

**Language education policies in the Nordic countries and the Nordic Model
after the Refugee crisis – Quo vadis?**

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According to the United Nations High Commission there were over 60 million refugees who needed to leave their homes in 2015. Over one third of these people come from Iraq and Syria. The year of 2015 was extraordinary for the whole world including the Nordic countries. The growing amount of asylum seekers has been described in the media as “refugee crisis”, and the Nordic countries have needed to re-analyse their migration and integration policies, including language education policies regarding minors and adult newcomers.

Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden are often seen as welfare societies, representing the ideals of Nordic egalitarianism. For example, universal social and human rights regard the whole population. The Nordic welfare model is also based on a strong state, while as other institutions, like church and voluntary organisations, are included in forming of social citizenship. In addition, it is claimed, that there are fairly small differences what comes to class, income and gender. (Alestalo et al. 2009.)

This view of the Nordic welfare model, however, has been challenged by several scholars (e.g. Forsander 2004), arguing that the Nordic countries have great difficulties in opening up pathways for migrants into the labour market and into society in general. The ideologies underpinning the Nordic Model have thus been called into question. Also, on a governmental level, actions to restrict the social benefits for asylum seekers and refugees have been introduced. Yet, at the same time, national discourses in the Nordic countries emphasize

certain type of multilingualism i.e. multilingual language proficiency of the members of the host societies, which is shown in action plans, language strategies, and recruitment practices.

What does this all mean for language education in the Nordic countries? Have attitudes towards language skills changed in the Nordic countries after the growing amount of asylum seekers? What is seen as symbolic capital? Are languages (and which one) part of it? What kinds of lessons have we learned nationally? What could we learn from the other Nordic countries and on a larger scale, from other countries in the world?