

# To Sider af Samme Sag: A Comparative Study of Teacher Education Programs in California and Denmark

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## **Abstract**

This study explores the experience of teacher candidates and instructors in teacher education programs in California and Denmark. With both California and Denmark grappling with the way their current education system is or is not meeting the needs of the current population, this comparative study aims to better understand the dichotomy present. Through a set of interviews, the study focuses on the concepts of social responsibility and culturally sustaining pedagogies and how stakeholders experience these in their programs. Results show that Danish participants experience a more defined purpose and common understanding of the role of schooling in Danish society, and their role in it as teachers. Californian participants expressed a desire to reshape the state's education system to be more racially and socially-just, but with varying ideas of how to achieve this. Implications of the comparison are discussed.

**Keywords:** social responsibility, culturally sustaining pedagogies, interview, comparative

## **Introduction**

This study aims to examine the role teacher education plays in the larger conversation around the purpose of education in a modern, multicultural democracy specifically in California and Denmark. As more democracies have constituencies from many different cultural, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds, the role of societal institutions in these democracies must shift in response to the changing demographics and experiences of its members. Institutions, such as public education, can respond in multiple ways. Perhaps

they focus on assimilating any newcomers into the existing cultural understanding and power structure, or the institution may position itself as promoting change, integration, or restructuring the way a society's constituents relate to each other and their broader society.

## **Background**

### ***Why California & Denmark?***

The scale of California's public school system rivals that of many independent countries. With over 6 million students enrolled in over 1,000 public districts (California Department of Education [CDE], 2021), California has a vested interest in ensuring that the teacher education pipeline is preparing a workforce for a wide range of students across the state's many diverse communities. Currently, this is not the case in California's system. California's policymakers, educators, and the general public are demanding a more equitable education system, a societal shift that has been occurring for several years and has become more urgent after the Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests that swept the US after George Floyd's May 2020 murder. While there are pockets of this work happening in teacher education programs (TEPs) in California, state-level change is often impeded by the fragmented nature of the system itself, as teacher education like many other US states, is not centralized or coordinated at the state level so consists of a large number of programs provided by public and private universities, local school districts and even non-profit organizations.

Throughout this study, I treat California as being a comparable unit to Denmark. California is a constituent member of the US, but it is not a sovereign nation. However, due to the federal structure of the US, many responsibilities fall to the state governments, such as most aspects of the education system. In the US, only the federal government grants the status of citizenship, but individual states do have a concept of 'residency.' While it would be incorrect to refer to oneself as a 'citizen' of California (or any other US state) or to describe one's 'nationality' as Californian, we can use the term 'resident.'

Denmark has invested heavily in a centralized state that is able to affect change across all TEPs and schools when necessary. Yet, Denmark is currently undergoing a demographic shift, largely driven by several decades of immigration and refugee resettlement, and now moving into second and third generation Danes with non-European backgrounds. Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon are the largest home countries of immigrants coming to Denmark from outside the EU (Statistics Denmark, 2021), and the most recent wave of immigration has caused a wide range of reactions from Danish citizens, media, and policymakers (Jaffe-Walter, 2020).

These responses are like what the US has experienced in recent decades, including increases in xenophobia and islamophobia, hardline immigration policies, and a general rightward, nationalistic shift in public discourse. Disparities are also playing out in the school system, such as in the 2020 report *Education Policy Outlook in Denmark* which highlights higher gaps in performance between ethnic Danes and immigrant-born students than the OECD average as well as foreign-born students in Denmark being 5.5 percentage points more likely to be not enrolled in any postsecondary education or training than their Denmark-born peers (OECD, 2020).

### ***Two Sides of the Same Coin: To Sider af Samme Sag***

When it comes to their respective education systems, and the way teacher education is intertwined, I argue that California and Denmark have much more in common than a surface description presents and are uniquely suited to learn from each other. While both locations are shaped by individual circumstances, they are currently focused on two sides of the same coin when it comes to the state of teacher education.

A long tradition of an education system that intertwines schooling with instruction on a specific interpretation of what it means to be Danish is clashing with the reality of who is present in classrooms across Denmark today. However, Danish schools and teacher education programs have, up to this point, largely emphasized policies of assimilation for non-ethnic Danes, intensifying societal discord and strife in a nation that prides itself on its democratic institutions and egalitarian structure (Jaffe-Walter, 2020).

In California, demand both inside and out of the education system is pushing for approaches that will result in more equitable outcomes for the state's children. Yet, a combination of US citizens' emphasis on local control, national political polarization, and disconnected organizations within California's education system make any statewide responses difficult.

With this context in mind, I aim to better understand the way a society's teacher education system relates to the larger purpose of education and the way that system might be able to change and adapt with, as well as shape, its broader society. Therefore, this study asks the following research questions:

1. What experiences do candidates and instructors have in their TEP that relate to a broader sense of social responsibility? That is, how is the TEP related to promoting or influencing societal values?
2. What experiences do candidates and instructors have in their TEP that relate to preparing teachers to use culturally sustaining pedagogies ("CSP") in their future classrooms?

## **Areas of Interest**

The above research questions identify two areas of interest in this study: program structure, social responsibility, and CSP.

### ***Social Responsibility***

The term social responsibility refers to the broader purpose and goals of teacher education. The ways teacher education, and schooling more broadly, serve a purpose in society influence the way teacher educators and teacher candidates develop their understanding of their roles. This understanding of the purpose of teacher education has a reciprocal relationship with larger cultural values: if schools are seen as institutions to promote a cultural identity, democratic values, national allegiance, or strong competitors in the workplace, then schools and TEPs may operationalize these values within their members (Green et al., 2006). Conversely, if schools' primary purpose is to prepare students for economic productivity, teachers and teacher education will primarily be geared toward achievement of the skills seen as necessary for these outcomes.

In the US context, thinkers like John Dewey are still widely discussed in TEPs and education circles. Yet, this focus on democracy and the way education influences individuals to function as citizens may not be readily apparent in a system where the focus of the last two decades has largely been on the measurement of academic achievement and accountability. In Denmark, conversations around the purpose of schooling are largely influenced by German philosophies of past centuries, or by thinkers such as contemporary Dutch researcher Gert Biesta and the ideas of education to achieve self-actualization in service of broader society. Yet, Denmark is also not immune to the pressures of accountability and international comparison, as evidenced by a swift reaction within the country to improve its performance on international benchmarks (Dolin & Krough, 2010).

The deeper social motivations behind education matter as systems are set up to reproduce themselves. The purpose of reproducing social systems, particularly education, has been discussed in many ways before, especially in regard to the tension between the value assigned to the priorities a system reproduces and the ability of societies to change over time (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Broadfoot, 2017). Critiques of social reproduction have also long been the focus of Marxist analyses of both economic and social systems (Perlman, 1985). In this study, I argue that the specific social context being discussed can be described as a desire in California to disrupt the current system and up for debate is the mechanics, whereas in Denmark the debate is whether the system needs to be disrupted. I acknowledge that there are many individual Californians and Danes who have differing views on both societies, but in the teacher education field, this is the type of debate playing out in TEPs, teacher education policy, and in academic

research. Understanding the motivations behind why people participate in teacher education is an important prerequisite in learning from another system: if the goal is to apply some change to our own system, we need to understand the intent of our peers.

### *Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies*

The second concept, culturally sustaining pedagogies (CSP), refers to teaching practices that promote multicultural understandings of students' strengths, and seek to include multiple linguistic, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds as equal components in schools (Paris & Alim, 2017). CSP seeks to be direct responses against the practices that center whiteness and past legacies of colonialism present in many Western schools.

This approach to pedagogy has its roots in the work of Gloria Ladson-Billings' introduction of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) from the early 1990s (1995). Ladson-Billings describes the importance of leveraging a child's own experiences and background to help them connect with the curriculum (Ladson-Billings, 1995). CRP also implies that what is being taught should have meaning and value to the students who are in the room, exemplified in phrases from Ladson-Billings such as "We teach what we value," (Paris & Alim, 2017). CSP builds on these ideas and takes the next step of affirming that not only should education be relevant to the students in the room, but that our schools should also actively work to include their experiences not to connect with a mainstream idea of what is valuable, but rather to sustain students' experiences so that multiple cultures and communities can thrive.

CSP is at the forefront of many educators' minds in California. I bring it up in this comparative study due to the rapidly changing demographics in Denmark as well. American schooling was built upon the idea of elevating one cultural understanding as being superior, and minoritized groups were subjugated through our system's design. Each phase of education history has been in relation to this original story: from desegregation and integrated schooling movements to tribal schools to modern discussions around the achievement gap. Unfortunately, these inequities persist in today's system, and are more complicated than simply describing a gap in achievement between ethnic groups (Ladson-Billings, 2006), supporting the idea that this is more nuanced than selecting between the most applicable instructional strategies, but rather requires a more substantial paradigm shift such as presented in a CSP approach.

In Denmark, there are also inequities between different social groups, largely along ethnic lines. The school system in Denmark proper (the peninsula and islands directly in Europe) largely consisted of ethnic Danes until the 1970s. As previously stated, immigration waves from other countries have regular occurred since then, especially in the 2010s, and many of these students from immigrant families are not reaping the same successes from the Danish education system as their peers. As Denmark pursues a

multicultural, multi-ethnic democracy, I argue that CSP is a concept relevant for this moment in time, and I assume it will be interpreted and adapted to a Danish lens.

## **Data & Methods**

To investigate the way TEPs in California and Denmark interact with the concepts of social responsibility and CSP, this study consists of interviews with stakeholders in TEPs in both Denmark and California. In total, I conducted 14 interviews with teacher candidates at different stages of their program, teacher educators (who directly work with or instruct teacher candidates) as well as TEP administrators. Eight of these interviews were with participants from two TEPs in Denmark, and six were from a single TEP in California. A fuller description of participants is provided in Table 1.

### ***Interview Construction***

The interview protocol consisted of three modules. Each module covered a specific area of interest: program structure (not the focus of this manuscript), social responsibility, and CSP. This interview protocol was constructed using a tree and branch method (Rubin & Rubin, 2005), where the main questions are predetermined, but during the interview the participant was able to steer the conversation while the interviewer asked follow-up questions in the moment as necessary to better understand their perspective and how it related to the concept. The goal was to gain insight and trust with the interviewee, and details were encouraged. The interviews occurred over Zoom due to COVID-19 restrictions in place at the time: Winter and Spring terms of 2021.

### ***Description of TEPs***

The California participants all came from a TEP situated in a public research university, which will be referred to as Public University TEP. This TEP has a structure like traditional programs in California: teacher candidates enter the program after they have already obtained a bachelor's degree, and over the course of approximately 12 months they earn a preliminary teaching credential in their desired discipline. Public University's TEP trains approximately 100 new teachers each year and is in a middle-sized California city, approximately 1 hour by car from a major metropolitan area.

The Danish participants came from two TEPs and one university in Denmark. The TEPs will be referred to as By TEP and Cimbric TEP. Both are typical of Danish TEPs: they are located within a *professionhøjskole* and teacher candidates complete their entire post-secondary education in the program over the course of four years. The single participant not placed at a TEP is an instructor with a master's level program at By University but works closely with teacher education. The main campuses of By and

Cimbric are in Danish cities and offer programs at satellite campuses meant to serve their greater geographic regions. All interviews, even with Danish participants, were conducted in English, as agreed to by the participants.

**Table 1**

*Overview of Interview Participants*

| Participant ID | Nationality/<br>Residency | Location              | Role                          |
|----------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1              | Danish                    | By TEP                | 3rd Year Candidate            |
| 2              | Danish                    | By TEP                | 1st Year Candidate            |
| 3              | Danish                    | By TEP                | 4th Year Candidate            |
| 4              | Danish                    | By TEP                | Instructor                    |
| 5              | Danish                    | By TEP                | Instructor                    |
| 6              | Danish                    | By University         | Program Coordinator           |
| 7              | Danish                    | Cimbric TEP           | Program Coordinator           |
| 8              | Danish                    | Cimbric TEP           | Instructor                    |
| 9              | Californian               | Public University TEP | Instructor                    |
| 10             | Californian               | Public University TEP | Instructor                    |
| 11             | Californian               | Public University TEP | Instructor                    |
| 12             | Californian               | Public University TEP | Teacher Candidate             |
| 13             | Californian               | Public University TEP | Teacher Candidate             |
| 14             | Californian               | Public University TEP | Instructor/Program Leadership |

***Content Analysis of Interviews***

For this analysis, I employed a qualitative content analysis of the interview transcripts. Qualitative content analysis is a term that refers to the systematic analysis of qualitative artifacts, in this case the

transcripts of interviews, and aims to identify and categorize the prevalence of themes (Schreier, 2012). The goal was to create a corpus of individual segments of meaning that could then be analyzed and sorted using other quantitative methods. While I entered this analysis with some idea of the general themes I searched for (social responsibility and CSP), qualitative content analysis allowed me to adapt these structures based on the responses from participants, since they are the people engaged in teacher education.

Given the high dependency of my research questions on social, political, and cultural context, a qualitative approach such as this allowed for preservation of the nuance of participants’ experiences and responses. Fairbrother (2007) also described the value of a qualitative approach when working outside of one’s own cultural context to both allow a researcher to be aware of their own bias and assumptions, and for these assumptions to be presented in the findings. My own experience and training as an educator and researcher in a Californian/American context were important to consider as I presented interpretation of the interviews, especially those that occurred in a foreign (to me) context.

**Results**

Before analyzing, I predefined a starting set of categories aligned with the two focus concepts. I then predefined three degrees of the presence of that concept. The definitions are shown in Table 2. After transcription, I segmented the interviews into individual units of meaning and categorized them according to the definitions in Table 2.

The segments may consist of individual words, phrases, full sentences, or even multiple sentences. Each individual segment is the unit of analysis that conveys meaning but is also where interpretation must take place. Using the above rubric as a guide, I identified segments of unique meaning, and then chose a category in which to place them. In total, I coded 131 segmented units in these two categories from the 14 interviews.

**Table 2**

*Interview Coding Categories*

| Subcategory                                  | Description                                                                                                                                                |
|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| High Social Responsibility View of Schooling | Program emphasizes school system as an important mechanism to shaping other parts of society and has clear implications for how teachers are part of this. |

|                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Medium Social Responsibility View of Schooling | Program discusses the role of schooling in greater society but does not have a cohesive way of preparing teachers for how they will act upon this.                                                                                                        |
| Low Social Responsibility View of Schooling    | Program either does not discuss the way schooling is connected to other parts of society, or only superficially mentions it. There is no preparation around how teachers can influence this.                                                              |
| High Integration of CSP                        | CSP/CRP are integrated across most areas of the TEP, and instructors have a shared view and understanding of how these practices are relevant to candidates, regardless of discipline/specialization.                                                     |
| Medium Integration of CSP                      | CSP/CRP are discussed regularly in multiple areas of the program. They are incorporated in some instructional areas, but not across all. Candidates likely see the importance of CSP/CRP, but may struggle to integrate across disciplines or situations. |
| Low Integration of CSP                         | CSP/CRP are discussed in a standalone fashion, or indirectly through other topics (such as bilingual education). While individual instructors may promote exposure to CSP/CRP, the program is not actively working towards an overall strategy.           |

### ***Social Responsibility Results***

The concept of social responsibility came up much more frequently in interviews with Danes than with Californians: more than twice as often. Danes more often described medium and high examples of social responsibility views (87% of social responsibility mentions) in their TEPs than Californians (60% of social responsibility mentions) as shown in Table 3.

When asked about how they viewed the role of schools in broader society, many Danes directly brought up the issues of instilling democratic values and serving as a place for different classes and ethnicities to interact with each other. The idea of *Bildung* repeatedly came up in interviews with Danish instructors. *Bildung* has its roots in German education traditions (Westbury et al., 2012) and it can be briefly described as a tradition of education where an important purpose of school is to help individuals develop to their full potential, not just academically, but also morally, emotionally, and socially, so that they may

be successful members of the larger society. The Danes maintain a version of this, commonly referred to as *dannelse*.

**Table 3**

*Segmentation Results for Social Responsibility by Respondent Role*

|                                        | Low Social<br>Responsibility View<br>of Schooling | Medium Social<br>Responsibility View of<br>Schooling | High Social<br>Responsibility View of<br>Schooling |
|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Danish Students                        | 0                                                 | 6                                                    | 5                                                  |
| California Students                    | 0                                                 | 1                                                    | 0                                                  |
| Danish<br>Instructors/Coordinators     | 4                                                 | 10                                                   | 9                                                  |
| California<br>Instructors/Coordinators | 6                                                 | 3                                                    | 4                                                  |

Other evidence of high social responsibility views from Danes included participants discussing the long tradition of welfare education, pedagogical viewpoints in Scandinavian countries that value learning as an individual pursuit that serves the common good, and the importance of concepts like *samlingskraft*, or social cohesiveness, in public education. These responses described situations, evidence, and frameworks that operationalized social responsibility in teacher education programs.

In the Californian interviews, candidates tended to describe the social responsibility of their own role as a future teacher, mainly describing their desire to be a role model or trusted adult for their students. Californian instructors described not only a high level of social responsibility on the part of teachers, but also described instilling this into candidates as a challenge of teacher education. One instructor said, “I put this in the category of a challenge... when people come to a teacher ed program... I don’t think they expect to be asked to question the foundations of schooling.” Overall, Californians expressed an individual-level understanding of the social responsibility of teaching and schools in American society but seemed hesitant or unsure of the way their TEP was promoting, challenging, or directly related to this (depending on their role).

## ***CSP Results***

Discussions around CSP were largely initiated by my interview questions related to how the TEP prepares candidates to work with students from a language background other than Danish or English, and how the TEP prepares candidates to work with students from minoritized cultural backgrounds. Table 4 shows the results broken down by interview group.

**Table 4**

*Segmentation Results for Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies by Respondent Role*

|                        | Low Integration of CSP | Medium Integration of CSP | High Integration of CSP |
|------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Danish Students        | 14                     | 6                         | 0                       |
| California Students    | 6                      | 11                        | 0                       |
| Danish Instructors     | 19                     | 9                         | 2                       |
| California Instructors | 3                      | 13                        | 0                       |

In this section, Danes mentioned many instances of being exposed to ideas around how to best promote Danish language skills in their students. However, each candidate also mentioned that they did not see many examples of these practices used in their placements as there were very few students with a non-Danish language background in their immediate fieldwork. The Danish instructors echoed similar approaches to addressing bilingual development in their coursework. Many of the Danish participants discussed the importance of connecting with a student’s culture, and how this could be an important way to facilitate a deeper connection with both Danish language and Danish culture. One candidate phrased it in a way that was relevant in many of the interviews:

But I think also most of the people I know who chose to be a teacher also [did so] because of these challenges and to integrate [students from non-Danish backgrounds] in Danish society. I think that's a huge role that the teachers have.

This view was not shared by all the Danish participants, especially two instructors who focus on the area of multiculturalism and bilingualism in Danish schools. One instructor was acutely aware of the ideas in CSP but described how these ideas had not yet worked their way into Danish education in the same way

they have in many places in the US. They said, “my point is that we are very far away from changing ... our own unconscious behaviors, [or] ways of behaving towards specific minorities.” Another instructor, when describing the inability of the Black Lives Matter movement to gain the same national traction in Denmark that it has in the US, said “So it just came around us as like really non-Danish.”

An instructor of morality and ethics expressed that some of the American ways of describing CSP, multiculturalism, race, and ethnicity do not directly translate into a Danish context, and this is causing friction in adapting to changes in society. This instructor described that while Denmark has historically considered itself to be global and multicultural, the current scenario of many people immigrating to Denmark is a new development and is causing friction in popular discourse. Simultaneously, the education system is trying to understand its role in the current Denmark. This instructor stated,

When you don't have a lot of people coming to Denmark, then it's a pretty easy approach to have ... but when [immigration] begins and ... people do not adjust as we thought they would do, then the cultural norms get mixed up.

In the Californian interviews, there was a more direct awareness of CSP, and much of the conversation was around how to incorporate this philosophy genuinely and effectively into TEPs. Both candidates from Public University explicitly stated that they wished Public University TEP would more actively incorporate anti-racist teachings across the program and acknowledged that while they could see efforts being made, they hoped for it to be more expansive and supportive. It is worth noting the timing and context of these interviews. While anti-racism has been discussed with more regularity in education circles, there is an increased sense of urgency and need for action especially since the 2020 BLM Protests and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Both California candidates described a disconnect between the way Public University TEP talked about race, ethnicity, language, and CSP and what they were seeing in their fieldwork placements, especially as it related to structural racism that they witnessed, such as unintentional segregation by race between advanced and general curriculum courses. The Californian instructors acknowledged the same ideas: they described a desire and an urgency in preparing candidates to both effectively work with students from minoritized backgrounds and to have the skills to dismantle the unjust systems they might find themselves in but struggled with how to best do that and if Public University TEP was meeting that charge.

One Public University instructor described the situation like this:

I think that in general, people see [our approach to] race and equity as a concern and that they don't feel that the program is doing a good enough job now to prepare candidates and they are very anxious to try to fix that problem and go deeper.

None of the California participants described the push to focus on CSP as unnecessary or unwarranted.

## **Discussion**

The main takeaway around the concept of social responsibility is that Danish TEPs have a much more developed and common understanding of the role schools play in Denmark's social structure, and therefore how teacher education fits into this. Danes repeatedly articulated directly that schools play an important institutional role in Denmark and are specifically charged with encouraging trust and participation in Denmark's democracy. The history and origin of the importance of Danish social trust and responsibility would be impossible to discuss in its entirety here, but the takeaways from participants highlighted three aspects: trust in Denmark's institutions, a clear vision of what it means to be Danish, and a clear understanding of how school fits in with Danish life. The sample of Danes whom I interviewed expressed a sense of trust in their country's institutions, even during the COVID-19 pandemic and a nationwide lockdown. I interpreted this as something that was not developed entirely by the TEP, but rather something that the Danes experienced throughout multiple aspects of their lives. Therefore, it seemed like the purpose of school was already more readily defined and understood by everyone involved. And while nearly everyone I interviewed within the Danish education system had ideas for what could be improved or changed, there was also a consensus that the mechanisms for change were achievable through participation in the system.

From the Californian interviews, I saw a much more muddled understanding of the social responsibility of schools. The interviewees I spoke with clearly articulated that the current system of schooling in America is not serving everyone and that teacher education plays some part in both sustaining and changing that system. However, there was not a cohesive vision of how the TEP was part of the logic of change beyond the scope of individual instructors interacting with their cohort of students. I repeatedly heard Californian participants express that this was something they felt TEP was grappling with but had not quite figured out.

This brings the final concept to the discussion: how TEPs can prepare teacher candidates in working with a diverse group of students using tools like CSP. This concept seemed very familiar to the participants from Public University TEP in California. And while there was not a sense that CSP is currently tightly integrated across the program, there was a sense from candidates and instructors that the TEP is actively reassessing and working to improve this feature within the program. Given the highly structured program environment, and the description of several instructors that Public University has been able to incorporate

changes in the past, it seems likely that future iterations of the TEP will incorporate more and more of these practices.

CSP seemed more unfamiliar to Danish participants. This makes sense given the highly developed sense of social responsibility of teachers and teacher education being centered around schools as a place for the continuation of Danish democracy and society: this self-perception of the role of Danish schools requires a certain conformity to Danish cultural norms. It is difficult for me, as a non-Dane, to fully understand the nuances of how cultural influences are affecting institutions in Denmark. But I often felt from these interviews that the idea of setting up a static set of norms around what it means to be American has not worked for us and, if anything, the contemporary American refusal to have a larger reckoning about who is included in American society and prosperity, and who has been left out, is leading us down a very tumultuous path. Countries tell themselves stories to help members feel part of a bigger group. These stories can help unite people under a common cultural framework. They can change or adapt over time to incorporate new events, understandings or to explain past wrongdoings. These stories can help welcome people into the fold, and they can keep people out.

For audiences beyond California and Denmark, a broader takeaway from this study is the way that teacher education is influenced by and can influence broader change in a society. The topics discussed here can be applied to nearly any local context in asking: *Who is our system designed to serve? Who is actually present?* and *Is this the way we want to maintain our system moving forward?* These questions directly relate to system- and policy-level thinking behind teacher education in a given country or jurisdiction, and they also inform teacher educators in how they approach their practice with teacher candidates, whether that is through teaching, supervision, or any other responsibility.

## **Implications & Next Steps**

One pitfall of international comparative research is that it is very tempting to look at another country's system and try to grab one piece of it to apply to your own domestic context. A more sustainable implication for California's teacher education system is that the individual TEP discussed here presents an example of a program that fosters commitment to the program's mission by both candidates and instructors. To me, this indicates that participants at all levels of teacher education, not just researchers or policymakers, are eager to engage in the broader construction and implementation of a cohesive purpose for schooling in California.

As for implications for TEPs in Denmark, I do not think a researcher not living in Denmark permanently is in the position to discuss lessons for Danish schools. Rather, I would like to pose a series of questions to my colleagues I met in Denmark, highlighting things that I, a visitor, noticed and am still wondering about after having left: *Can being Danish mean different things to different people? While many public institutions have been successful at building public trust in the past, will they be able to do so using the same strategies heading into the future?* and *Are there specific voices missing from the conversation?* Versions of these questions are appropriate for American audiences as well.

For the field of teacher education and international comparative education more broadly, this study provides a framework for how to investigate teacher education programs in different systems. Of course, there is a great lineage of research in this area preceding this, and I hope that this study can serve as a next step, especially with a growing emphasis on the importance of understanding education systems in diverse and diversifying societies, and the way CSP can be embedded within this. By selecting these two focus concepts, we can seek to understand the context of what our neighbors experience and what we might learn when applying to our practices.

## **Conclusion**

At the opening, I described two systems facing two separate, but related problems: two sides of the same coin. After this series of interviews, I remain committed to this idea, and that both systems can learn a lot from each other by continuing an exchange of ideas and being willing to engage in an open dialogue. Teaching has always been a challenging profession, this is part of its appeal for many, and the practice of teacher education is uniquely positioned to influence schools in ways that other institutions cannot. By holding onto what is working and building upon it and being willing to let go of practices that no longer serve students, we can do right by the communities whose wellbeing is at stake.

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