**Educational Equity
in Migration Societies**

Critical Cultural Awareness
in ECEC Higher Education
Programmes

• **Basic text:** Theoretical foundations
and context

Introduction

Issues of diversity and the strong social and cultural dynamics of a globalized world determine the prevailing discourses worldwide, also in the field of education. On the one hand, processes of harmonization and universalization of educational curricula can be observed in many countries of the world; on the other hand, there is growing criticism of these developments, which calls for the inclusion of the diversity of different cultural educational milieus with their own educational values and practices. This is accompanied by the realization that the prosperous industrialized nations of the 'Global North' in particular are societies shaped by migration, dominated by a diversity and heterogeneity of educational and learning cultures whose social recognition as an equal existence is still in its infancy.

From our point of view, the great challenge for our societies is not only to accept these 'cultural differences', but to further develop our own educational system to include different cultural perspectives on education in order to create a new common basis for 'Educational Equality for a future Society for all'. Against this background, the project 'Reflecting Cultures of Education - Transnationality and Cultural Awareness in Early Childhood Education Programmes (RECOdE)' was carried out, which was partially funded by the Erasmus+ programme 'Cooperation Partnerships in Higher Education' of the European Union, represented by the DAAD, from 2022 - 2025.

The objectives of the project were the development of a set of tools that considers 'cultures of education' in the ECEC programmes of the project partners as a sustainable, overarching theme. The project had set itself four tasks: The first task was to develop a framework for reflecting on one's own organizational development at the university level, the curriculum level and the classroom level. Building on this, the second task was to develop a BA module (Project Result 2) and an MA module on cultural awareness. The MA module was tested in a Spring School (Project Result 3) with students from all project partners in 2024. The materials created in this context are part of a digital media box (Project Result 4), which also contains materials that were presented by our network partners at the multiplier events. This tool kit was supplemented with additional materials that round off the topic as a whole. This teaching material is made freely available to a broad university public as OER (www.recode-erasmus.com).

This publication contains all four project results, which are also available in digital form. The overall work is structured as follows. Project result 1 begins with the theoretical justification for the project (Part A). The focus here is on clarifying the concept of culture and what understandingof culture we take as a basis. Our considerations are based on a humanrights-oriented pedagogy and its axioms of justice, freedom and solidarity. Against this background, we explain why we see cultural awareness/cultural sensitivity as an overarching

category for the development of student competence in ECEC programmes. In Chapter 3, we present a tool for internal organizational development that can be used for programme development. In doing so, we assume organizational learning based on the principles of participation and involvement of all relevant actors at all levels (institution, curriculum, classroom). Chapter 4 contains the BA and MA modules as well as the Spring School concept. The modules and the Spring School are framed by a competence model of teaching and learning, which for us is the prerequisite for achieving professional competence. All the didactic materials (lesson plans, methods, materials) are collected and presented in Chapter 5. These materials represent a non-exhaustive collection that makes no claim to completeness but has been developed from the discourse of the project partners and the participating network partners in the course of three years of discussion and cooperation. We see the materials as a stimulus and impulse that each university status group can use to discuss and reflect on its own curriculum development work.

Against this backdrop, we are delighted with the emergence of a cooperative body of work that we hope will inspire other university members to work together internationally and understand questions of cultural awareness as an ongoing process of joint debate on our own values, attitudes and ideas, which will gradually bring us closer together at the level of higher education and lead to deeper mutual understanding.

We would like to thank all our colleagues who took part in the Multiplier Events and whose contributions and thoughts have enriched our discussions. On behalf of all of them, we would particularly like to thank the colleagues with whom we have developed closer cooperation during the project and who have become our network partners:

- Dr. Caterina Sugranyes Ernst & Dr. Montserrat Prat Moratonas,
  Blanquerna Universitat Ramon Llull Barcelona, Spain
- Karen Burvenich, Liesbet de Lepeleire & Laure Evers, Artevelde Hogeschool,
  Ghent, Belgium
- Dr. Wenckje Jongstra, Hogeschool KPZ, Zwolle, the Netherlands
- Dr. Angéla Bajzáth, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary
- Lena Knudsmark, University College South Denmark (UC SYD)

The project partner:
Dagmar Kasüschke, Karin Kämpfe & Steffen Geiger (PH SG, Germany)
Mathias Urban & Carolina Semmoloni (DCU, Ireland)
Gunnar Magnus Eidsvåg & Sara Esmaeeli (UiS, Norway)

RECOdE
Reflecting Cultures of
Education in Early Childhood

1 Critical Cultural Awareness as a task for Higher Education Programmes in ECEC

Cultural awareness presupposes reflexive engagement with the concept of culture. This is not an easy task, as this term - like almost every social science term - is an ambiguous construct that depends on explication, is sometimes highly charged politically, and is used in a controversial and sometimes ideological way, especially in everyday lives and interactions (Römhild 2014, 255f.). Also, the scientific debate in various sub-disciplines such as cultural sociology, cultural anthropology or cultural studies sketches a complex and multi-layered picture of the concept of culture rather than inviting a simple answer. Political statements try to put emphasis on the lowest common denominator as the basis for understanding and communication. For example, in the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, UNESCO describes culture as 'the totality of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional qualities that characterize a society or social group, and it includes, beyond art and literature, ways of life, ways of living together, value systems, traditions, and beliefs' (UNESCO 2013/2005). This lowest common denominator seemed reasonable but unhelpful to our endeavour. Instead, we wondered what the goal of this framework was, and so we ultimately decided not to start with a narrowing definition. Therefore, we decided rather for an explication in a broader sense that is open for extensions and additions.

In our view, the concept of culture must not only be considered as a basic anthropological condition of human existence and being, but also with a view to its scope in dominant discourses in our societies, especially against the background of political developments and the pluralization of societies. For this reason, we start from two premises:

a) Human beings are anthropologically and inescapably reliant on enculturation, which defines them as individuals and as part of a community.

b) Culture is the existential mode of expression not only of each individual human being, but also of social groups and societies.

We are culturally situated beings, and every communication is culturally contextualized by the actors involved and the socio-spatial conditions. Accordingly, we refrain from describing the content, rather trying to approach the term under the premise of everyday practicality. Communication with a culturally aware magnifying glass knows about the importance of the content and relationship aspect, about the reciprocity of cause and effect, about the ambiguity of analogue and digital modalities, and finally about the importance of symmetrical or complementary forms of expression.

1.1 Enculturation as an anthropological basic condition of being human

At birth, human beings are prepared by their learning and developmental dispositions to adapt to a wide variety of environmental conditions. This environmental openness of the newborn is dependent on symbolic and social mediation by other people, which leads to a growing into a respective own culture. This process of enculturation takes place through unnoticed socialization processes as well as through education. But it is not only through the (linguistic) mediation of symbolic systems and the participation in a communicative world that enculturation into a cultural world takes place, but already the young person not only leaves traces through his formative activity but creates himself as it were (his identity) (Cassirer, 1944, 3) and thus actively contributes to the cultural (further) development. The enculturation of the individual can thus be described as the necessity of a successful process of cultural identity.

1.2 Culture and identity as a challenge of social communities/societies

Enculturation as the necessary prerequisite for a successful process of cultural identity starts with the interplay of an existing collective cultural context and the positioning of each individual in this context. In this context, culture is not only a product of collective meaning, such as art, science or religion, but is also subject to change, transformation and also destruction processes over time. Although societies cannot be described without a concept of culture (Moebius & Quadflieg 2011), the concept of culture must not be applied to closed systems such as nations or geographical territories, as this suggests that they form a cultural unit. That this is not the case is shown by the current discourses on the effects of globalization and its fragmentations in migration societies. The topicality of the subject should not obscure the fact that European societies have always been migration societies and have been subject to cultural transformation processes. Cultural diversity appears as a societal challenge against the background of diversity of languages, values and distribution of (economic) resources. On the one hand, the concept of culture is used in various discourses as a line of difference between 'us' and 'them', with the postulated commonalities generating demarcation from others. On the other hand, these demarcations seem to be arbitrary and fluid, which is especially evidenced in the case of the transcultural identities of people growing up with different cultures (Welsch 1994).

RECOdE
Reflecting Cultures of
Education in Early Childhood

Accordingly, we move on two levels of reflection when we address the topic of cultural awareness. On the one hand, we deal with the mechanisms of social practices that frame and determine human action; on the other hand, we want to analyse and reflect on the supra-subjective organization of social systems of symbolic orders (Reckwitz 2006). In relation to universities, we not only focus on the everyday level of action of the actors, but also on the university system itself. We strive to do this, among other things, by integrating post-colonial critique. In particular, post-colonial critique exposes culture as a concept of difference formation between imagined cultures (us - them), which ultimately produces this (re)production of power relations in the first place. Impulses from the post-colonial discourse take a contrary perspective to the so-called common sense of classical social scientific debate by placing the colonizing effect of Western systems of thought at the centre of their critique (Hall 2018, Spivak 1994, Said 1978, Bhabha 1994) and contrasting it with a creolized understanding of culture and identity (Glissant 2005).

Against this background, it seemed useful and helpful to us to choose an approach to analysis that represents the intertwining of the concept of culture with processes of othering, processes of the re-production of power relations and the associated processes of the standardization of education. In order to present the task of promoting cultural awareness/sensitivity of institutional education, we had, in a second step, to create a counter-design of social heterogeneity, participation and solidarity in the system of education as the foundation of this framework. This will be outlined in the following.

1.3 Critical Cultural Awareness in the context of Human Rights

The diversity and heterogeneity of learning groups and educational cultures has long been a central topic of educational issues. Therefore, the organizational development of educational institutions is also affected by the cultural diversity in the contexts of migration. It is no longer just a matter of accepting and integrating cultural lines of difference, but also one of professionally shaping transformation processes of educational institutions in the direction of more equal opportunities and inclusion at all levels of university life. In our view, the core issue is a common basis for teaching and learning at universities with the goal of 'Educational Equality for a future Society for all'. Although the focus of this project is on Early Childhood education programmes, we believe that our considerations can be applied to other programmes as well. Likewise, we do not consider our project to be an 'island of bliss' by designing a curriculum for culturally reflexive coexistence within the narrow framework of a degree programme development, but rather we consider the challenge to be one that affects all levels of higher education. Therefore, we think of our project in a broader context. In this respect, the most important question that remains to be answered is what could be a common consensus between those people who are responsible for universities and ECEC study programmes that can be supported by all despite differing ideas about culture, education and training?

RECOdE
Reflecting Cultures of
Education in Early Childhood

Against this background, a human rights-based ECEC seems to us to be a sensible approach, not only because it represents the basic consensus of a human rights-based approach under international law, but also because it seems to be a minimal consensus between different ideas of education. This approach seems to make sense to us not only because Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights describes man as a social and cultural being who has the right to participate in the social and cultural life of a community and the right to live and experience his own cultural heritage as well as the cultural heritage of others, but also because cultural diversity is recognized as a human right and worthy of protection. (see https://www.menschenrechtserklaerung.de/kultur-3689/, accessed on 6.9.2023).

Furthermore, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, has by now become 'an indispensable point of reference for politics, the public and education in the global society' (Weyers & Köbel, 2016, p.2), so that no curriculum development can take a back seat to it. Even though it is anchored in international law, it is still not legally binding but rather has a symbolic character that relates to the relationship between the state and the individual, 'namely (to) the political self-commitment of those responsible for public policy to the realization of these human rights' (Dangl & Lindner 2022, p.46). Nevertheless, in many countries human rights have found their way into legislation, the shaping of public life and also education, so that we can assume a basic consensus here, against the background of which the topic of cultural diversity can be reflected upon and discussed. Human rights have also become a guiding issue in educational science, which has successively led to an institutional anchoring of the human rights of individuals in national education systems. Even if the right to education (Article 26, paragraph 2) is a central point of reference, it cannot be understood in isolation from other rights. Thus Lenhart (2006, p.5) distinguishes education as a human right under four aspects: The right to education, human rights education, rights in education, and the rights of the child.

The right to education includes the demand for equal opportunities for every child/person, regardless of their origin, in accessing and participating in the education system of a respective country. The prerequisites for enabling equal opportunities are both free attendance at educational institutions and an institutional anchoring of the topic of inclusion to break down barriers to participation. This also implies that equal opportunities are linked to the 'full development of the human personality', which presupposes a high-quality education system that meets the needs of heterogeneous learning groups and is linked to the concept of lifelong learning.

Human rights education addresses human rights as an educational goal. The aim is to instil in students a respect for human rights and basic human freedoms through education and teaching. According to Weyers and Köbel, this method includes knowledge, understanding, and attitudes. 'Human rights education in this sense thus includes the dimensions of education about and education for rights: human rights are the object of education here, with the aim of enabling people to respect them and to work for their realization' (ibid., p.5). The authors refer to this as the triad of learning about, learning for, and learning through, meaning that knowledge, attitude, and action levels must be linked in the learning process.

The consideration of rights in education is about pedagogical professional ethics, in which human rights are declared as a guideline for professional action. Here, the rights of both teachers and learners are to be respected. The starting point was the structural power imbalances in pedagogical relationships, which especially disregarded the rights of learners and minors. Thus, a centuries-old institutional power imbalance was questioned in principle, and only since the 1970s have learners been recognised successively as bearers of their own rights, leading to educational policy reforms (ibid., p.7), which ultimately resulted in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The rights of the child are primarily concerned with the protection, care and participation of children in decision-making processes in the educational process. In essence, it is about acting as an advocate for the 'best interests of the child'.

Rights in education and the rights of the child represent a fluid transition in this regard, as both are at their core about enabling participation of structurally dependent people. 'Learner participation is at the heart of human rights education, which aims to build human rights attitudes and agency. This is a subjective educational process that can only be stimulated from the outside. ... Participation, however, must not be made dependent on its effect, for it is an inalienable subjective right of learners' (ibid., p.10).

Thus, one can legitimately ask how a human rights pedagogy can now be transformed into childhood pedagogy courses of study without letting discourses of professional theory recede into the background, as they are a prerequisite for the professional ability of graduates. From our point of view, this question can be clarified relatively easily. On the one hand, human rights have always played an important role for educational professional ethics and, on the other hand, examples such as the declaration on the 'Ethics of Social Work' (2004) by the same international professional association (DBSH) are already available (cf. Weyers & Köbel 2016, p.8). However, we pay special attention to the line of difference 'culture' with all its contradictory interpretations, as we are convinced that it is effective in an intersectional way in the critical reflection of human rights.

In the following, we will first outline the framework of a critically culturally sensitive ECEC, guided by human rights, before presenting the different thematic topics.

1.4 CCA as a societal educational task in institutional contexts

The university is a critical institution or it is nothing, Stuart Hall

Higher education institutions, i.e., universities, are not just neutral containers of the multiple and intersecting identities of their students, staff and stakeholders. They are, as critical theorists maintain, active contributors to the formation of society. That means they are inextricably embedded in the struggle over what designates the 'good' society. Inevitably, any attempt at transforming educational institutions requires critical and purposeful positioning

of that attempt in a much wider notion of a transformed society, or, as Paulo Freire (1978) reminds us, 'it requires a political decision coherent with the plan for the society to be created, and this must be based on certain material conditions that also offer incentives for change'. Introducing critical cultural awareness into the university, is therefore a multi-faceted task. It requires commitment to internal, institutional transformation as well as positioning the university in and/or against a neoliberal discourse that equally dismisses criticality and the very idea of society. Critical theorist Henry Giroux emphasises the connection between societal and institutional degradation:

> *This loss of faith in the power of public dialogue and dissent is not unrelated to the diminished belief in higher education as central to producing critical citizens and a crucial democratic public sphere in its own right. At stake here is not only the meaning and purpose of higher education, but also civil society, politics, and the fate of democracy itself. (Giroux, 2016, p.3)*

He goes on to argue that in neoliberal contexts educational institutions are both exposed to, and active in 'a form of depoliticization' that removes 'social relations from the configurations of power the shape them' (ibid., p.4). The result, which many critical educators experience in their daily practice, is that 'it becomes difficult for young people, too often bereft of a critical education, to translate private troubles into public concerns' (ibid.).

Approached from this perspective, fostering critical cultural awareness in higher education becomes a res publica, a 'matter of concern' (Latour) for the entire polis of which the university is an institutional citizen. RECOdE recognises the complexity and urgency of the challenge. In the following section we argue that the recognition of diversity as the fundamental condition of higher education requires an anchoring in active citizenship at institutional, collective, and individual levels, and a value-orientation towards equity and social justice.

1.4.1 Diversity and processes of Othering

Postmodern social transformation processes are accompanied by an increasing pluralisation of the population. Heterogeneity can be recognised, for example, by different dimensions such as national-ethnic-cultural belonging, language(s), gender, religion, sexual orientation, disability, etc. These differences must be viewed against the backdrop of power relations. This is because differences between groups are in a hierarchised relationship to one another and provide a breeding ground for different forms of discrimination and their intersectional interconnectedness. Through the process of othering, certain groups and their members are classified as 'different' and made socially visible. These powerful processes between individuals or groups mark people as different, foreign and/or not belonging. Educational institutions and their actors cannot be understood beyond these social orders (Riegel 2022). They are inscribed in educational institutions on an organisational and conceptual level as well as on a professional and interactional level, not least because dealing with heterogeneity is one of the central fields of action of educational work.

1.4.2 Identity and belonging

Belonging can be studied from various perspectives (Antonsich 2010; Guo & Dalli 2016; Juutinen et al. 2018; Nutbrown and Clough 2009; Roffey 2013). In this context, we find it fruitful to follow the British social scientist Nira Yuval-Davis' understanding of belonging as an intersectional phenomenon (2006; 2011; 2015). Yuval-Davies distinguishes between belonging as a concept and the politics of belonging as a social and political phenomenon (2006; 2011). Negotiations and conceptual understanding are interrelated and mutually influence each other (Johannessen et al., 2018, p. 65).

Yuval-Davis uses the concept of situated intersectionality to illustrate the complexity of belonging and identity (Yuval-Davis, 2015, p. 93). This is a useful delineation to the concept of identity politics where political and social movements gather and engage people around a common narrative (Yuval-Davis, 2010, p. 266). Situated intersectionality focuses on the nuances, the transgressive and imperfect in any form of social stratification.

Yuval-Davis discusses different understandings of the concept of belonging. She explains the term using the categories: social location, identifications and emotional attachment and ethical and political values (2011, pp. 12-18). Belonging can refer to social locations. Social locations are the affiliations we attribute to each other (2010, pp. 267-268). This includes gender, nation, race, class, age, occupation, and kinship. These categories are observable because they appear in recognizable ways in different individuals. Identifications and emotional attachment are the affiliations that the individual himself highlights as the most important for his or her identity. A person may have external characteristics that place them in a social context, but they themselves may well identify more with a completely different location. In other words, belonging is not just something you can observe, it is also something you feel. Thus, two people may belong to the same group, but this affiliation may have different meanings for the two. Yuval-Davis argues that this is related to the values attributed to belonging, both by the individual himself and by the larger collective.

When Yuval-Davis uses the phrase politics of belonging, it is as a reference to a social phenomenon. She is concerned with how belongings are created and prevented, attributed, and disclaimed. Belonging takes place in processes where someone has the power to define the boundaries of the community. These limits are maintained by various forms of rejection or attribution. Such actions are influenced by which categories of social locations are used in the underlying discourse and what significance these have for the person or persons who hold the power of definition.

Yuval-Davis distinguishes between categories that have varying degrees of transparency. Examples of closed categories include ancestry, race and place of birth. More open categories are language, culture and religion, while categories based on common humanity such as human rights are open. An important question for this framework is to study which categories are used by the different parties in ECEC education.

Yuval-Davis points to the concept of transversal belonging as an alternative to the projects of belonging that characterize identity politics (2010, p. 277). Transversal belonging seeks, through solidarity and liberating values, to establish a common us across other affiliations (Yuval-Davis, 2009, p. 15).

An important point for transversal belonging is the formation of 'epistemological communities' in which different knowledge and positions are acknowledged and seen as underway or unfinished, but not invalid (2010, p. 278). Such epistemological communities can be seen as a contrast to political communities where different groups fight to gain acceptance for their views. Yuval-Davis writes: 'the only way to approach 'the truth' is through dialogue between people with different viewpoints, the greater the distance the better' (2010, p. 278).

1.4.3 (Active) citizenship, participation, and social justice

The conceptualization of citizenship in this framework is not reduced to a political definition, where the notion refers to the legal relation of human beings to a nation state that goes along with different rights and duties. Here, citizenship focuses on being an active part of a community. In a more concretized definition, active citizenship means 'being a social agent expressing opinions, making decisions, and enacting social actions as an expression of civic responsibility' (Phillips, 2011, p. 779). As an educational concept and approach, active citizenship is especially concerned with the teaching and development of moral values and democratic competences (e.g. Brownlee et al., 2017). That means, in the context of higher education, that the concept focuses on the development of own opinions, autonomy, self-determination, and responsibility. Such competences are necessary to live and teach in a globalized world as well as to create a tolerant learning environment and a cohesive society in the future.

Active Citizenship is strongly related to the concept of participation (Zepke, 2015). In general, participation can, on the one hand, mean access to higher education (e.g. Osborne, 2003). On the other hand, participation is a crucial educational concept to include perspectives of students. In this sense, it focuses on the involvement and recognition of the needs, ideas, and opinions of students in the context of all processes of decision-making (e.g. Schwanenflügel/ Walther, 2022). Teaching competences of participation therefore means considering the perspectives of students on different levels of the entire university culture: Students must play an active role on the institution level as well as in creating curricula and study courses. This holistic view of participation also considers and leads to feelings of belonging in the sense of being accepted, valued, included and encouraged by teachers as well as feeling like an important part of the university (Bergmark & Westman, 2018; Masika & Jones, 2016); or in general, belonging means an emotional attachment to the entire university (Yuval-Davis, 2011).

However, participation is always connected to power relations since different status groups come and learn together within a university. Furthermore, an active role of students, and relating thereto, structures of participation and co-determination have to be enabled by teachers and leading actors of the university. That means that non-recognition of students'

RECOdE
Reflecting Cultures of
Education in Early Childhood

perspectives can be institutionalized in university policies or professional teaching practices. Such institutional patterns can constitute 'some social actors as less than full members of society and prevents them from participation as peers' (Fraser 2000, p. 114). Therefore, it is a principle task in the context of cultural awareness to reflect structures of participation at the university in order to establish a culture of 'unrestrained discussion' (Habermas, 1970, p. 371) in the sense of equal chances to speak for all status groups.

1.4.4 Educational Equity between competences and capabilities

Regarding current discourses on educational disadvantages und the arrangement of early childhood education, at least two different perspectives can be differentiated: on the one hand, there is a debate about the results of international school assessment studies - especially shaped by educational policy - and the reformulation of this debate as a problem of the acquisition and development of competences. On the other hand, there is a debate that connects education with human rights and its realization and derives educational tasks from the dignity of human beings.

The focus of the first-mentioned debate is on the question of different requirements for participation and education in social subsystems like school or employment and how such requirements can be acquired and developed (Baumert & Maaz, 2012). In the context of early childhood education, this is related to the support of skills relevant to school and the promotion of a successful transition to primary school. Here, educational deficits and risks should be identified at an early stage, school readiness should be strengthened, and competences should be supported by educational interventions. Thereby, different and unequal learning starting points should be compensated (Hartmann et al., 2020; Hasselhorn & Kuger, 2014).

This perspective is often in the forefront but there is also critique that is based on the fact that it reflects the systemic rationality of globally networked, market-based service and communication societies. Critical perspectives also argue that the focus on the development of competences is strongly related to the social and economic usability of education and knowledge and the question of what is equitable or not (equality of what) is one-sidedly oriented towards enabling the acquisition of the dispositions necessary for successful participation in the existing educational and economic system. Thus, educational practices are understood as instrumental and strategic action. The individual is constantly challenged and asked to self-optimize (Veith, 2014). Consequently, the dispositions and resources of individuals as well as education as self-acting acquisition based on individual life situations and circumstances and, relating thereto, an unquestionable right to social participation, are less in the foreground.

This is where the perspective of the capability approach comes in. Based on a human rights-conceptualized perception of equity, the dignity of human beings is pivotal. Relating thereto is the aim to counter the instrumentalization of the individual. Against this background, this approach does not connect the reduction of educational disadvantages with the acquiring of competences, but rather it is related to enabling and empowering human beings to exercise their civil rights. Thus, the approach addresses the interaction of the skills of individuals with objective social structures and conditions. Here, the differentiation between functioning and capabilities is important (e.g. Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2000). Functions are related to actual conditions and actions (e.g. the development of personal relationships and ideas about good life) that are valuable for the person's own life. Capabilities, on the other hand, focus on the freedom to decide for or against such functions. This means capabilities are related to aspects of autonomy and self-determination.

In this sense, the capability approach relates to some aspects of the competence perspective. However, individual skills and competences are contextualized differently; they are framed on the basis of ethical principles and emancipatory claims. Against this background the approach provides a theoretical frame to teach cultural awareness. On the university level, where the conceptualizing of module handbooks and the description of competences is, by now, an international common-sense procedure, the capability approach provides a perspective that completes such an instrumental and strategical perception of education with an understanding that is based on comprehension and communication in order to consider the individual resources of all actors of an institution. Against this background, the development of our documents considers both perspectives. On the one hand, the development of modules and didactic materials cannot completely disregard the trend of a competence perspective since they would not be compatible with current thinking and practices. On the other hand, with a more communicative and comprehensive perspective, the resources and needs of students and teachers can be considered and that is especially important in order to teach cultural awareness.

1.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the framework presented here for critically culturally sensitive Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), guided by human rights, underscores the complex nature of cultural awareness. Cultivating such awareness involves reflexive engagement with the concept of culture, understanding it not only as an anthropological condition but also as a dynamic expression of individual and societal identities. Furthermore, embedding critical cultural awareness within higher education institutions necessitates a transformative approach that addresses broader societal issues. Universities, as critical institutions, play a vital role in shaping society and must actively engage in promoting social justice and equity. This involves not only internal institutional transformation but also challenging neoliberal discourses that undermine criticality and democracy. The recognition of diversity as fundamental to higher education underscores the importance of active citizenship and participation.

RECOdE
Reflecting Cultures of
Education in Early Childhood

References

Antonsich, M. (2010). Searching for belonging – An analyticalframework. Geography Compass, 4, 655–659.

Baumert, J. & Maaz, Kai (2012). Migration und Bildung in Deutschland. Die deutsche Schule, 104(3), 279-302.

Bergmark, U. & Westman, S. (2018). Student participation within teacher education: emphasising democratic values, engagement and learning for a future profession. Higher Education Research & Development, 37(7), 1352-1365.

Bhabha, H. K. (1994). The Location of Culture. New York: Routledge.

Brownlee, J.L., Johansson, E., Walker, S., & Scholes, L. (2017). Teaching for active citizenship. Moral values and personal epistemology in early years classrooms. London & New York: Routledge.

Cassirer, E. (1944). An essay on Man. An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Dangl, O. & Lindner, D. (2022). Wie Menschenrechts-bildung gelingt. Theorie und Praxis der Menschen-rechtspädagogik. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.

Fraser, N. (2000). Rethinking Recognition. New Left Review, 3, 107-120

Freire, P. (1978). Pedagogy in process: the letters to Guinea-Bissau. New York: Seabury Press.

Giroux, H. A. (2016). Writing the Public Good Back into Education: Reclaiming the Role of the Public Intellectual. In J. R. Di Leo & P. Hitchcock (Eds.), The New Public Intellectual: Politics, Theory, and the Public Sphere (pp. 3-28). New York: Palgrave Macmillan US.

Glissant, E. (2005). Kultur und Identität. Ansätze zu einer Poetik der Vielheit. Heidelberg: Wunderhorn (Culture and Identity. Approaches to a Poetics of Diversity)

Guo, K., & Dalli, C. (2016). Belonging as a force of agency: An exploration of immigrant children's everyday life in early childhood settings. Global Studies of Childhoods, 6, 254–267.

Habermas, J. (1970). Towards a Theory of Communicative Competence. Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philisophie, 13(1-4), 360-375.

Hall, S. (2018): Das verhängnisvolle Dreieck. Rasse, Ethnie, Nation. Berlin: Suhrkamp

Hartmann, U., Ehm, J.-H., Höltge, L., & Hasselhorn, M. (2020). Unter welchen Bedingungen gelingt die Implementation eines Modellvorhabens zur Förderung der Schulbereitschaft in Kindertagesstätten. Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft, 23(1), 61-82.

Hasselhorn, M. & Kuger, S. (2014). Wirksamkeit schulrelevanter Förderung in Kindertagesstätten. Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft, 17(2), 299-314.

Hall, S. (2018): Das verhängnisvolle Dreieck. Rasse, Ethnie, Nation. Berlin: Suhrkamp

Johannessen, L.E.F., Rafoss, T.W. & Rasmussen, E.B. (2018). Hvordan bruke teori? Nyttige verktøy i kvalitativ analyse. Universitetsforlaget.

Juutinen, J., Puroila, A. M., & Johansson E. (2018). 'There is no room for you!' The politics of belonging in children's play situations. In E. Johansson Emilson, A. and Puroila, A.M. (Eds.), Values in early childhood settings. (pp. 249-264). Springer International Publishing.

Lenhart, V. (2006). Pädagogik der Menschenrechte. 2., überarbeitete und aktualisierte Auflage. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Masika, R. & Jones, J. (2016). Building student belonging and engagement: insights into higher education students' experiences of participating and learning together. Teaching in Higher Education, 21(2), 138-150.

RECOdE
Reflecting Cultures of
Education in Early Childhood

Moebius, S. & Quadflieg, D. (Eds.) (2011). Kulturtheorien der Gegenwart – Heterotopien der Theorie. In: S., Moebius & D., Quadflieg (Eds.). Kultur. Theorien der Gegenwart (pp. 11-18). Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Nussbaum, M. (2000). Women and Human Development. The Capabilities Approach. Cambridge: University press.

Nutbrown, C. M., & Clough, P. (2009). Citizenship and inclusion in the early years: Understanding and responding to children's perspectives on 'belonging'. International Journal of Early Years Education, 17, 191–206.

Phillips, L. (2011). Possibilities and Quandaries for Young Children's Active Citizenship. Early Education and Development, 22(5), 778–794.

Reckwitz, A. (2006): Die Transformation der Kulturtheorien. Zur Entwicklung eines Theorieprogramms. Weilerswist: Velbrück Wissenschaft.

RECOdE (2025a): Educational Equity in Migration Societies. Critical Cultural Awareness in ECEC Higher Education Programmes. Basic text: Theoretical foundations and context of justification. https://recode-erasmus.com/

RECOdE (2025b): Educational Equity in Migration Societies. Critical Cultural Awareness in ECEC Higher Education Programmes.. Part A: a framework for university development. https://recode-erasmus.com/

RECOdE (2025c): Educational Equity in Migration Societies. Critical Cultural Awareness in ECEC Higher Education Programmes. Part B: Module für Bachelor Programmes. https://recode-erasmus.com/

RECOdE (2025d): Educational Equity in Migration Societies. Critical Cultural Awareness in ECEC Higher Education Programmes. Part C: Module for Master Programmes. https://recode-erasmus.com/

RECOdE (2025e). Educational Equity in Migration Societies. Critical Cultural Awareness in ECEC Higher Education Programmes. Part D: „Enhancing Critical Cultural Awareness in ECEC Higher Education Institution." - toolkit. https://recode-erasmus.com/

Riegel, C. (2022): Differenzverhältnisse in pädagogischen Räumen. In Y. Akbaba et al. (Eds.). Lehren und Lernen in Differenzverhältnissen. Pädagogische Professonalität und Migrationsdiskurse. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag.

Römhild, R. (2014). Diversität?! Postethnische Perspektiven für eine reflexive Migrationsforschung. In B. Nieswand und H. Drotbohm (Hrsg.), Kultur, Gesellschaft, Migration. Studien zur Migrations- und Integrationspolitik. Wiesbaden: Springer

Roffey, S. (2013). Inclusive and exclusive belonging – The impact on individual and community well-being. Educational & Child Psychology, 30, 38–49.

Said, E. W. (1978): Orientalism. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.

Schwanenflügel, L.v. & Walther, A. (2022). Learning to participate in and through conflict. InZulmir Bečević & Björn Anersson (eds.), Youth Participation and Learning. Critical Perspectives on Citizenship Practices in Europe. Cham: Springer, pp. 37-54.

Sen, A. (1999). Development as Freedom. Oxford: University Press.

RECOdE
Reflecting Cultures of
Education in Early Childhood

Spivak, G. C. (1994). Can the Subaltern Speak? In: P., Williams & L., Chrisman

(Eds.), Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory. A Reader (pp. 66-111). New York: Columbia University Press.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Ed.) (2013). Basic Texts of the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. Paris: UNESCO, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000225383

Veith, H. (2014). Kompetenz – Anmerkungen zu einem bildungstheoretischen Paradigmenwechsel [Comptence – Comments to an educational theoretical change of paradigm]. In S. Faas, P. Bauer, & R. Treptow (Eds.), Kompetenz, Performanz und soziale Teilhabe [Competence, performance and social participation] (pp. 51-65). Wiesbaden: Springer.

Welsch, Wolfgang (1994). Transkulturalität – Die veränderte Verfassung heutiger Kulturen. In Via Regia. Blätter für internationale kulturelle Kommunikation, H. 20

Yuval-Davies, N. (2006). Belonging and the Politics of Belonging. Patterns of prejudice 40, pp. 197-214.

Weyers, St. & Köbel, N. (2016). Bildung und Menschenrechte. Grundlagen, Herausforderungen, Perspektiven. In dies. (Hrsg.). Bildung und Menschenrechte. Interdisziplinäre Beiträge zur Menschenrechtsbildung. Springer VS, DOI 10.1007/978-3-658-11687-3

Yuval-Davies, N. (2006). Belonging and the Politics of Belonging. Patterns of prejudice 40, pp. 197-214.

Yuval-Davis, N. (2009) Women, Globalization and Contemporary Politics of Belonging, Gender, Technology and Development, 13:1, 1-19, DOI: 10.1177/097185240901300101

Yuval-Davis, N. (2010) Theorizing identity: beyond the 'us' and 'them' dichotomy, Patterns of Prejudice, 44:3, 261-280, DOI: 10.1080/0031322X.2010.489736

Yuval-Davies, N. (2011). The Politics of Belonging: Intersectional contestations. Sage.

Yuval-Davies, N. (2015). Situated intersectionality and social inequality. Raisons politiques 58, pp. 91-100.

Zepke, N. (2015). Student engagement research: thinking beyond the mainstream. Higher Education Research & Development, 34(6), 1311-1323.

RECOdE
Reflecting Cultures of
Education in Early Childhood