process to acquire and develop their own identity has many facets. Even in a majority culture, there are tendencies to reject some and include other influences. This dynamism, which we may call "acculturation" is found in both national and minority cultures. However, a minority will always have identity challenges and have less power than a majority (Cummins, 2001). Cummins calls this "a process of negotiating identities" (p. 653). This is an ongoing process for immigrant pupils and families. It is important to acknowledge the culture, language, identity, and creative and intellectual resources immigrant parents bring with them (Mena, 2011; Lea, 2012). The teacher must have openness and awareness of this aspect in PTC with newcomer parents. This also demands the teacher be well acquainted with immigrant pupils and their cultural backgrounds. In Norway, reception classes are designed specifically for newcomer pupils. For

newcomer pupils, reception classes are the first contact with the host culture, school system, and socialization as Dewilde and Skrefsrud (2016) call these transition classes "contact zones" for newcomer pupils and their parents. On the other hand, parents also must be aware of which differences the school represents to accept the way forward for their children in the host society (Lea, 2012). It is paramount that we deepen our understanding of the processes that contribute to newcomer pupils' education. As the landscape of our schools continues to change, the key role of teachers (particularly those who work with newcomer pupils) in facilitating healthy and successful transitions for the immigrant population has become ever more pronounced. This article is focused on one Norwegian teacher's perceptions and practices of collaborating with newcomer parents in the reception class.

This study

This study is part of a larger qualitative classroom study of how one Norwegian teacher, Anne (pseudonym), deals with the complexity of teaching newcomer pupils in a reception class. During the data collection period, Anne's class had pupils from second to fourth grades. The 16 pupils came from Iraq, Syria, Thailand, Somalia, Ethiopia, Philippines, and Russia and spoke Arabic, Thai, Somali, Tigrinya, Filipino, and Russian. Anne, herself is a native Norwegian speaker who was born and raised in the country. She speaks Norwegian and English. One throughgoing pattern that appeared during the data collection period and consequently also in the data material was Ann's emphasis on PTC. As there is a lack of studies on teachers' collaboration with newcomer immigrant parents, this study seeks to contribute to the literature on newcomer parent involvement. The research question is:

What are the teacher's perceptions and experiences of collaborating with newcomer parents in the Norwegian elementary reception class?

This paper aims first to contribute to the literature on PTC when it comes to newly arrived immigrant pupils, and second, to offer a "thinking tool" (Gudmundsdottir, 2001) for teachers who work with immigrant pupils, especially the newly arrived ones.

Materials and methods

The study is thus situated within a qualitative tradition. Qualitative researchers using a variety of data collection methods, study phenomena in their natural settings and they are interested in how their informants make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world. In other words, the main concern is to understand the phenomenon of interest from

the informants' perspectives, which is referred to as the emic or insider's perspective (Erickson, 1986).

Approaching the field

In the process of choosing a teacher for the overall study, several criteria had to be fulfilled. First, the teacher had to have experience from more than 5 years of working with newly arrived immigrant pupils. Second, the teacher would have to be willing to let the researcher, who is the first author of this article, enter the classroom for an indeterminate but most likely long period of time. Third, the teacher would have to be willing to collaborate during the data collection period and, if needed, also after this period to talk about and discuss the data and the interpretations. Fourth, the teacher had to be willing to let the researcher use a video camera to record classroom activities and to participate in conversations that were tape-recorded and transcribed. Implicit in all this is the criterion that the teacher should like her or his work, enjoy talking about teaching, and enjoy reflecting on her or his practice. The gatekeeper (Creswell and Poth, 2018) in the process of selecting a teacher, was the headteacher at a school with reception classes. It appeared that Anne, already introduced, satisfied the above criteria. In addition, she also agreed to use the time to watch video vignettes together with the first author of this article and reflect on them. All newcomer parents also gave their consent for observations and video recordings. The study was prospectively approved by the Norwegian Center for Research Data (NSD) and considered to be in accordance with privacy protection laws.

Data collection and analysis

Data were collected over a period of one school year and in two phases. Both phases involved observations, interviews, video recordings, and informal conversations with the teacher. The analysis of this huge amount of qualitative data was inspired by Creswell and Poth's (2018) "the data analysis spiral" (p. 186). This means that the researchers were engaged in the process of moving in analytical circles rather than using a fixed-liner approach. Forming codes and categories represent the heart of data analysis in the data analysis spiral. In the loop of describing and classifying codes into themes, coding involved aggregating text and video data into small categories of information. A long list of codes emerged from the data corpus. Then, the first author started looking for the codes and patterns that can be used to develop themes. The codes and patterns were "conceptually interesting and unusual for the researcher" (Creswell and Poth, 2018, p. 193). The recurring patterns (Maxwell, 2013) that were conceptually interesting and unusual for the researchers were identified as categories and themes (Creswell and Poth, 2018). One throughgoing recurring pattern that emerged was Anne's engagement in PTC. This throughgoing pattern occurred in the

transcribed interviews as well as in the informal conversations between Anne and the first author of this study. PTC is not only about rhetoric and fine words but it also involves concrete actions. In the process of data analysis, it became obvious that the teacher in addition to the *Institutionalized Pupil-Parent-Teacher Conferences* also arranged some other self-constructed PTC activities such as *Parents' Walks*, *Mothers' Evening*, and *Parents become Teachers*. In the result part of this article, these activities including the teacher's reflections upon them are presented.

Verification

Theories on how to ensure the quality of qualitative research suggest several verification procedures and one of these is long engagement and observation in the field (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Creswell and Poth, 2018). The first author of the study satisfies this verification procedure as she was in the field for one school year. Another verification procedure is triangulation. Anne's emphasis on PTC appeared in both the observation notes, the transcribed interviews, and some of the video recordings. A third verification procedure is member checking. In member checking, the researcher solicits the research subject's view on the credibility of the findings and interpretations. This technique may be considered "the most critical technique for establishing credibility" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 314). Throughout the entire research process, the findings and analysis were discussed with Anne, and thus the study is a result of a joint intersubjective understanding that developed during the research process (Moen, 2006).

Results

The data corpus from interviews and video recordings demonstrates Anne's strategies to communicate with newcomer parents. As Anne mentions "it is a process for me to learn how to work, give, and get adequate support from parents." Reflecting on her experiences, Anne finds newcomer parents flexible and cooperative and keen to see their children do well at school. Anne sees hope in newcomer parents. Consistent with the interviews, the video observation data corpus shows that for Anne the relationship with newcomer parents is very important, as is the information the parents share with her. "I truly see them (parents) as a big help for me," states Anne. Anne sees the involvement of parents as crucial, and she experiences the encounter with newcomer parents positively.

Institutionalized pupil–parent–teacher conferences

As mentioned earlier, formal and institutionalized "Pupil-Parent-Teacher Conferences" are conducted on regular basis

twice a year. Anne considers these conversations of utmost importance. She states “these conferences are one of the ways to get to know my pupils and their parents. When parents talk about their child in his presence, it tells me a lot about their parenting.” For those parents who cannot speak Norwegian, Anne arranges interpreters for pupil–parent–teacher conferences. Yet mostly they are mother tongue teachers who become interpreters. There are several mother tongue teachers one for each language. Anne works closely with mother tongue teachers. Anne perceives them as a huge resource. Furthermore, there is an Arabic-speaking assistant in the reception class. According to Anne, having such resources is also helpful to communicate with newcomer parents who can’t speak Norwegian. For the parents who can understand Norwegian, Anne prefers to have meetings without interpreters. In addition to these two formal pupil–parent–teacher conferences per school year, Anne arranges many other meetings with the parents. When asked how Anne communicates with her parents who can’t speak Norwegian, she responds by saying that Norwegian is not an obligatory language to communicate with parents. They can speak English or their mother tongues. “We have many ways to communicate with each other. And this I learned from pupils in my class. Children in my class communicate with each other, play together. . . even they don’t have a shared language.” She further says,

Parents who have been longer in Norway become interpreters for me and help converse with other parents who can’t speak Norwegian. I have learned some essential words in the languages I have parents with, for example, Swahili, Arabic, and Farsi. . . google translate on my mobile helps sometimes. . . I also use pictures to communicate. . . gestures and body language are always helpful ways to communicate.

The data corpus exhibits that to get the best out of these formal pupil–parent–teacher conferences, Anne combines these with diverse other self-initiated and self-constructed PTC activities. According to Anne, even reading simple Norwegian text in class is encouraging for newcomer parents and their children. Such sessions place parents and their strengths at the heart of these activities making it a great moment for PTC. According to Anne, successful PTC cannot be established through solely formal pupil–parent–teacher conferences. Combination with other activities makes pupil–parent–teacher conferences successful.

Parents walks

To better connect with diverse newcomer parents, Anne arranges a “*Parents Walk*” for the whole school day. Designed by parents and pupils, the whole group walks together to the destination point, which can be a forest, library, or downtown. The forest walk is a popular activity for all ages of people and throughout the year in Norway. During the parents-led

walks, the whole group sits and eats their lunches together and discusses families’ questions, concerns and hopes for their children and the reception class. Reflecting on her experience of Parents Walks, Anne says “it is amazing to see parents in such roles. I think, owning such activities make parents feel more responsible for the whole reception class.” During winter, parents join in for ice skating and skiing. Anne considers activities like these a great source to be educated about her pupils’ backgrounds, challenges, and cultural assets. According to Anne, one of the objectives of such initiatives is also to empower parents by providing them the opportunities to plan, arrange, and lead such activities. Activities such as ice-skating and skiing are new for many parents, Anne supports parents to learn the new culture. Ice skating and skiing are part of Norwegian culture. While reflecting on one of the video vignettes, Anne states “. . . when parents have a positive experience of such Norwegian sports then they start taking interest in them, then they encourage and help their children. . . this helps both parents and their children to positively experience the new culture.” Anne gets help from mother tongue teachers and the classroom assistant for such activities. Anne appreciates that she always has one assistant with her. “Some parents, in the beginning, are skeptical for such activities due to cold, lots of snow and they are not used to of it . . . However, when they find other parents as organizers and keenly involved, it helps them to join” alludes Anne. It appears that Anne has several reasons for parent lead walks. Parents’ representatives are responsible to arrange Parents Walks in the first week of every month.

Mothers’ evening

Another regular activity organized by mothers is “*Mothers’ Evening*.” Anne arranges *Mothers’ Evening* once a month where mothers are engaged in cooking traditional food from their home countries. Having dinner together in a relaxing environment, provides an opportunity for her, according to Anne, to get to better know her pupils. They eat together and discuss different topics. Anne reflects “sometimes mothers become so engaged in a discussion that they start talking fast in their mother tongues and forget my presence. Then, I must ask for help from those mothers who can speak Norwegian.” Newcomer mothers talk about their experiences of migration, homelands, family, cultural practices, challenges in Norway, and most importantly their children. According to Anne, “I knowingly make them (mothers) feel that I am not here to judge them; rather I am interested in learning about them. And the idea that they (mothers) are not judged, helps them to be themselves and share their thoughts and experiences. This does not happen at once, . . . In the beginning, I found them (e.g., mothers) to be careful. But with time, they become open about their experiences in Norway.” Mothers’ evening activity

also serves to immerse in the home environment of the pupils. According to Anne, the purpose of having only mothers has two factors. First, Anne believes that newcomer mothers know better about their children. Second, Anne experienced mostly newcomer fathers coming to school if there is any concern even though mothers know more about their children. Anne considers that it can be due to cultural practices in homelands.

Parents become teachers

For Anne, the most cherished experience is when “*Parents become Teachers*” in her class. Elaborating on this activity, Anne explains that parents can arrange such sessions in pairs, groups, or even individually. Parents also have the choice of which day, yet most parents choose the national holidays of their countries for such sessions. According to Anne, parents can choose the topic; however, parents often (in groups or pairs) prefer to choose their country as a topic. Parents lead the session with whatever they have planned. Sometimes they show videos or just talk about their country and cultures showing some pictures, their national clothes, singing songs, playing music, and sometimes bringing traditional food. Reflecting on her role in the activity, she states “I tell them that they can ask me for help. And I help them with providing pictures (prints), arranging mother tongue teachers, helping with technology (smart board for showing videos, etc.), and providing stuff if they need to make their national food. They know it is our session and we work together. ... though I am not in the leading role.” Sometimes parents choose to present a “role play” then Anne arranges mother tongue/bilingual teachers’ support for parents. Additionally, parents read stories from their countries in their languages accompanied by a translation by their mother tongue teachers. Some parents who are learning or can read Norwegian contribute by reading Norwegian books. Anne states “I help them (parents) to read the book first with me or with the mother tongue teacher if they want. The purpose is not only to help them read a Norwegian book but also be confident and do it happily with pupils.” According to Anne, this simple activity of reading a Norwegian text is encouraging for both newcomer parents and their children. This practice has a permanent slot in every second week of Friday’s lesson plan. Video observations indicate flexibility in terms of time for this activity ranging from 45 min to one and half hours. According to the teacher, parents can be invited to their children’s educational and social activities such as listening to their children read, even when parents are non-literate and can’t speak the language. Given the increasing number of newcomers in the Norwegian education system (particularly in the current situation of Ukrainian refugees), it is both timely and necessary to address how teachers can work with and involve parents by offering an education that supports newcomer pupils’ holistic needs.

Discussion

The key precepts of Anne’s perceptions and self-constructed practices are discussed as the teacher’s pluralistic/positive perceptions of newcomer parents. The discussion also includes the tenets of Anne’s priorities and challenges regarding PTC.

The teacher’s pluralistic/positive perceptions of newcomer parents

Teachers’ personal views and beliefs on values and learning affect their practices and assessment of collaboration (Biesta et al., 2015). Teachers’ perceptions of diversity, minority pupils, and their families guide their practices and attitude. Teachers’ positive attitudes toward families, their invitations to parents, and effective communication strategies contribute to a successful collaboration (Willemse et al., 2016). If teachers are motivated and have a pluralistic ideology of diversity, then they think of minority parents as resources (Horenczyk and Tatar, 2002; Tatar and Horenczyk, 2003; Cummins, 2014; Dubbeld et al., 2017; Norozzi, 2019). Some research (Cummins, 1986; Mena, 2011; Lea, 2012) shows that even illiterate parents can support their children’s education. Regardless of family background and student achievement level, pupils do better in schools if their families are engaged in their education (Sheldon, 2019; Epstein and Boone, 2022). Positive PTC has a positive influence on pupils’ academic achievements (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2010; Nunez et al., 2015; Sibley and Brabeck, 2017), with increased thriving, wellbeing, and decreased behavioral problems (Fan and Chen, 2001; Faugstad and Jenssen, 2019). When school becomes a safe place of support for newcomer parents and their children, pupils’ trajectories can be significantly improved. The representative activities presented in this paper of newcomer parents’ involvement are a few ways in which we may meet newcomer pupils and their parents where they are, fostering integration and success as they navigate life in Norway. When parents become teachers and facilitators, this creates formal and informal avenues for reciprocal learning between parents and the teacher. This refers to Epstein’s (2010, 2018a) model for parents’ involvement. The data show that Anne implicitly supports newcomer parents in parenting by helping them to understand their children and their development. This takes place by involving parents in what Epstein calls “volunteering” activities inside and outside the classroom. Such activities help Anne to understand families and their cultures. This is a key component of pluralistic ideology (Horenczyk and Tatar, 2002; Tatar and Horenczyk, 2003; Dubbeld et al., 2017, 2019) as demonstrated by Anne in her perceptions and practices. According to Anne, making the classroom welcoming, and safe and creating reciprocity is the goal of Anne’s self-constructed practices including the

teaching sessions. PTC should be an essential component of every teacher's professional work (Bæck, 2015; Epstein, 2018b).

Newcomer parents are often considered a challenge (Lea, 2012; Sibley and Brabeck, 2017). According to Bajaj and Suresh (2018), it is well known that many newcomer parents do not speak the host language. Realizing that parents might not understand all conversations but at least the teacher involves them by being open and trying to understand what they think and experience about their children in the new context. Listening and caring appear to be significant aspects of Anne's self-constructed pedagogical orientation. Anne appears to see the positive in them as she has a pluralistic perception of newcomer pupils and their parents. For example, Anne sees newcomer parents as extraordinarily strong (psychological), and these strengths are conveyed to their children in ways that can positively affect newcomers' education through PTC. Many immigrant families demonstrate considerable resilience, which is the capacity to survive physically and psychologically in pre-migration, *trans*-migration, and post-migration (Hamilton and Moore, 2004) circumstances requiring strength and determination. Anne appreciates newcomer parents' ability to adapt to a new lifestyle. Despite their challenges and limitations, the teacher can see parents' want for their children to do well in school and she counts this as a driving source for parents' flexibility and cooperation. Anne leverages this opportunity to create a safe place of hope, trust, and achievement for her pupils through PTC, and this can influence pupils' attainment (Sibley and Brabeck, 2017; Sheldon, 2019; Epstein and Boone, 2022). The examples of PTC presented above draw from parents' knowledge and rich cultural wealth empowers newcomer parents to be resources and facilitators. Anne's practices exemplify how parents can be involved whether in reception classes or mainstream conventional classes. Bæck (2015) mentions that the focus should be on the kind of involvement that takes place in PTC. Then only PTC contributes to improving school achievements, diminishing absence, and increasing pupils' wellbeing in schools. This kind of involvement and pedagogies has the power to make education, as Freire (2000) says "become the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women . . . discover how to participate in the transformation of their world" (p. 34). Most of the newcomers' cultural norms and values emphasize family obligation, warmth and reciprocity, and strong connection with others, and this may act as a buffer against the negative effects of migration (Sibley and Brabeck, 2017). According to Sibley and Brabeck, most newcomers are more likely to live in two-parent households, which have positive effects on children's education.

Despite the language issue, it is interesting that communication between Anne and the parents becomes a form of information exchange about school programs, culture, expectations, and children's progress. Anne sees parent-teacher conferences as a significant way to strengthen PTC. Contrary, Faugstad and Jenssen (2019) mention that parent-teacher conferences are largely formalities that seem to hinder genuine

collaboration. Anne combines parent-teacher conferences with many other activities, and this might help Anne to perceive parent-teacher conferences as a form of information exchange. If only parent-teacher conferences become PTC, then it makes it what Faugstad and Jenssen call a hindrance to genuine collaboration. This paper affirms earlier research about PTC in Norway that teachers develop their own practices of PTC (Bæck, 2015; Faugstad and Jenssen, 2019). However, this research (e.g., Bæck, 2015; Faugstad and Jenssen, 2019) was conducted in mainstream Norwegian classes, while this study was undertaken in a reception class. The contradicting finding with the earlier research is that Anne is positive about PTC, while the earlier research indicate that PTC may be demanding and difficult for Norwegian teachers. This can be understood in terms of Anne's positive/pluralistic perceptions of immigrant pupils and their parents. Another aspect through which Anne's positive perceptions and experiences of PTC can be understood in the context of reception class is discussed in the following part.

Challenges and priorities

Usually, there is more focus on newcomer parents' sources of risk than their strengths. Newcomer parents are often marginalized due to their differences, lack of language skills, stereotypes, and ignorance of host culture and society (Trzcinska-Krol, 2020). However, the data show that Anne appears to be aware of the parents' strengths as well as sources of risk, and this is especially critical for PTC. Anne mentions "lack of time" as the biggest challenge in PTC. This finding affirms Bæck (2015) in Norwegian schools even though teachers acknowledge the importance of PTC, yet this part of their job is often deprioritized due to a lack of time and resources. Since Anne uses lots of time for PTC activities, she has less time for subject-content teaching. However, Anne states "once I am successful in creating a good relationship with parents, then I think it is a good investment . . . and this way it compensates in terms of time." This can be understood in reference to Epstein's (2010, 2018a) model of parents' involvement where parents are encouraged to help their children at home in their studies and other activities. However, it is not clear how much newcomer parents help their children at home since it is not part of the study. Yet, Anne admits that most of the newcomer pupils in her class are lacking behind in terms of subject content learning when compared with Norwegian pupils in mainstream classes. In reception classes, less focus on subject content teaching provides an opportunity for Anne to have more time for PTC. Yet, this leads Anne to uncertainty where she wonders if her self-constructed practices are right for the holistic education of newcomer pupils. It seems that Anne finds this demanding because she stands alone in her choices without the support of a professional community. This uncertainty and lack of professional support can be a barrier to successful PTC (Bæck, 2015; Sibley and Brabeck, 2017;

Faugstad and Jenssen, 2019). This study also confirms findings from Bæck's (2015) study that PTC appears to be a privatized part of a teacher's job in the sense that it seems to be the responsibility of the individual teacher.

Consistent with video observations, when Anne was asked how parents could contribute to their children's schooling, aspects connected to the supporting role of parents were emphasized. Anne views it as vital that parents express support and encouragement regarding their children's schoolwork. According to Anne, academic support is not the most important form of support from parents, rather general encouragement is more significant. Anne appreciates that the parents do not have opinions on teaching or pedagogical questions. This is aligned with what Bæck (2010) found that the Norwegian teachers find it annoying if parents tried to "meddle" in things that in their view were not parents' business. Another factor is the parents' education level. As Bæck mentions, Norwegian teachers who need to deal with less-educated parents do not seem to feel a need to create or maintain professionalism. On the other hand, well-educated parents seem to trigger a need among teachers to demonstrate authority. The data corpus from interviews is consistent with observations where Anne demonstrates a level of comfort with newcomer parents and does not need to maintain a certain professional distance from the parents. Anne says "most of the parents themselves are new and they look up to me not only for their children's education but also knowing about Norwegian culture and society. My every word is so important to them." This establishes the power dimension in two ways. First, teachers have a more powerful status in schools compared to parents (Bæck, 2010). Secondly, being from a host (majority) culture Anne holds an additional power status in relation to newcomer parents. When asked whether Anne has involved the parents to discuss her PTC approaches and practices, she expressed "no need for this." Acknowledging her all good intentions, Anne may appear demanding to parents by setting the standards for the PTC. This may increase pressure on newcomer parents. This leads us to ask how newcomer parents experience the encounter with such practices of PTC. What has characterized Anne's PTC practices and approaches are only Norwegian-oriented understandings. PTC can be of different forms in different countries and cultures (Spernes, 2018) and even different for different teachers in the same school (Faugstad and Jenssen, 2019). It appears that Anne involves the parents in "decision-making" to a limited extent. According to Epstein's (2010, 2018a) model of parental involvement, decision-making is a crucial part of PTC. All activities allow parents to plan, arrange, and lead the activities, yet Anne alone decides about the activity itself. For example, all the above exemplary activities shown in the data are Anne's self-constructed and self-initiated approaches based on her ideas. Yet, participation is volunteer based, for example, who will read books this month? Who will accompany the reception class for a walk? In addition, mothers can choose the theme for Mothers' Evening, etc.

According to Bæck (2010), teachers perceive well-educated parents who share the common cultural capital as wanting to engage more actively in their children's schoolwork. Well-educated parents keep an eye on the teachers and tend to question pedagogy and teaching methods. Bæck mentions that such challenges come from active, resourceful, and well-educated parents who share the common cultural capital. Bæck further emphasizes that teachers tend to attempt to distance themselves from well-educated parents through the insistence on their professionalism. On the other hand, teachers who relate to less well-educated parents are not in the same vulnerable position when it comes to authority. It is because teachers' academic superiority over these parents is unquestionable, and teachers feel that such parents do not have sufficient contact with teachers. Less-educated parents are reluctant to contact the school and the teachers are confident to protect their position. Newcomer parents do not share common cultural capital, some of them are less educated or have no formal education, yet they are considered a resource by Anne. In this respect, it is important to bear in mind that behavior is the result of complex cognitive dispositions and perceptions. The development of positive perceptions and understanding of newcomer pupils and their parents is, therefore, prerequisite for achieving positive behavioral changes (Horenczyk and Tatar, 2002; Tatar and Horenczyk, 2003; Dubbeld et al., 2017, 2019). Taking this into account, we propose that teachers' perceptions of immigrant pupils and their families should be primarily focused on positive PTC.

This study suggests that if the teacher is motivated and has positive/pluralistic perceptions of immigrant pupils, then s/he finds ways to PTC that are of utmost importance in newcomer education. Anne's intentional practices are aimed to allow greater reciprocity between the school and newcomer parents. Though one teacher can make a big difference in the lives of many pupils, yet this vital component requires consideration at all levels of education for sustainability. It certainly needs a whole school approach and support from the Norwegian education system. The emphasis in Norwegian policy on PTC is not enough, but the implementation of the policy can be improved (Lea, 2012) by providing ongoing professional support to teachers who work with immigrant pupils, particularly newcomers. PTC will surely help to better understand and meet the needs of newcomer pupils in reception schools. PTC can bring about dramatic changes in newcomers' academic progress (Bajaj and Suresh, 2018).

Conclusion

Given that newcomer pupils are a growing segment of Norwegian schools, we emphasize that PTC is of utmost importance in newcomer pupils' education. The findings of this study contradict previous studies that show most teachers

are not competent enough to work with newcomer and their parents. This study shows that if the teacher is motivated and has positive/pluralistic perceptions of newcomer pupils, she finds ways to collaborate with newcomer parents. The teacher's approaches to PTC are not referred to as right or wrong but rather appreciated as self-constructed and self-initiated. Anne's intentional practices are aimed to allow greater reciprocity between the school and the newcomer's parents. Even though we have focused on one teacher in this study, we strongly suggest a whole school approach for a sustainable better education of newcomer pupils. PTC will surely help to better understand and meet the needs of newcomers in reception schools. Though the Norwegian policy emphasizes PTC, the implementation of the policy can always be improved (Lea, 2012) by providing ongoing professional support to teachers who work with newcomer pupils (Short and Boyson, 2012; Sibley and Brabeck, 2017; Bajaj and Suresh, 2018). From the perspective embraced in this paper, ongoing professional support is explicitly suggested for reception teachers. In such professional support and other teacher education programs, a concerted effort should be made the promotion of PTC with newcomer parents. Offering valuable insights, the findings of this study must be viewed considering two limitations. First, focusing on only one reception teacher's perceptions and practices limits inferences and generalizations drawn from this study. Yet, the purpose of the study has been to inspire educators and researchers to consider the topic for further research with larger samples and in different contexts. Secondly, the study does not include parents' perceptions of and experiences with Anne's collaboration. Future studies can focus on newcomer parents' experiences of collaboration with reception teachers.

Data availability statement

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by Norwegian Social Science Data Services. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

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Author contributions

SN conducted data collection, oversaw data analysis, and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. TM contributed to the data analysis and wrote the method section of the manuscript. Both authors contributed to the manuscript revision, read, and approved the submitted version.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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