
Research article

A critical review of international research into pre-service teachers' beliefs and practices when teaching migrant learners

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Abstract

This article provides a critical qualitative review of 26 English-language journal articles from multiple countries that focus on research and practice among pre-service teachers, and their beliefs about, and experiences of, teaching migrant learners. The findings are organised around two themes. First, the review reveals that student teachers are more likely than not to hold negative beliefs and harbour anxieties about teaching migrant learners. While the cultural diversity of the country in which the student teachers are working does not seem to be a strong determinant of such beliefs, research suggests that such beliefs are more often linked to a lack of knowledge and training. Second, the review identifies a strong emphasis on belief in the value of empathy in learning to teach migrant learners, with the caveat that having a migrant background does not necessarily lead to a more empathetic student teacher. The wider discussion problematises empathy as a goal of training and highlights the challenges inherent in encouraging the development of critical self-reflection among pre-service teachers. The review ultimately questions the extent to which pre-service teacher education equips

pre-service teachers to work effectively with migrant learners and proposes increased collaborations between researchers and pre-service teachers as a step towards expanding critical research and practice.

Keywords initial teacher education; migration; immigrant; refugee; teacher beliefs; teacher identity; research review

Introduction

Over 35 million children are living outside their country of birth, including 7.1 million refugee children, with many facing disruptions in their education and struggles to access quality schooling (IDAC, 2021; UNHCR, 2019). As global migration has continued, there is no doubt that interest in diversity and inclusion within school systems has grown exponentially over the last three decades. While migration is nothing new (de Haas et al., 2020), and is of ongoing concern within the sphere of education (Welply, 2021), with the rise of social media and rolling news, societies have become increasingly sensitised to world events that may previously have appeared to be at a distance (Danilova, 2014). Added to this are significant movements of people within and away from regions of the world affected by intractable conflict, environmental and food emergencies, wars, poverty and struggling economies and infrastructure (UN, 2019). As host countries of migrant people are formally bound by national and international law to provide educational opportunities to migrant children (Mendenhall et al., 2017), such movements have, inevitably, led to a wider range of children with complex backgrounds and needs entering schools. Meanwhile, as societies become more sensitised, and as schools grapple with increased intakes and the seemingly intensified challenges, so too have pre-service teacher education programmes (in some countries called 'initial teacher education') been faced with the challenge of addressing the needs of teachers as they enter such diverse classroom environments (Gay and Kirkland, 2013), with a subsequent gradual increase in the amount of diversity-related content in teacher education programmes (Silverman, 2010). The role of teachers in the education of migrant learners is held to be crucial (UNESCO, 2019); equally, pre-service teacher education is generally considered to be essential in equipping trainee teachers to teach diverse groups of learners, ultimately creating equal educational opportunities for all, regardless of background (Darling-Hammond, 2000). However, while there has been a 'pro-inclusive turn' (Bačáková and Closs, 2013) involving a recognition that education must be inclusive of learners' 'multiple identities', and much reform in teacher education over the last three decades, some scholars have been disappointed by how little progress has been made; as Ryan et al. (2019: 259) have argued, 'the crucial priority of preparing teachers for increasingly diverse classrooms has not been addressed'.

There is a small but growing body of work that focuses specifically on pre-service and in-service teacher education for working with migrant learners, evidenced by the articles in this review, as well as by online training courses available (for example, British Council, 2020) and by chapters in larger collections on teacher education (Cochran-Smith et al., 2008; Peters et al., 2017). However, given that the 'migrant' identity can be subsumed within wider talk of diversity, there are other sub-fields that are relevant here. For example, the long-standing area of multicultural (teacher) education (Banks and Banks, 2003, 2019; Cochran-Smith, 2003; Gay and Howard, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Larkin and Sleeter, 1995; Nieto, 2000), as well as work on migrant learners' and their teachers' experiences (Adams and Kirova, 2007; Hanna, 2020, 2022; Karsli-Calamak and Kilinc, 2021; Pastoor, 2017). There is also instructive work on teacher identities (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009; Zembylas and Chubbuck, 2018) and teacher beliefs (Ashton, 2014; Pajares, 1992), particularly concerning diversity (Devine, 2005; Pohan, 1996; Silverman, 2010), recognising, as it does, the links between identities, beliefs and practice, and especially how these identities and beliefs manifest themselves in how empathetically a (student) teacher might behave in diverse classrooms (Gay and Howard, 2000).

Despite the growing scholarship mentioned above, there remains a particular gap when it comes to pre-service teacher education for teaching new or recent migrant learners (children and young people who were born outside the country where they are now attending school) in compulsory education. (The term 'migrant' is much debated, and there are many variations of this term used differently in different

country contexts and disciplines; for example, 'first-generation immigrant children', or even 'third-culture kids'. I will use the term 'migrant learner', as it includes children and young people who were born outside the country where they are now attending school. This can include refugees, asylum seekers, economic migrants and others who intend to stay in the new country, and those who do not. This can also include children and young people who move multiple times within the same country.) This gap occurs despite the fact that migration continues to be a global phenomenon, with migrant learners and their teachers facing challenges that go beyond dealing with cultural difference, xenophobia and racism (especially for non-White migrants in White-majority countries), to include the possibility of trauma from the upheaval of migration caused by war, poverty and political unrest, resulting in interrupted education and disrupted family life (Mendenhall et al., 2017). It should also be acknowledged, however, that such children do indeed hold multiple identities (Kymlicka, 1995), aspects of which increase and decrease in salience to them and their education at different points in their lives, although there is not adequate space to address these other aspects of identity in this review article (reflecting, indeed, the fact that this is not regularly highlighted in the articles included in this review). Therefore, this article argues that learning to teach migrant learners deserves particular attention, and aims to contribute to knowledge in this area by offering a critical qualitative review of articles published between 2002 and 2021 on pre-service teacher education that report on a variety of research and teacher education initiatives in preparing trainee teachers to work with migrant learners in compulsory education. It focuses on the following interwoven questions:

1. What are the beliefs of pre-service teachers about teaching migrant learners?
2. What role do pre-service teachers' migration identities and empathy have on their beliefs about teaching migrant learners?
3. What role can and should pre-service teacher education play in shaping these beliefs and identities?

A presentation and synthesis now follow the current literature relevant to the field. They reveal two important and interrelated themes: trainee teachers' beliefs in the context of societal (non-)diversity; and teacher identities and empathy, which, after a presentation of the scope of the research review, are then used to analyse the articles selected. The ensuing discussion of the findings problematises the development of empathy as an aim, as well as the role of critical self-reflection in mediating the attitudes of trainee teachers. The article ends by proposing increased critical researcher–teacher collaboration in future research.

Multicultural teacher education

Multicultural education can be understood in many different ways (for an overview, see Cochran-Smith, 2003). However, its essence may be expressed as the view that education should create equal educational opportunities for both minorities (for example, ethnic, racial, cultural, religious, linguistic) and the majority in societies, with an emphasis on adapting the school to reflect social diversity, and to respect diverse backgrounds through pedagogies that are relevant and responsive to a diversity of cultural backgrounds (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Therefore, it is argued, pre-service teacher education should be directed towards this purpose, given its essential role in equipping trainee teachers to enable all children and young people to access learning opportunities (Darling-Hammond, 2000). While this review was motivated by the challenge that the author faced in finding scholarship on pre-service teacher education that has a very particular focus on learning to teach migrant learners, the area of multicultural teacher education appears to most easily encompass concerns about migrant learners, given its interest in respecting the diverse backgrounds of learners. Therefore, it is this scholarship that was chosen as the foundation for this review.

There has been long-term academic engagement in the field of multicultural education and multicultural teacher education (for example, Banks and Banks, 2003, 2019; Cochran-Smith, 2003; Gay and Howard, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Nieto, 2000). Key publications have included the *Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education* (Banks and Banks, 2003), the *Routledge International Companion to Multicultural Education* (Banks, 2009) and *Developing Multicultural Teacher Education Curricula* (Larkin and Sleeter, 1995). In addition, there are chapters on teacher education and diversity in collections focusing on teacher education more broadly. While the field has undoubtedly been dominated by scholars from the USA, there are also contributions from a range of other countries, including Australia

(Inglis, 2009), the UK (Bhopal and Rhamie, 2014; Race and Lander, 2014), Thailand (Arphattananon, 2018) and South Africa (Lemmer et al., 2014). Additionally, there is a growing body of work on migrant learners and their teachers (Adams and Kirova, 2007; Arnot et al., 2016; Hanna, 2020, 2022; Karsli-Calamak and Kilinc, 2021; Maher, 2020; Pastoor, 2017; Urias, 2012).

In terms of specialist work focused on teacher education and migrant learners, there are some publications of note. In addition to the articles that will be discussed in this review, Springer's *Companion to Research in Teacher Education* (Peters et al., 2017) has a chapter on 'Teacher education, research and migrant children', and there are several chapters in the *Handbook of Research on Teacher Education* (Cochran-Smith et al., 2008) that include migration in their considerations of diversity. There are also key journals that periodically devote space to the topic, such as *Teacher Educator's* 2018 Special Issue on 'Immigration and teacher education' (articles from which are included in this research review) and editorials in journals such as the *European Journal of Teacher Education* that focus on wider inclusion issues (see, for example, Florian and Camedda, 2020; Livingston, 2019). Nevertheless, it remains rare to find consideration of multicultural teacher education and migrant education in the same review. Therefore, this review aims to bridge this gap.

Synthesising these strands of scholarship, some shared concerns emerge. First, there is often a focus on language learning and attainment, and the perception that migrant learners underperform. This can sometimes lead to a 'deficit model' that focuses on what the child is lacking rather than the knowledge that the child may hold, and neglects the non-homogeneous nature of migrant children. However, Goodwin (2017) has noted that there has also been a growing appreciation of cultural issues, particularly noting the ideas of cultural disorientation and being caught between cultures. Second, there is continued recognition that while specific training is required to work effectively with migrant learners, provision for such training has not improved; indeed, in some cases, it has been reduced, along with reduced funding and time for teacher education in general, in addition to fear of diversity and reluctance to deal with racism held by trainees, despite efforts to promote critical reflection among trainees (Gay and Howard, 2000). Finally, there is a shared frustration that research in migration and education in general, and teacher education in particular, continues to be lacking. This is despite the apparent rise in practice-based research, and many and varied attempts to engage teachers in research and encourage researchers to collaborate with practitioners (Ryan et al., 2019). This is, surely, a reminder that the challenge of preparing teachers to teach migrant learners is as significant as it ever was. Aspects of these three areas of concern will re-emerge later in the findings of this review.

Teacher beliefs and identities

Research on teacher beliefs and identities is also relevant here. Scholarship on teacher beliefs makes a strong case for the links between beliefs, identities and practice (Ashton, 2014; Pajares, 1992), not least when it comes to teacher beliefs about diversity, influenced by teachers' backgrounds, experiences and identities, and how these beliefs manifest themselves in how a teacher behaves in diverse classrooms (Osler and Starkey, 2010; Pohan, 1996; Rodríguez-Izquierdo et al., 2020; Silverman, 2010). Studies in this area highlight not only the risk of negative or stereotypical beliefs among student teachers detrimentally impacting on learners (Chan and Gao, 2014), but also the value of exploring the underlying, contextually based influences on teachers' identities, as well as their biographies in terms of migration (Haim and Tannenbaum, 2022), which, it has been argued, should be discussed within teacher education programmes (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Devine, 2005). Inevitably, then, the role of teacher education in developing and influencing teachers' beliefs is a focus in scholarship, identifying teacher educators as holding the potential to help or hinder student teachers to develop through their openness towards learning (Ell et al., 2017), and highlighting the importance of the teacher practicum experience, in-school mentoring and opportunities for critical reflection on teaching practice (Gay and Howard, 2000).

Closely related to teacher beliefs are teacher identities, given the strong potential for the former to be influenced by the latter. In their review of the literature on teacher identity, Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) highlight the centrality, as well as the complexity, of identity in teacher development, with Day et al. (2006) adding that it is a concept that is constantly evolving (and even fragmenting) during the pre-service stage and on into teachers' professional lives. In this sense, pre-service teacher education is seen not merely as involving one-time input, but as the beginning of a long-term process of development of teacher competencies and identities (Smagorinsky et al., 2004), influenced by people

(including teacher educators, in-school mentors, wider school staff and learners), contexts (Flores and Day, 2006) and power relations (Zembylas and Chubbuck, 2018). Unsurprisingly, then, Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) argue that a greater understanding of teacher identities is essential in order to design effective teacher education programmes; shifting the focus towards the interest of this review, multicultural teacher educationalists (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Gay and Howard, 2000) would propose that understanding of teachers' cultural identities, and particularly enabling trainee teachers themselves to understand their own and others' identities, through critical reflection, is crucial to pre-service teacher education.

While the areas of teacher beliefs and identities, and the apparent influence of these two aspects on practice, are undeniably important to consider in pre-service teacher education for teaching migrant learners, what this review will reveal is that the connections are complex and sometimes problematic. This is not least the case when it comes to trainees' beliefs about, and experiences of, migration, and assumptions that might be made about the level of empathy those with migrant backgrounds do or should show towards their learners. I will return to these concepts later.

Scope of this review and search strategy

This research review is a critical qualitative review (see Newman and Gough, 2020) focused on published articles that present research, reviews of teaching interventions and curriculum/practice reviews on pre-service teacher education for teaching migrant learners in compulsory education. The qualitative, narrative approach was selected to allow space for analysis of themes that are insignificant numerically but significant in terms of themes of concern or interest, without generalisation as an aim. A critical lens was applied to research in terms of using a selective, purposive sample of articles, with a significant focus on thematic analysis that 'goes beyond description' (Grant and Booth, 2009: 94) towards highlighting the crucial issues in pre-service teacher education for migrant learners. The common threads of identities and beliefs emerged during the review process. The review is based on articles in English-language journals only, as this is the only language in which I am fully fluent.

The search strategy loosely followed the stages outlined by Newman and Gough (2020). I did an initial general search based on Google and Google Scholar, looking for teacher education and (im)migrant education to find the key search terms. I then turned to academic databases, beginning with Scopus. I did a Boolean search of titles, abstracts and keywords, with my search terms refined to 'teacher education' OR 'teacher preparation' OR 'teacher training' OR 'teacher instruction' AND 'migrant' OR 'immigrant' OR 'asylum seeker' OR 'refugee'. I also limited the search to research articles, and excluded books and book chapters (although the two latter sources were used in the literature review and analysis and discussion). I limited neither the time period nor the country focus. This generated a list of 142 articles. Once I had skim-read the titles of these articles, I limited the disciplines to arts and humanities and social sciences. I also excluded articles that mainly focused on learners who are second-generation immigrants, who were born in the country where the study was conducted, as this would have broadened the scope beyond what could be achieved usefully in this article. I also excluded articles that focused solely on continuing teacher education, although I included those that referred to both, or where it appeared that in-service teachers may not have previously taken part in a programme of initial teacher education. I decided to include some other articles that mentioned diversity but not migrant/immigrant/refugee/asylum-seeker learners in the title, as, once I had read them in more depth, I discovered that they nevertheless included a discussion of migrant learners (as I had defined them). I also used the references in the selected relevant articles to find articles that did not appear on Scopus. Finally, I searched Taylor and Francis, Wiley and Elsevier journal websites, as well as the digital library ERIC, to fill in any remaining gaps. Such inclusions and exclusions are indicative of how challenging it was to unearth the 'right' articles, given that migration issues can sometimes be somewhat 'buried' in discussions around diversity more broadly and definitions of 'migrant', 'immigrant' and 'ethnic minority', among many other terms, can differ, overlap and diverge in different ways in different countries.

The findings were synthesised and presented in narrative form, employing thematic analysis to identify and report on key themes (Grant and Booth, 2009). Two themes emerged inductively and are explored in the findings and synthesis section, supported by the wider literature in teacher education to enhance the subsequent discussion.

Findings and synthesis

This review found 26 relevant journal articles published in English between 2002 and 2021. The list of papers included in this review can be found in Table 1. While the majority were based in countries in the Global North where the English language dominates, there was also a small number of studies from a range of non-anglophone European countries (8 articles), as well as 1 study in Africa and 2 in Asia. The country focuses and the number of articles were as follows: USA (10 articles), Sweden (2), Australia (2), Cyprus (1), Canada (2), Finland (2), Hong Kong (1), Ireland (1), Kenya (1), Northern Ireland (1), Portugal (1), Thailand (1) and Spain (1). The studies were a mixture of qualitative or quantitative research projects and reports, evaluations and supportive accounts of specialist training initiatives and practice.

Two themes emerged from the review and are considered in turn below: trainee teachers' beliefs in the context of societal (non-)diversity; and teacher identities and empathy.

Trainee teachers' beliefs in the context of societal (non-)diversity

The role of teachers in the education of migrant learners is generally held to be crucial (UNESCO, 2019). However, teaching and teacher education do not exist in a bubble, but are influenced by many personal, historical, political and institutional factors, as well as by dominant societal attitudes such as racism and xenophobia (Anderson, 2007). Teachers also hold their own beliefs, shaped over time through life experiences and cultural backgrounds (Osler and Starkey, 2010), and sometimes altering during their training and practicum experiences (Rodríguez-Izquierdo et al., 2020). Therefore, it was unsurprising to discover that the research articles reported a mixture of attitudes held by pre-service teachers towards migrant learners.

Chan and Gao (2014) explored the views of pre-service teachers in Hong Kong towards 'newcomer' children from mainland China. In their study, student teachers expressed a range of views on teaching such children, with the majority viewing them from a 'deficit' standpoint and as presenting 'a serious professional challenge' (Chan and Gao, 2014: 140). This revealed the influence of prevalent negative societal stereotypes of mainland Chinese people, transmitted through the media. While in some contexts this might translate as racism, given that both Hong Kong Chinese and mainland Chinese share an ethnicity, in this case it could be more accurately described as xenophobia or cultural discrimination. More positive attitudes were reported by Níkleva and Ortega-Martín (2015) in the context of a study on undergraduate education students on an undergraduate teacher education programme in Spain, a country which, at the time of the research (the 2010s), had already culturally diversified in a significant way. Therefore, the authors regarded this as having had a positive impact on students' attitudes: 'the experience of having had immigrant classmates is viewed as culturally enriching, which vastly facilitates their encounters with multicultural students in their future profession' (Níkleva and Ortega-Martín, 2015: 315). In the context of Ireland, a country which in the 2000s was considered to be relatively new to immigration, Leavy (2005) indicated that student teachers were inexperienced with cultural diversity due to lack of exposure. Despite this lack of exposure, the study reported high levels of tolerance and support expressed towards religious, cultural, sexual and language diversity, evidenced by trainees taking on the role of 'advocate' for language diversity in the classroom. Thus, the lack of exposure to diversity in this regard did not seem to negatively influence student teachers' views. Overall, then, the studies in this review demonstrate a range of beliefs and a range of suggested explanations for such attitudes: societal diversity was less of a determinant of positive attitudes towards migrant learners than might be expected, xenophobia can at least in some cases be a factor, and anxiety over lack of training was a bigger barrier to trainees' positive beliefs about migrant learners.

The finding that pre-service teachers hold negative beliefs about migrant learners is nothing new (Devine, 2005). From a sociological and political perspective, schools and universities represent sites of socialisation of children and adults into the kind of people that society deems acceptable (Apple, 2014). If a country's diversity and its media reporting on this topic do not unfailingly determine trainee teachers' beliefs about migrant learners, this leaves space for consideration of the role that teacher education can play in influencing such beliefs. Indeed, if one assumes that teachers' beliefs about migrants impact on practice, which can then have a significant impact on how migrants feel in class (Hanna, 2020, 2022; Mendenhall et al., 2017), then it is understandable that teacher education is looked to as the vehicle by which to effect change in this area. However, how exactly to do this – what policies, pedagogies, curricula and training are needed – is not agreed upon.

Teacher identities and empathy

It is often suggested that teachers as a workforce do not reflect the diversity of identities held by their students, and that this is problematic for being able to empathise with students (Bhopal and Rhamie, 2014; Gay and Howard, 2000; Goodwin, 2017). In this research review, empathy, understood as stepping into the shoes of another person in order to better understand them (McAllister and Jordan Irvine, 2002), was overwhelmingly recommended as a significant resource for pre-service teachers to draw upon, and it was argued that this practice was facilitated when trainees had migrant backgrounds and experiences themselves.

Ginsberg et al.'s (2018) research in the USA with student teachers and teacher educators focused on a pre-service teacher education programme which involved migrant trainee teachers working with Hispanic learners. The authors claimed that trainees' ability to understand the experiences of migrant learners made them more empathetic, and therefore effective in supporting such learners, as they were able to better use a 'pedagogy of recognition' (Ginsberg et al., 2018: 251) whereby the student teachers actively sought, through their teaching approach, to recognise and relate to the learners' backgrounds, and to offer a deeper sense of respect for them. Empathy was also deemed useful when extended to experiences of discrimination, and it was cited as a motivator for migrant teachers in their work. Significant here, however, was not only the fact that the teachers were migrants themselves, but that they shared a specific, Hispanic background. Similarly, in Naidoo's (2009: 269) analysis of an after-school homework club for refugees in Australia, they reported that trainees decided to take part in this intervention precisely due to 'personal experience of racism and its deleterious impact on learning'. Unsurprisingly, then, these and several other studies called for increased support and, in some cases, recruitment of migrant teachers, so that teachers could offer this level of empathy and recognition to migrant learners, such as in the case of Burmese teachers teaching the Burmese curriculum to students from Myanmar (Burma) in Migrant Learning Centres in Thailand (Tyrosvoutis et al., 2021). Indeed, taking the need for empathy further, it is, for some, the knowledge of migration that underlies this empathy that should also result in action on the programmatic level. In Vellanki and Prince's (2018) interesting 'collaborative autoethnography', based in the USA, the authors, themselves from migrant backgrounds, reflected on a global teacher education course on which one of them studied and one of them taught, and argued that such expertise should be taken into account when designing and modifying such courses. Thus, again, the importance of personal identities and experiences in informing a teacher's beliefs on migration diversity is underlined (Silverman, 2010).

However, several authors argued that where trainee teachers were not from a migrant background, they could develop empathy through pre-service teacher education programmes. In their narrative study on the experiences of three teacher educators/leaders in Canada in the context of attempting to integrate Syrian refugee learners, Gagné et al. (2017) suggested developing culturally relevant pedagogy as part of culturally relevant education (Ladson-Billings, 1995), through engaging trainees in the power of sharing stories from refugee learners and a deeper understanding of the learners' lives. Similarly, outside the university or college setting, it was argued that empathy could be achieved through a teaching practicum or in-school placement, often a compulsory part of pre-service teacher education, and seen as crucial to the broader development of teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Lesko and Bloom, 1998). Wellman and Bey's (2015) article on an art education intervention that involved trainee teachers argued that this kind of initiative was essential to enabling pre-service art teachers to encounter and learn to work more effectively with refugee students. Tilley-Lubbs (2011) studied a service-learning project in an immigrant community in the USA that placed students with Spanish-speaking families. Focusing on the experiences of student teachers, they concluded that a service-learning project can be transformative for the teachers, offering 'an effective pedagogy to develop an awareness of students' worlds away from school' (Tilley-Lubbs, 2011: 104).

Critically, however, while the majority spoke with unwavering positivity about the importance and potential of developing empathy among student teachers, not all studies agree that teaching migrant learners in teacher practicum experiences, or even being a migrant themselves, would automatically lead to the development of empathy or compassion among trainees, particularly when their migration, cultural and ethnic backgrounds differed so widely. Anttila et al.'s (2018) study in Finland involved collecting the views of pre-service physical education teachers after facilitating workshops for asylum seekers, with some participants concluding that, after this experience, they had no desire to repeat it, not least because they did not see why culturally diverse content and pedagogy might be relevant to a

school subject such as physical education. Racism and xenophobia may also have been a factor here, given that many of the migrant learners that the (majority White) student cohort worked with were asylum seekers from Iraq and Afghanistan. Mendenhall et al.'s (2021) study of a teacher training programme on approaches to school discipline in Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya (where many refugees come from Somalia, Uganda and Congo) showed how, even when teachers empathised with students, sharing with them their refugee background, they still sometimes used (banned) corporal punishment due to the extreme challenges of working in such a resource-constrained environment. Thus, even where empathy is encouraged and expected due to an aspect of shared identity, it may simply be out of reach for teachers under pressure. Indeed, a short teacher practicum may, at best, be simply a starting point, especially if it is not accompanied by other aspects of pre-service teacher education, such as in-school mentoring and opportunities for critical reflection on practice (Gay and Howard, 2000). Nevertheless, as Day et al. (2006) remind us, the complexity of (student) teacher identities means that they may be considered constantly evolving and under construction, throughout the pre-service period and beyond, influenced by people, contexts (Flores and Day, 2006) and power relations (Zembylas and Chubbuck, 2018). Therefore, perhaps there still remains the potential for empathy and its positive impact on practice.

Discussion: empathy, critical self-reflection and the role of pre-service teacher education

The findings that emerged from this research review speak to broader, critical issues within pre-service teacher education and migrant education, and the most appropriate role for teacher educators. The first theme revealed that, in terms of trainee teacher beliefs, negative views and anxieties appear to dominate the articles included in the review. These beliefs include a deficit approach that views migrant learners as lacking ability, racist or xenophobic stereotyping, and viewing working with migrant learners as much more challenging than working with non-migrants. This leads, in some of the articles, to trainee teachers being reluctant to work with migrant learners again after their first experience during the pre-service period. A number of the studies underline the risk of negative or stereotypical beliefs among trainee teachers detrimentally impacting on learners. Many articles attribute such beliefs to a lack of knowledge and training in teaching diverse learners. Some link these beliefs to the level of national/migratory diversity in a country; however, this does not seem to be a decisive factor. The second theme relates to pre-service teacher background and empathy. Here, the review reveals a strong emphasis on the value of empathy in learning to teach migrant learners. Many articles foreground the apparent advantage of being a migrant teacher oneself, both to being able to empathise and to being equipped to develop teacher education curricula, while several studies also highlight that being a migrant oneself is not essential to developing empathy with migrant learners, and that this is a skill that can be developed through the teaching practicum. Nevertheless, other articles complicate this narrative, highlighting that even holding shared experiences with migrant learners does not necessarily lead to empathy, or a desire to teach migrant learners in the future.

As mentioned earlier, while pre-service teachers hold varying beliefs and have had varying experiences concerning migrant learners, influenced by many factors both inside and outside the school environment (Devine, 2005; Haim and Tannenbaum, 2022; Rodríguez-Izquierdo et al., 2020; Silverman, 2010), it is widely accepted that teacher education can influence such beliefs and student teachers' understanding of their experiences. It was also argued that this matters because of the link between teachers' beliefs and pedagogical approaches, and how migrant learners feel in class (Hanna, 2020, 2022; Mendenhall et al., 2017). Nevertheless, as Goodwin (2002, 2017) and Allman and Slavin (2018) confirm, teacher education that directly focuses on migration issues is not consistently in place worldwide. Therefore, they call for compulsory input, mandated on the national and institutional level, on migration issues in teacher education and coursework, the teaching of culturally relevant pedagogies, and for training for teachers to become advocates for migrant learners. The implication here is that the lack of a deliberate approach can have a detrimental effect on trainees, leaving them either unprepared or disengaged from the process of learning to teach and support migrant learners, due to being disengaged from their own potentially stereotypical views on such learners, and from their own cultural identities (Cochran-Smith, 2003).

However, it was also highlighted that schools and universities represent sites of socialisation of children and adults into the kind of people society deems acceptable (Apple, 2014). This understanding

is key to considerations of migrant learners and the education of their teachers, because it poses two challenges in terms of the agency of (pre-service) teachers educators and teachers: to what extent are teacher educators able to control the potentially negative impact of negative societal views on trainee teachers? And to what extent are these teachers, when they arrive in classrooms with migrant learners, able to control the potentially negative impact of these views on their learners? Just as (student) teacher identities are impacted by multiple factors (people, contexts, power relations), and are often in flux (Smagorinsky et al., 2004), so too are the identities and beliefs of those who are tasked with educating these student teachers – teacher educators are also part of this socialisation project, and may themselves be uncomfortable with encouraging critical reflection on identities or problematic societal beliefs. Thus, the challenge arises: rather than working for the socialisation of – and acceptance by – students into the status quo, can schools educate students to make changes in their society, and can teacher education and educators facilitate this? On this, Tuomi (2005: 207) is hopeful: 'The ability to adapt to societal transitions is a skill that needs to be developed in teachers ... Rather than working for socialization into the status quo, schools can foster proactive agents of social change.' The idea of school as a site for social transformation is a powerful and attractive one.

The findings also lead us to ask bigger questions about the role of empathy, troubling the notion not only of its achievability – whether that be through drawing on one's own identities and experiences of migration or discrimination, or learning it 'from scratch' through in-school teaching experiences – but also of its desirability as a goal within pre-service teacher education. As Cushner and Mahon's (2002) focus on the importance of teachers' engagement with diversity implies, particularly for those trainees from non-migrant backgrounds who cannot realistically empathise with migrants from experience, a short teacher practicum cannot be more than one part of a much longer term, perhaps even lifelong, commitment to developing as a culturally responsive educator. Critical self-reflection was a skill that often appeared to be mentioned as complementing empathy in the articles in this review (see, for example, Chan and Gao, 2014; Morita-Mullaney and Stallings, 2018), and is often cited as part of culturally relevant (teacher) education (Aronson and Laughter, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Scorgie (2010: 699) highlights that critical self-reflection involves transformation, including the 'disorienting dilemma' that requires learners to 'confront and evaluate their underlying beliefs and assumptions using both personal reflection and reflective discourse with others', leading to empathy. Such an approach may require, in Zembylas and Papamichael's (2017: 3) view, the use of 'pedagogies of discomfort' within multicultural teacher education, whereby the discomfort of student teachers when dealing with challenging topics might be harnessed in order to challenge 'dominant beliefs, habits and normative practices that sustain stereotypes and social injustice [thereby] creating openings for empathy and transformation'. This may be especially important where trainees lack intercultural or multicultural experience (Guo et al., 2009). In terms of migrant learners, wider scholarship has highlighted the importance of learning to reflect in a personal way on diversity, racism and internalised notions such as 'colour-blindness' (Gay and Howard, 2000). However, as Dorner et al. (2017) have highlighted, students often struggle to appreciate the complexity of identities, even their own, and some show resistance to being challenged, as was seen in the findings in this article, and elsewhere in the literature (for example, Aronson and Laughter, 2016). This can stem from many aspects of a pre-service teacher's institutional environment, and their professional and personal life and beliefs, not least the beliefs they have about themselves as a 'good person' or a 'good teacher', and it is a particular concern within antiracist and multicultural (teacher) education (Bhopal and Rhamie, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Given these beliefs, attitudes and identities, further questions emerge about how they are shaped, and the role that teacher education can and should play in shaping trainee teachers. Ball (2009: 46) suggests that teacher educators 'must assist teachers in replacing their feelings of insecurity, discomfort, and inadequacy with feelings of agency, advocacy, and efficacy'. Gay and Kirkland (2013), among many others (for example, Cochran-Smith, 2003; Gay and Howard, 2000), also propose that critical self-reflection, in addition to cultural critical consciousness, is crucial, going beyond regurgitation of course materials towards an analysis of their own beliefs and biases. Critical reflection also links to identity: as Beauchamp and Thomas (2009: 182) note, reflection is 'recognized as a key means by which teachers can become more in tune with their sense of self and with a deep understanding of how this self fits into a larger context which involves others; in other words, reflection is a factor in the shaping of identity'. Indeed, several articles in this review also recommend critical self-reflection as an essential part of teacher education, as a way of helping trainee teachers learn how to effectively engage with migrant learners (for example, Guo et al., 2009). However, the resistance towards teaching (or changing

the approach to teaching) migrant learners that surfaced in some of the studies in this review presents a challenge to critical self-reflection as a 'fail-safe' strategy. While it can be facilitated by a sense of empathy with migrant learners, one cannot assume that empathy will be achieved, and one cannot even expect a teacher educator to empathise with trainees when trainees hold views that teacher educators may find abhorrent (see also Zembylas and Papamichael, 2017). So, if a teacher educator is not modelling such empathy, then surely the potential of pre-service teacher education to develop such skills in a student teacher may be limited. Perhaps, where the value of empathy might be under question, what is more important is the way pre-service teacher education approaches empathy: it may be sufficient for teacher educators to offer, in the spirit of openness and honesty, the modelling of critical self-analysis (including of culture), harnessing the power of storytelling and applying this 'pedagogy of discomfort' to themselves. If, indeed, critical self-analysis is so essential to critical multicultural teacher education for teachers of migrant learners, then surely this could be the first step.

Summary and conclusion

This article has offered a critical qualitative review of 26 English-language journal articles from a diverse range of countries that focus on research and practice among pre-service teachers and their beliefs about, and experiences of, teaching migrant learners. Two themes have emerged. First, the review revealed that student teachers were more likely to hold negative beliefs and anxieties about teaching migrant learners. While the diversity of the country in which the students are working did not seem to be a strong determinant of such beliefs, articles suggested that such beliefs were more often linked to lack of knowledge and training. Second, a strong belief in the value of empathy in learning to teach migrant learners emerged, with the caveat that having a migrant background did not necessarily lead to a more empathetic student teacher. The wider discussion problematised empathy as a goal, and highlighted the challenges inherent in encouraging the development of critical self-reflection among pre-service teachers.

Several issues regarding pre-service teacher education for teaching migrant learners remain. Undoubtedly, more research that focuses on teacher education specifically for learning to teach migrant learners, as well as reflections on the future of teacher education for this task, are required. Ryan et al. (2019) have reported the rise in practice-based research, and many and varied attempts to engage teachers in research and link researchers with practitioners. Similarly, Cheng and Li's (2020) recent article calls for more effective practitioner research as part of teacher professional development, and some of the articles included in this review illustrate that teacher educators/teacher education researchers and trainee teacher partnerships, in both research and writing, may offer a step in the right direction, particularly when some of the researchers/practitioners/authors have experienced migration themselves (Dorner et al., 2017; Gagné et al., 2017; Vellanki and Prince, 2018). It would be enlightening both to see more of these collaborations and also to read a more critical reflection on the experiences of such collaborations, not least as it may shed light on the issue that was the motivation for this review in the first place: why there is so little research on teacher education and migrant learners.

Two decades into this century, another 'age of migration' looks set to continue (de Haas et al., 2020). Ferfolja (2009: 405) has argued that 'In a world increasingly globalised, knowledge of diversity and understanding the extent of differences encountered in schools is pivotal to enable new teachers to effectively address students' sociocultural and learning needs and to provide an equitable and more informed classroom environment.' If, as Ryan et al. (2019: 259) hope, 'the crucial priority of preparing teachers for increasingly diverse classrooms' is to be addressed, then resources need to be funnelled towards this end. We should not, in a few years' time, find ourselves saying, as Goodwin did in 2017, when reflecting on her article 15 years prior, that 'it is troubling to find it necessary to engage in the same examination and assessment of the same issues' (Goodwin, 2017: 434). My hope is that this resourcing will allow us in a more effective way to address the most pressing challenges of pre-service teacher education for teaching migrant learners in the twenty-first century.

Table 1. List of the 26 papers under review in this article

Year of publication	Title	Author	Country	Type of research/project	Key points of article relevant to this review
2002	Teacher preparation and the education of immigrant children	Goodwin, A.L.	USA	Review article	Focuses on teacher preparation in light of changing demographics as a direct consequence of increased immigration Reviews two decades of teacher education literature, how immigrant children are conceptualised and key issues that must be taken into account when preparing teachers to work with immigrant children.
2005	'When I meet them I talk to them': The challenges of diversity for preservice teacher education	Leavy, A.	Ireland	Quantitative research project	Examines pre-service teachers' exposure to and beliefs about diversity in Ireland using prior experiences related to diversity and the personal and professional beliefs about diversity scale on 286 pre-service teachers Highlights the move from homogeneity to cultural diversity in Ireland: pre-service teachers' exposure to diversity is very limited (for example, their exposure to refugees and asylum seekers), high levels of tolerance and support expressed towards religious, cultural, sexual and language diversity.
2006	Agents of social change in education	Tuomi, M.T.	Finland	Specialist teacher training initiative	Explores the participation of educators in workgroup consultations to create training that captures teachers' and student teachers' interests and enhances the creation of diversity-positive learning environments Contextualises the arrival of refugees and other immigrants in previously culturally homogenous Finland Recommends a two-pronged approach that promotes the world citizenship education of all students and meets the lifelong needs of immigrants; the ability to adapt to societal transitions must be developed in teachers.
2009	The Refugee Action Support program: Developing understandings of diversity	Ferfolja, T.	Australia	Specialist teacher training initiative	Reports on the implementation and learning outcomes of a teacher preparation initiative that seeks to develop understandings of diversity Provides targeted training to pre-service teachers in literacy and numeracy tuition Prepares pre-service teachers to tutor humanitarian refugee students in high schools.
2009	Intercultural inquiry with pre-service teachers	Guo, Y., Arthur, N. and Lund, D.	Canada	Mixed-methods research project	Examines the intercultural competence of pre-service teachers and ways to prepare them for responding to the needs of diverse student populations through focus groups and questionnaires Describes experiences of meaningful events in on-campus and field-placement learning related to intercultural competence based on pre-service teachers' critical incidents Findings indicate pre-service teachers' multiple and sometimes contradictory understandings of diversity, the importance of self-examination and reflection in the process of intercultural inquiry, and a disconnection between theory and practice.

2009	Developing social inclusion through after-school homework tutoring: A study of African refugee students in Greater Western Sydney	Naidoo, L.	Australia	Specialist teacher training initiative	Focuses on an after-school homework tutoring programme that uses secondary teacher education students as tutors for African refugee students in secondary schools to facilitate their inclusion into society Discusses the part played by schools in constructing barriers that prevent under-represented groups such as refugees participating in the education process Explores the success of community engagement programmes.
2010	'You lie—that's not true': Immigration and preservice teacher education	Fitchett, P.G. and Salas, S.	USA	Autoethnographic teacher educator reflections; theoretical	Proposes a theoretical model for developing a discourse on immigration in teacher education courses Explores two questions: How do we responsibly teach the controversial issues surrounding immigrant rights? and To what extent can structured dialogue of this topic deepen teacher candidates' understanding of the complexity of citizenship in the 21st century? Finds that recognising the importance of understanding the historical context of current immigration is essential, that teacher educators should expose learners to historical perspective-taking and that meaningful discussion should be used as a tool for perpetuating a democratic dialogue on controversial issues surrounding immigration.
2010	English as an additional language and initial teacher education: Views and experiences from Northern Ireland	Skinner, B.	Northern Ireland	Qualitative research project	Reports on a small-scale qualitative study on 15 primary and post-primary teachers' perspectives on their preparation for teaching English as an additional language (EAL) Includes topics such as EAL content in initial teacher education (ITE) programmes, the type of difficulties faced when teaching EAL pupils and the ways in which ITE might include the skills and knowledge needed to do this Findings show that the current provision for EAL training varies and that participants need and want practical EAL coping strategies and a thorough grounding in EAL-related theory.
2011	Preparing teachers for teaching immigrant students through service-learning in immigrant communities	Tilley-Lubbs, G.A.	USA	Qualitative research project; specialist teacher training initiative	Investigates the transformative aspects of a course that places graduate students in service-learning experiences with Spanish-speaking families Argues that service-learning in immigrant communities is an effective pedagogy to develop an awareness of students' worlds away from school Findings suggest that focused academic study and community experience promote understanding challenges English language learners and their families face, as well as understanding their future roles as teachers of such students.

2014	Pre-service English teachers' perceptions of newly arrived children from mainland China	Chan, Y.W. (B.) and Gao, X. (A)	Hong Kong	Qualitative research project	Examines focus group discussions with 17 pre-service English language teachers about their perceptions of newly arrived immigrant children from mainland China Findings reveal that (1) participants widely perceived these children as deficit and consider them a serious professional challenge; and (2) media, life and teaching practicum experiences with immigrant children were crucial in forming these perceptions Calls for teacher education programmes to involve pre-service teachers in critical engagement with the mass media and their own experiences so that they can address the deficit model applied by teachers to immigrant children.
2015	The pre-service training of students in the Bachelor's in primary education on how to teach immigrant students and different educational intervention measures	Nikleva, D.G. and Ortega-Martín, J.-L.	Spain	Quantitative research project	Focuses on pre-service teachers' views of their training to teach immigrant students Results indicate that changes should be introduced in the teaching-learning process to improve the efficiency of pre-service teacher training, as the multilingual and multicultural nature of Spanish society today is constantly growing and increasingly requires teachers who are prepared to meet this demand.
2015	Refugee children and art teacher training: Promoting language, self-advocacy, and cultural preservation	Wellman, S. and Bey, S.	USA	Specialist teacher training initiative	Reviews a course which involves six pre-service art teachers, designed and led by the two authors. The course aims to use visual arts to enable refugee students to develop the confidence and life skills required for acclimatisation into school and the outside world Findings focus on such work's potential to develop language and literacy skills, self-advocacy skills and self-esteem in migrant refugee children.
2017	'Everybody kind of looked at me like I was from Mars': Preparing educators through qualitative service research projects	Dorner, L., Kim, S., Floros, A. and Mujanovic, M.	USA	Qualitative research project; specialist teacher training initiative	Qualitative 'service-research' project in an undergraduate teacher education course where students examined the racial, linguistic, religious and migration experiences of youth in St Louis, Missouri Showcases one student research team that developed and analysed three case studies of young women from Bosnian Muslim families in partnership with a local organisation Argues for the integration of qualitative research skills, service projects and community partnerships into educator preparation programmes.
2017	Teaching about refugees: Developing culturally responsive educators in contexts of politicised transnationalism	Gagné, A., Schmidt, C. and Markus, P.	Canada	Qualitative research project	Uses narratives generated within a self-study approach of two teacher educators and one teacher leader Compares and contrasts their experiences working with different teacher groups to promote resiliency and language learning among war-affected and refugee children and youth; argues for the use of culturally responsive pedagogy in contexts of politicised transnationalism.

2017	Who is in the classroom now? Teacher preparation and the education of immigrant children	Goodwin, A.L.	USA	Review article	Follow-up review to a review from 14 years before, which argues that teacher preparation must be rethought to ensure culturally and linguistically responsive curriculum and classroom practice, and has not yet been adequately addressed. Asks the questions of: What, if anything, is different in terms of who is in the classroom now? Are teachers any more prepared to work with immigrant children? Have the issues facing immigrant children—and their families—changed? How is the world different and what does that difference mean for education? Immigration and immigrants are indelibly woven into the fabric of American history, so any discussion about the education of immigrant children is embedded in an ongoing socio-historical conversation. In what ways have educators been full participants in that conversation? Have we done the right thing?
2017	Language learning and intercultural education: Barriers and prospects in the Cypriot context	Hajisoteriou, C. and Angelides, P.	Cyprus	Qualitative research project (policy focus)	Qualitative study of policy documents and interviews with policymakers, which examines the barriers and prospects of intercultural education in Cypriot schools of the southern part of Cyprus with regard to learning the language of the reception country and the language of origin. Findings indicate that intercultural education policies almost exclusively relate to Greek-language teaching, promoting cultural assimilation, and that there is a lack of coherent policy and inadequate teacher training, and a lack of collaboration between schools and migrant families.
2017	Homonationalism in teacher education – Productions of schools as heteronormative national places	Reimers, E.	Sweden	Qualitative research project	Qualitative study based on observations at a teacher training programme, which interrogates how teacher education and schools are produced as places for simultaneous and intertwined norms of nationality and norms of sexuality. Findings indicate that homonationalism in education produces tolerable queers together with intolerant migrants. Argues for investigations of homonationalism as a tool in teacher education in order to bring about more inclusive schools.
2018	Supporting immigrant-origin children: Grounding teacher education in critical developmental perspectives and practices	Abo-Zena, M.	USA	Framework proposal	Proposes an ecologically and developmentally sensitive framework for teacher education in order to understand immigrant-origin children in a holistic manner to support their overall development and learning.
2018	Immigration in 2018: What is a teacher educator to do?	Allman, K.R. and Slavin, R.E.	USA	Practice proposal	Highlights scholarship in critical care pedagogy and culturally sustaining pedagogies and identifies three "action areas" where teacher educators can apply these theories. Recommends practices that can be adopted to create more caring and culturally sustaining spaces for immigrant teachers and students.

2018	Teachers as frontline agents of integration: Finnish physical education students' reflections on intercultural encounters	Anttila, E., Siljamäki, M. and Rowe, N.	Finland	Qualitative research project; specialist teacher training initiative	Reflects critically on an experiential learning intervention and interviews with pre-service teachers – trainee physical education teachers facilitated kinaesthetic language-learning workshops for asylum seekers Focuses on how future physical education and dance teachers may be better prepared to work in increasingly diverse education environments and how tertiary institutions might address issues of social inclusion and cultural pluralism within their programmes, courses and assignment Findings reveal that not all students feel that such encounters with migrant learners are relevant to the role of a physical education teacher Argues for courses on interculturality.
2018	Meaning-making or heterogeneity in the areas of language and identity? The case of translanguaging and <i>nyanlända</i> (newly-arrived) across time and space	Bagga-Gupta, S. and Dahlberg, G.M.	Sweden	Qualitative research project	Ethnographic research including naturally occurring interactional data and textual data, such as current scholarship, directives from the national bodies in charge of schools and teacher education in Sweden Findings focus on the ways in which the emergence and proliferation of neologisms like translanguaging and <i>nyanlända</i> contribute towards (or confound) issues related to communication and diversity in the educational sector.
2018	"It's in your heart": How the California Mini-Corps programme and Hispanic serving institutions are transforming migrant student education	Ginsberg, A., Gasman, M. and Castro Samayoa, A.	USA	Qualitative research project; specialist teacher training initiative	Case study evaluation of a migrant teacher training intervention based on interviews with 10 students and 14 educators involved in the programme Aims to support migrant pre-service teachers to teach migrant students Advocates teaching 'from the heart', culturally relevant pedagogy and developing teacher education programmes that are rooted in the local community.
2018	Serving Indiana's emergent bilingual immigrant (EBI) youth: A collective case study of EBI teacher educators	Morita-Mullaney, T. and Stallings, L.	USA	Qualitative research project; specialist teacher training initiative	Collective case study that examines how a university faculty prepares pre- and in-service teachers to address the needs of EBI youth Findings highlight the institutional constraints as well as the existence of activities that promote respect and develop empathy through perspective sharing – implications include the value of methodical inclusion of immigration history, perspective-taking and critical self-reflection in order to facilitate teacher identity development and foster their stances of advocacy for EBIs.
2018	Where are the "people like me"? A collaborative autoethnography of transnational lives and teacher education in the US	Vellanki, V. and Prince, S.P.	USA	Qualitative research project; specialist teacher training initiative	Collaborative autoethnography of a transnational migrant pre-service teacher and a transnational migrant teacher educator that explores the ways their transnational identities shaped their experiences in a global teacher education course focused on diversity and multiculturalism Findings focus on the idea that curricular nationalism within multicultural education courses often negates any critical engagement with the influence of transnationalism on immigrants and their educational experiences, and the visible absence of narratives and research about transnational lives and identities in the course curriculum.

2021	Teachers as agents of change: Positive discipline for inclusive classrooms in Kakuma refugee camp	Mendenhall, M., Cha, J., Falk, D., Bergin, C. and Bowden, L.	Kenya	Qualitative research project; specialist teacher training initiative	<p>Draws on 81 semi-structured interviews and extensive feedback gathered during teacher training workshops in a refugee camp</p> <p>Highlights the reality that refugee children have often witnessed or experienced trauma, violence and death</p> <p>Examines the micro-level disciplinary practices among teachers</p> <p>Presents the tension between teachers' own negative experiences with corporal punishment as students and their justification for using corporal punishment as teachers</p> <p>Highlights the role that continuous professional development plays in making positive changes to teachers' beliefs and practices</p> <p>Recommends providing a safe space for reflection and discussion on corporal punishment and positive discipline.</p>
2021	Deep change in low-resource classrooms: Data-driven teacher professional development for educators from Burma using a choice-based approach	Tyrovoutis, G., Sasaki, M., Chan, L., Win, N., Zar, T., Win, N.N., Moo, N.T. and Paw, N.N.Y.	Thailand	Specialist teacher training initiative	<p>Evaluates the competencies of 132 Burmese educators employed in Migrant Learning Centers on the Thai-Burma border through enrolment in a 10-month in-service teacher training programme</p> <p>Findings include that teachers exhibited the greatest gains when presented with different options of how they could improve</p> <p>Argues that key aspects of teacher professional development, which should be considered in low-resource contexts, are teacher ownership, transparent accountability measures, place-based instruction and coaching, high-quality feedback and modelling, contextually relevant design and strong professional relationships.</p>

Declarations and conflicts of interest

Research ethics statement

Not applicable to this article.

Consent for publication statement

Not applicable to this article.

Conflicts of interest statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest with this work. All efforts to sufficiently anonymise the author during peer review of this article have been made. The author declares no further conflicts with this article.

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