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Article

# A Dialogical Exploration of Student Teacher Reflections: From Notions of Insiderness and Outsideness to Pedagogical Alongsiderness

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**Abstract:** This article offers a dialogical exploration of student teachers' reflections on notions of insiderness and outsideness, the focal themes of an Erasmus+ ten-day intensive programme (IP). The arts-based, interdisciplinary IP involved 32 student participants and twelve members of staff from eight European universities hosted by the University of Jyväskylä, Finland. The data for this paper are based on the final written essays of student participants as they reflected on their understanding of outsideness and insiderness at the end of the IP. The dialogic approach used in the analysis allows for a careful exploration of how the students attended to different experiences, surmised the meaning of insiderness and outsideness, and used these reflections to develop their pedagogical response. The findings highlight how the participants drew on their own experiences and relationships within and beyond the IP to navigate and negotiate their pedagogical understanding. This study offers useful insights into the formation of pedagogical understanding as well as the role and responsibilities of teacher education in guiding this formative process, all the more important in times of emergencies.

**Keywords:** dialogic approach; pedagogical understanding; insiderness; outsideness; chronotope; reflection



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## 1. Introduction

This qualitative study investigates student teacher reflections on insiderness and outsideness at the end of an intensive programme (IP) addressing diversity as an inherent and expanding feature of education. The ten-day IP involved 32 student participants and twelve members of staff from eight European universities hosted by the University of Jyväskylä. The IP drew on arts-based and interdisciplinary approaches to explore notions of 'insiderness' and 'outsideness'. These notions acknowledge the subjective relation between individuals and different places [1], such as a sense of belonging, disassociation, or alienation [2].

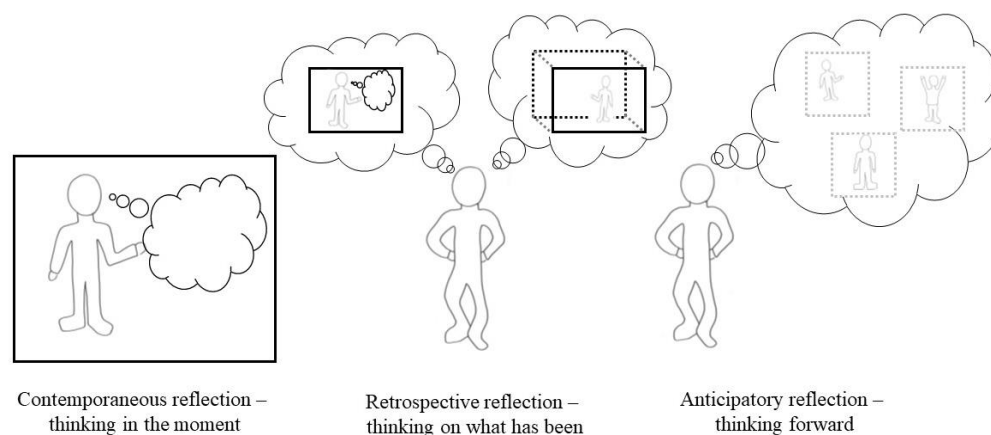
Current and ongoing emergencies, with the extensive movement within and across populations, the enduring sense of uncertainty, and failure to integrate immigrant populations into educational communities [3] require educators to understand what it means to be an insider and an outsider. Teachers have to be increasingly sensitive to the different kinds of life stories and experiences, current situations, and future prospects that students bring with them to the classroom [4,5]. Moreover, teachers need to recognise the crucial role they play in the integration or exclusion of students in educational communities [6]. These significant responsibilities call for better understanding of how student teachers prepare to come alongside students in teacher education and how reflecting on notions of insiderness and outsideness can contribute to this process.

This study uses a dialogical perspective to explore how student teachers reflected on their own experiences of insiderness and outsideness to navigate and negotiate their pedagogical understanding. This perspective 'has much to offer in the consideration of learning, relationships and what these aspects mean for contemporary society' [7] (p. 849) and provides a lens for exploring the interplay of 'inference and observation' [8] (p. 270) that inform the reflective process of pedagogical development [9,10].

### 1.1. Reflecting on Reflection

Reflection is a well-established feature of teacher education [11] recognised as an important way of ‘thinking better’ [12] and of developing personal and professional understanding [13]. Ideally, by reflecting teachers can go beyond ‘what works’ to understanding how or why actions are pedagogically appropriate for particular students at a particular time [8]. Through reflection, everyday understanding comes into dialogue with explicit knowledge, uncertain action can be re-examined for future practice, and greater distance can be fostered between the event and the moment of careful reflection, promoting deeper learning [14]. While it is not possible to anticipate what will happen nor to have readymade answers, through reflection educators have wider repertoires to draw on for better actions and responses in the future [15]. Moreover, over time educators can develop reflexive dispositions as reflecting becomes part of habitual thinking [16,17] without undermining the complexity of reflection.

This complexity is exemplified in the different temporal frames that inform reflection [18]. Contemporaneous reflection is located within the present moment and often requires immediate action giving little time to think deeply, illustrated by the boxed figure on the left side of Figure 1. Retrospective reflection looks back from a distance allowing consideration from different perspectives and reconsideration of what has happened, as illustrated by the thought bubbles of the middle figure. Anticipatory reflection that looks forward to what could be, without any guarantee of what will be, is illustrated by the presence of different actions in the thought bubble of the right-hand figure. These different forms of reflection build on and from one another. Over time, anticipatory reflections transform into retrospective reflections; past experiences can then resource current decision making as teachers look forward and make decisions in the moment. To be able to reflect well, however, requires time and investment [19].



**Figure 1.** Illustrating contemporaneous, retrospective, and anticipatory reflection.

Research to-date highlights the challenge of developing reflective dispositions within teacher education. Too easily, reflection can remain a superficial ideal, rather than an invested practice [11]. Accountability measures and forced reflection diminish the quality of and personal investment in teacher reflection [20] and ignore the personal, emotional risk of sharing reflections at the heart of one’s practice and understanding [21]. Teacher educators can fail to demonstrate how reflection is part of their own practice, and the emotional intonations of reflection can be mistakenly dismissed rather than acknowledged as indicators of sensitivity and awareness that need guiding, not over-riding, to inform the development of pedagogical understanding.

Research also indicates that student teachers’ reflection can be developed through a range of modalities, such as diaries and portfolios [21], reflective sketchbooks [22], and drama [23] as well as essays and narrative texts [24]. Clarà [8] argues that reflection remains an ambiguous notion and is better understood as the continual interplay of inference and observation, a kind of conversation, that can lead to a conclusion or clearer perspective

rather than a linear, decision-making process. The ambiguity of reflection highlights the need for better understanding of the process of reflection in teacher education and how reflection contributes to develop the pedagogical understanding, the particular expertise, of teachers. This need is even greater in times of significant challenge when teachers need firmer foundations to remain committed and invested as educators [25].

#### 1.1.1. Reflecting to Inform Pedagogical Understanding

The original meaning of pedagogy was to walk alongside, specifically for a slave or guardian to walk alongside the son of the household to deliver him to a place of learning [9]. As a metaphor, however, ‘walking alongside’ provides a powerful picture of the relationship and understanding educators need in relation to students. In addition to theories of learning, curricular requirements, subject disciplines, and methodologies [26], pedagogical understanding involves a positive orientation to and investment in the being and becoming of students [9]. Indeed, an essential task of educators is to open up the range of ‘existential possibilities’ students encounter [27,28], that is, different ways of being and becoming in the world and drawing attention to aspects of the world and themselves as part of the world, which students might otherwise miss or misunderstand. From a dialogic perspective, developing pedagogical understanding involves ‘guided engagement . . . with historically, culturally, and socially important voices, and learn[ing] how to address these voices, and to develop responsible replies to them’ [29] (p. 179) ‘setting a course for [future] ethical actions’ [29] (p. 174). Pedagogical understanding, however, also requires an openness to those being taught [30].

As a form of personal–professional knowledge, pedagogical understanding is in part developed through student teachers’ own life histories and personal experiences [31]. Student teachers have to learn to navigate educational environments, including different kinds of responsibilities and relationships, and to negotiate their own response to different situations. Teacher education, however, can only prepare student teachers for unforeseeable futures [32], seeking to promote independent action that can be responsible without any guarantee in turn informing the future development of their own students [33]. Arguably, the learnerfication of education [27,34], however, which allows student teachers to focus on their personal interests or needs, does little to prepare student teachers to go beyond their personal interests or needs denying student teachers the opportunity to encounter the wider world, engage with discomfort, and recognise the hard work that is required to learn to live well together [35–37]. Biesta suggests that

*one way to understand the current ‘crises’ we are encountering is that this self-positioning of the self has gone too far, and not just has reached its limits but is encountering limits—first and foremost the limits the planet imposes upon us, but also the limits which the existence of other human beings and our existence with other human beings imposes upon us.* [38] (pp. 50–51)

As the demographics of educational communities continue to change, teachers increasingly need to be sensitive and responsible in their work and prepared to work well with students and families with a multiplicity of backgrounds, experiences, needs, and resources [4,5]. Recognising the increasing diversity of educational communities emphasizes the need for teachers to be able to reflect on their own experiences and understanding in relation to others, to be open to different perspectives and considerations, and to be willing to address the complexities of education without clearcut answers. These particular considerations highlight the importance of intercultural understanding as a concomitant part of pedagogical understanding.

#### 1.1.2. Intercultural Understanding as Part of Pedagogical Understanding

Intercultural understanding explicitly recognises the need to carefully consider what it means to relate to others and a willingness to learn from and value the ‘poetic experiencing of contradictions’ [39] (p. 59) or the ruptures [40] that poignantly arise in encounters [41]. Intercultural understanding questions the existence of ‘clear-cut answers and easy applica-

tions' instead recognising that education involves 'complexities, accepting multiple voices, openness and the questioning of fixed truths' [36] (p. 174). Opening up the complexity of the space between intercultural others draws attention to the very real, felt experience of different places and relationships fostered within different environments, all the more relevant in times of upheaval and mass migration. Research in humanistic geography, for example, highlights how childhood memories and experiences of a place inform future understanding and action [42] and how the same environment can be experienced in significantly different ways, which can also change over time.

One framework used to recognise and navigate these experiences and changes is a continuum from existential outsidership to existential insidership [1,43]. Whereas existential outsidership indicates that although someone is present within a place, it feels unreal; there is a sense of nonbelonging, noninvolvement, of placelessness. Objective outsidership is similarly deliberately dispassionate in the relationship with the place whereas incidental outsidership encapsulates the notion of a largely unselfconscious attitude of noninvolvement, perhaps physically but not emotionally present. Vicarious insidership, however, suggests a more positive engagement with a place albeit through second-hand experience, such as emotional involvement through the arts. Behavioural insidership recognises the presence of 'I' within this place, but this stance remains predominantly visual, looking at the place, whereas empathetic insidership involves a more deliberate and deliberative experience of a place, and existential insidership subsumes the individual with the sense of the place, informing a deep sense of identity no longer questioned or reflected upon. These different forms of insidership and outsidership suggest different degrees of emotion and cognitive attachment fostered through the material setting, human activities, and the meaning ascribed to a place. The challenge for educators is to be aware of how positive and negative experiences of educational spaces are formed and to foster a sense of appreciated presence for diverse individuals within places of education without assuming that this is an easy or straightforward task.

Intercultural understanding, however, also recognises that

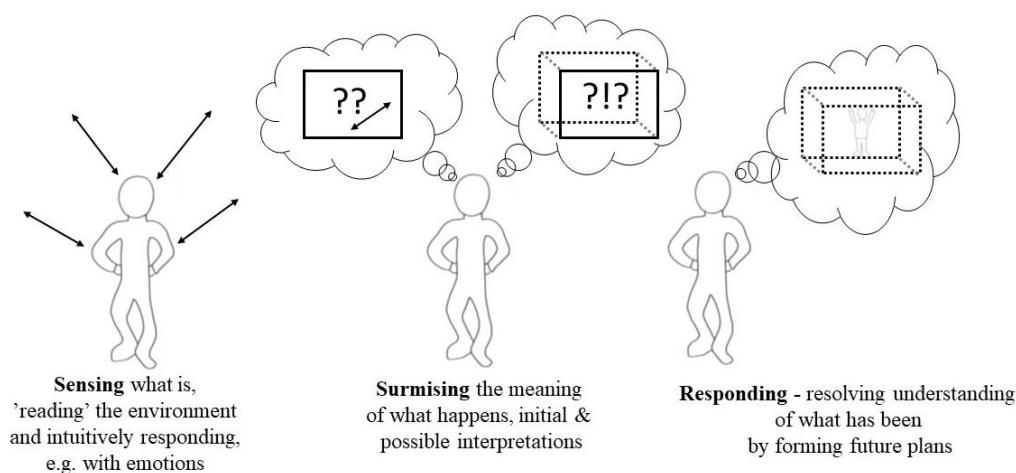
*... outsidership is a most powerful factor in understanding. It is only in the eyes of another culture that foreign culture reveals itself fully and profoundly... We raise new questions for a foreign culture, ones that it did not raise itself; we seek answers to our own questions in it; and the new culture responds to us by revealing to us its new aspects ... Such a dialogic encounter ... does not result in merging or mixing. Each retains its own unity and open totality, but they are mutually enriched. [44] (p. 7)*

Recognising outsidership as a resource challenges educators to appreciate the being, as well as address the becoming, of students [9]; to invest time in getting to know students as they are, in order to teach them [45]; and to value encounters with difference, that can be challenging and uncomfortable, as opportunities for mutual enrichment. Including intercultural understanding as part of pedagogical understanding calls for a careful reconsideration of the values and purposes underpinning education [28] as well as the investment and struggle, difficult questions and unanticipated answers [44], and boundaries and ruptures of educational encounters. Intercultural understanding expands what it means to be an educator, going beyond technique and standardisation, and even artistry and expertise, to allow for uncertainty coupled with a readiness to continually sense and respond responsibly. It is perhaps this expanded notion that can interrupt the tendency of student teachers to conform to perceived authorities and encourage them to consider for themselves who and how they should be as educators [15,38,46]. It is perhaps also this wider definition of pedagogical understanding that can enable future educators to teach their students how to deal with contradictions and struggles without demanding conformity [44,45]. The aim of this study is to better understand how reflection on insidership and outsidership can inform the pedagogical understanding of student teachers.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

This research draws on the dialogic perspective of Bakhtin to explore how student teachers reflect on insideness and outsideness to inform their pedagogical understanding. While a dialogic perspective has often been used to focus on the language and discourse in education, this perspective provides a sensitive theorisation of relationships between individuals, within communities, and in relation to the wider world [7]. From this perspective, individuals are understood to occupy a unique place in space and time [44]. Bakhtin's enduring interest in time-space, the chronotope, offers a sophisticated theoretical tool for exploring the interconnectedness of time and space as an environment for being and becoming [47], and to explore how individuals continually sense, surmise, and respond to their environment [48,49].

The immediacy of sensing, the initial meaning ascribed by surmising, and the greater thoughtfulness of responsiveness complement Clarà's [8] definition of reflection as 'the unclear situation; the problem; the idea (inference); the observation of the coherence between the idea and the observed events and previous knowledge; and the reaction of the situation to the introduction of the idea' [8] (p. 270). It is this interplay that generates dialogues in which past experiences, voices, and authorities are used as resources to anticipate and form potential action and pedagogical development [29,50]. Figure 2 illustrates the changing quality of reflection, from intuitive sensing to an initial surmising to, at least, a temporary resolving of understanding through the formation of future plans from a dialogic perspective.



**Figure 2.** Contemporaneous reflection as sensing, retrospective reflection as surmising, and anticipatory reflection as responding.

While different voices, authorities, and experiences contribute to this dialogue, student teachers have the final responsibility for who they become as educators [44,51,52]. Bakhtin conceptualised this dialogic relationship between an individual and their environment as a journey through a landscape [44]. If a hero travelling through space and time remains untouched and unchanged, that is 'self-centred', the hero remains under-developed [53]. However, if the 'hero' learns to 'read' the landscapes and look with a 'slower' eye then the engagement with the world is richer and a fuller self develops [44]. For Bakhtin, Goethe was a key example of engaging with a slower eye, and Goethe's account of his Italian journey [54] outlines how he sought to develop a 'slower' eye, for example, by drawing the natural world as drawing required him to deliberately stop, look, reflect, and engage with the world modelling an eco- rather than ego-centred approach to education [28].

Bakhtin's response to Bildungsroman—literature dealing with potential, reality, and creative initiative—commends human becoming that transforms from being a private affair in a stable world in which individuals are required to 'adapt' to the world '... to recognise and submit to the existing laws of life' [44] (p. 23) to becoming a public affair, which involves not only the becoming of individuals, but individuals and the world. This differentiation

between education as a private or public affair again anticipates the distinction between ego- and eco-centric education [28,38]. Moreover, from a dialogic perspective as an individual ‘emerges along with the world and he [sic] reflects the historical emergence of the world itself’ [44] (p. 23). In other words, each individual contributes to and is formed through the ongoing story of the world authored through the responsive acts of particular individuals at particular moments in space and time [55] underlining the emergent realism of a dialogic perspective [56].

From a dialogic perspective, it is the particularity of individuals within particular moments that avoids the over-abstraction of understanding that can undermine ethical relationships [44,51,55]. For Bakhtin, it is through relationships with particular others that a sense of self is formed, such as through the words of a mother in relation to an infant [51], through responses to someone else’s pain [51], or by recognizing the questions of outsiders as opportunities for mutual enrichment [44]. A dialogic perspective recognizes humanness not in abstracted truths, but in encounters between self and others. It is this perspective that can perhaps help with understanding why education is irreducible to technique or theory; education always involves relationships with particular others, in unrepeatable moments with profound implications for what students come to know and how they live in the world [28,31,38].

The IP in this study was a deliberate attempt to interrupt the assumptions and existing understanding of the student teachers by drawing their attention to notions and experiences of insideness and outsideness. Whilst teacher educators can seek to encourage engagement with different voices and spaces, it is students themselves who are ultimately responsible for their pedagogical understanding. The research task underpinning this study is to gain a better understanding of how students transform ‘ways of being’ into ‘ways of knowing’ that inform pedagogical understanding. The research questions underpinning this study use the distinct, dialogic phases of sensing, surmising, and responding to explore the formation of pedagogical understanding in relation to notions of insideness and outsideness.

1. How do the student teachers use key moments as resources to respond to notions of insideness and outsideness?
2. What did the student teachers initially surmise in response to these key moments?
3. How do sensing and surmising inform the pedagogical understanding of the student teachers in their reflections?

### 3. Materials and Methods

This section outlines the context for the research providing background information on the IP including the recruitment of participants, the generation of the dataset, and the theory-led analytical approach.

#### 3.1. Context for the Research

*Inside out, Outside in: Building bridges in teacher education through encounters with diversity*, was a three year Erasmus+ project that used a range of arts-based and interdisciplinary methodologies to examine insideness and outsideness from different perspectives and through different modalities (Project website <https://inouterasmus.wixsite.com/resources/home>, accessed on 15 February 2023 and evocative report, accessed on 15 February 2023). Each year of the IP included a 10-day IP with formal lecture-based sessions, including an introduction to the framework of Relph [43], as well as interactive and informal activities (see the Appendix A for more detail). The IP was intense with 32 participants from eight different European institutions coming together to sleep, eat, and study full time for a ten-day period in a location familiar to only four student participants from the host institution. In this iteration of the IP, two thirds of the 32 participants were female.

The participants of this IP specialised in different areas of education including pre-school, primary, secondary, special education, free-time guidance, and counselling. Most participants were completing bachelor studies, with the remaining participants completing postgraduate studies. The students applied for the IP and submitted a letter of motivation

along with a transcript of their studies as part of the application process. Local staff members were responsible for the final selection of student participants from individual institutions. Following the ethical requirements of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity [57], the participants were asked for permission to use videos and assignments as research data prior to and at the beginning of the IP. Participants could continue as a full member of the IP even if they chose not to participate in the research. Signed permission forms were submitted on the first day of the IP.

Prior to the IP, the participants were asked to write short texts reflecting on their experiences and understanding of ‘insiderness’ and ‘outsiderness’. The final assignment of the IP required participants to return to their initial texts and to write an extended reflection on insiderness and outsiderness in the light of the IP. These written reflections were submitted two weeks after the IP to local members of staff, and they form the dataset for this qualitative study. The length of the written reflections ranged from 1000 words for undergraduate students to 2000+ words for postgraduate students. Thirty assignments were returned in total, and no names or identifying features are included in this paper, although the assignments were numbered and referred to as, for example, P1 for Participant 1 to give the reader a sense of the breadth of responses from the participants. The author was a member of staff during the IP and responsible for the practical organisation of this particular IP—reserving rooms, organising local visits, and running a couple of sessions, including one session in which the author shared her own experience of insiderness and outsiderness as an international educator and parent. The final task assigned at the end of the IP was an extension of the ongoing, formal and informal conversations that had taken place throughout the IP in different formats and activities. This written reflection, however, was an opportunity for individual participants to share what they took away from the IP and how they envisaged this would inform their future practice.

### 3.2. Analytical Approach

The analysis is based on a dialogical approach to qualitative research [58] and is closely aligned with the Bakhtinian perspective outlined in the theoretical overview. This approach is particularly sensitive to the ongoing negotiations of inter- and intrapersonal dialogue that inform the reflective development of pedagogical understanding [50]. This approach is akin to narrative analysis in that seeks to avoid fragmentation of the dataset [59]. Moreover, a dialogic approach insists on maintaining the integrity of individual experiences [44,55] and recognises the ethical responsibility of individuals to respond to others [51].

#### The Analytical Procedure

Following careful readings of the participants’ texts to ensure familiarity with the overall dataset, the first analytical step was the identification of key moments in the data [58]. Key moments focused on that which the participants included as something to attend to in relation to insiderness and outsiderness. For example, Participant 1 wrote that *‘my university group always suggested insiderness and I also could appreciate that I could keep my identity there’*—the university group is ‘sensed’ as significant and appreciated, it is ‘surmised’ to be ‘mine’, and the abstracted ‘response’ is that this is the place that sustains one’s identity. These key moments were often accentuated by the emotional intonation of the text with direct reference to emotions or the use of descriptive, emphatic language highlighting the subjective nature of an experience [58] and of intercultural learning [60]. After careful readings of the essays, tables were used to document key moments from each essay outlining what was sensed and surmised and the response for each participant in relation to insiderness and outsiderness. Each table also included how insiderness and outsiderness were being conceptualised through the reflections and key quotations regarding the participants’ statements of pedagogical intent, that is, their future hopes and potential actions as teachers.

Table 1 includes example key moments from the dataset with what the participants sensed, that is, what they attended to and used as examples (Column 2); how the partic-



ipants initially surmised or explained the significance of what they sensed (Column 3); and the way in which the participants responded to the experience, that is, what action they then took or conclusion they drew from the experience (Column 4); and an example of pedagogical intent (Column 5). From a dialogic perspective, these responses are considered as significant points that can be subject to reinterpretation; nevertheless, the statements in the texts are seen to capture understanding at a particular point in time [53]. It is these responses that are part of the participants' epistemological becoming, arising from ontological 'being' [61].

**Table 1.** Data extracts and interpretations with emotional intonations in bold.

Participant	Sensed	Surmised	Responded	Pedagogical Intent
11	I grew up in a country with a strong traditional cultural background and after twenty years <b>I decided to push off the walls</b>	of my small reality, moving to another nation, where <b>life gave me the chance</b>	to experience the world from a different perspective.	"... as future teachers our goal should be to make our students aware of the danger of a single story, not to let them inherit what the hegemonic norm tries to impose"
Interpretation	Sensed the world was too small	Life in a different country can provide a different experience of life	Outsideness can be chosen and a chance to see from a different perspective	Teachers have a clear responsibility and goal

The third step was to compare the sensing, surmising, and responding with explicit statements of pedagogical intent, that is, what kind of educators the participants wanted to be, the actions they hoped to take, and the visions that they had for their students and classes in the future. This step involved comparing the retrospective and contemporaneous conceptualisations of the participants with their future expectations and potential action. The statements of pedagogical intent were often the concluding statements of paragraphs as well as the final paragraph of the essays where participants explicitly anticipated their work as educators [10,49]. Through these steps, a clear picture for the reflections of each participant, the quality of their reflections, and connection with their pedagogical understanding were developed.

#### 4. Findings

This section outlines the findings and begins by outlining the key moments that student teachers use as resources as they seek to make sense of insideness and outsideness. The personal tenor of these examples indicates how important it is for student teachers to have the opportunity to work through and with their own experiences as useful starting points concretising abstract notions. The middle section of the findings outlines what meaning the student teachers initially ascribed to these examples, that is, their preliminary reflections. These findings are important as they indicate the sensitivity and thoughtfulness of the student teachers and highlight how initially ascribed meaning can appear finalized. As the findings to the third research question indicate, however, over time this understanding can continue to change, to be enriched or undermined. Indeed, a key contribution of this study is to highlight the value of ongoing dialogue and of paying attention to the personal examples that students use to make sense of abstract notions, while also seeking to expand the dialogue beyond student teachers' own examples to enable them to work well in diverse educational communities. *In the findings, verbatim text from the participants' texts is italicised and followed by a reference to the participant to give the reader a better sense of the individual nature of the students' reflections as well as the shared quality of their reflections across the dataset.*

##### 4.1. Key Moments as Resources to Explore Insideness and Outsideness

The participants' texts include a broad range of key moments that they used as 'anchors' for sharing their experiences and as resources for developing their understanding. These key moments include remembered experiences of different places and environments as well as relationships with other people. For many participants, key moments of insideness were sensed in relation to that which was familiar—'my' group, a place with friends and family,

with people who shared the same passion or interests, belonging, and being connected. The emotional intonations associated with insideness were often positive—*safe and reassuring* (P1), *special* (P2), *accepted and respected* (P6), *rooted* (P13), *happy and able to learn* (P16), a *'natural spot'* (P21), *creates meaning* (P22), *welcoming* (P2), and *at home* (P6, P16, P22, P23).

Outsideness was sensed when entering new spaces—the course, schools, places of work, and exchange periods. In addition to physical or architecturally different places, however, the participants' texts also indicated the significance of different types of activities and relationships, such as drama, the *Dérive*, and meeting and discussing with new people as events that signified stepping outside of one's comfort zone or encountering something new. Emotions associated with outsideness included *agony* and *exhaustion* (P6), reduced confidence (P7, P16), *silly* and *terrible* (P7), *threatened* and *exposed* (P22), *stressed* (P22, P30), *unwelcome* (P23), *uncomfortable and overwhelmed* (P17), and *rejected and confused*, as well as *peace and freedom* (P15). The emotional intonations of the terms used to describe the sensation of insideness and outsideness indicate the significance of these experiences for participants and their intuitive explanation as to why these experiences were meaningful.

The temporal frame of these key moments greatly varied—from short moments as part of everyday life, such as skateboarding in the local city (P12) to longer term periods of living abroad (P6, P7, P8, P10) to the ten-day IP—*'the first time that I observed consciously my situation abroad'* (P1)—suggesting that it is not the duration of an event, but the meaningfulness of the moment that is attended to. In addition to new experiences that prompted reflections on outsideness, however, re-reading their own initial reflections was also significant for several participants (P4, P5, P9, P16, P17, P18, P24). Participant 9 commented that *'Sometimes it is hard to believe how your opinions and ideas about something can change so much in just a few days ... Now, reading my pre-task ... I realise that I Was just focusing surface of these concepts ...'*, and Participant 17 wrote, *'If I read my precourse assignment today ... I am astounded by my one-sided understanding of insideness and outsideness'*. Although these words might be somewhat idealised (the intended audience of the text is the course instructor), going beyond the opening words of these assignments the participants share in more detail why they are responding in this way to their own earlier assignment (see below). These findings suggest that re-viewing one's own words from a different vantage point can be significant in the formation of understanding and that initial associations or sensations of inside-as-positive and outside-as-negative can be questioned as participants revisit key moments. Moreover, it is noteworthy that although these anchor points are perhaps mundane in some senses, they give rise to powerful emotions also used to inform understanding.

#### 4.2. Surmising Significance

The surmised explanations of the students focus on the meaningfulness of their experiences after further reflection. The positive emotions associated with insideness continue to be present as participants surmise the significance of insideness. For several participants, insideness involves *being connected* (P1, P9), *identifying with others* (P14), *sharing similarities* (P18, P19) and *passions* (P9). Moreover, insideness is *bestowed* (P13), a *'way in'* *needs to be provided* (P9) as though *'inside'* is a bounded entity. On the other hand, some participants began to reform their initially positive statements, recognising that insideness can *bestow privileges to some* (P12, P24), it can *be abused* (P20), it is *insufficient in itself* (P9), it can *trap* (P23) and induce the adoption of inappropriate behaviour (P8, P25) and *dangerous 'habits'* (P20). These two different orientations indicate quite different ways of responding to insideness and point to the possibility of going beyond initial assumptions to develop a richer understanding.

Although the emotions associated with experiences of outsideness were often negative, as the participants surmise the significance of outsideness their intuitive responses are enriched. As Participant 30 wrote, *'I myself like the feeling of insideness, to belonging to a group and to feel safe. But sometimes in my life a [sic] made the experiences of being outside, and often, these were the moments in my life which made me grow'*. Many participants recognised the generative potential of outsideness (P4, P13, P15, P20) through the increased consciousness

it created (P1, P17), the different perspectives it provided (P4, P5, P9, P11), the space for reflection (P12, P15), new acquaintances (P1), inputs (P11), and empathy for others (P10) as well as the opportunity for change (P1, P11) and initiative (P13) and the role of power (P8) and difference between personal responses (P14). This surmising often points to the heightened awareness of being in a new place (physical, relational, conceptual) as well as the way in which it was suddenly ‘realised’ that now they could see more and that earlier limitations had been surpassed (P9, P18, P24). This sense of epiphany highlights the plasticity of understanding that can change and develop over time in turn highlighting the importance of prompts and encouragement to look again from different perspectives, to not be satisfied with initial impressions. It is also this epiphanic quality that separates the surmising of the participants from their more pedagogical responses to insideness and outsideness.

#### 4.3. From Surmised Meaning to Pedagogical Responses

As the participants anticipate their future role as educators, their responses are more extensive, and their understanding of insideness and outsideness is reformulated as principles to inform potential action. Whilst some participants explained insideness as a ‘basic’ or ‘human’ need (P3, P7, P18, P22), the explanations tend to acknowledge insideness as a *tenuous relationship* (P22) that should not be assumed or accepted without question (P12). Participants also pointed out that insideness requires *commitment* (P6, P20, P23), a relationship that requires *on-going reflection* (P8, P20), as this relationship is with and ‘between’ others, yet an individual should remain responsible for him/herself (P14, P23, P25). This conceptualisation corresponds with the initial responses to insideness as a mediated relationship, yet the participants seem to acknowledge their responsibility within this relationship, rather than having this position bestowed upon them. Moreover, the participants begin to recognise insideness as transitory (P14, P16) with *degrees of insideness* (P9), rather than a bounded entity. Some participants noted that it is possible to opt out of insideness (P11, P12, P17).

The participants’ texts also provide examples of actions and conceptualisations in response to outsideness. Actions include asking new questions (P1, P6, P16), revaluing opinions (P1, P6, P15, P17), being inspired to act (P2, P13, P15, P26, P2), and recognising the value of outside perspectives as resources for better understanding—seeing more or differently (P4, P5, P8, P9, P10, P12, P13, P18, P24). Outsideness was also responded to in terms of mediation and transition—as something that can be reduced through action and/or design (P1, P12, P22, P30), albeit challenging (P9, P13), and participants acknowledged the way in which outsideness can compromise potential contributions (P23), hamper engagement (P7), be *subject to cultural and social pressures* (P11) and *involves risk* (P20). In these responses, the positive and negative sides of outsideness are more readily acknowledged, and the clean-cut edges of outsideness are chipped away by suggestions that outsideness can on occasion be *chosen* (P11) or experienced even if an individual is accepted by others (P9).

As the participants continue to share their responses to insideness and outsideness, they also begin to share the way in which insideness and outsideness work as complementary notions. Participant 1 explicitly remarks ‘*that I could keep my identity there*’, that is, within the national group whilst participating in the InOut IP, and acknowledges the value of discussing with other participants as, ‘*when they shared their views on pedagogical topics . . . I could think over and revalue my opinion*’. Whilst on the one hand the ‘home’ group provided a foundation, the intercultural dialogues of the IP participants supported careful rethinking as the participants go beyond their initial experiences and begin to see and understand their experiences in new ways. These findings suggest that the participants are moving towards pedagogical understanding that is open to questions and contradictions and perhaps sympathetic to the experiences of others. As the participants share their potential pedagogical practice as future teachers, however, the relationship between insideness and outsideness is increasingly idealised.

#### 4.4. From Enriched to Idealised

As the participants turned their attention to the responsibilities of teachers, several participants emphasized the need to be aware of and to preserve pupils' identities and uniqueness (P1, P2, P10, P12, P13, P15, P21, P27, P28) by establishing an inclusive, welcoming atmosphere (P3, P10, P13, P17, P20, P27) to help pupils experience a sense of existential insideness (P4, P22, P26, P28). As future teachers, the participants expressed the desire to be responsible, sensitive examples (P8, P9, P10, P20, P23), available to students (P17, P21, P22, P26, P30) in order for their pupils to also learn to value diversity and to be inclusive. In these accounts, teachers are positioned as key mediators—almost gatekeepers—of insideness. Participant 22 writes, *'When people are included to the process, then they have opportunity feel as insiders. And our communication skills, temperament, cultural background, creativity, all our back[g]round makes us insideness of humanity'*. In a similar vein, Participant 24 says, *'It is time for education to invite learners to the inside. It is time for education to have purpose . . . For how are they else to create an environment that invites learners to create their own educational identity and sense of place?'*

These are indeed 'noble' goals, as Participant 26 notes, and the missionary tone of the participant texts—with mission being the word used by two participants themselves (P21, P28) when referring to their future work as teachers—is striking. These statements of pedagogical intent are reminiscent of the initial sensing of insideness, yet the struggles, challenges, and affordances of outsideness seem minimised. Three participants observe that the system needs to change for these hopes to be realised (P15, P28) and to avoid pupils *'inherit[ing] what the hegemonic norm tries to impose'* (Participant 11). These findings seem to suggest that although the big picture from the participants' accounts demonstrates a richer understanding of insideness and outsideness, when the participants look to the future as teachers, their reflections lack the complexity of their earlier reflections. As Participant 30 says,

*I myself view insideness as something positive people should try to reach. An important aspect of insideness is the safe frame it can give you. If we feel safe and enclosed we are much more willing to stay at the place where we are and to develop.*

The implications of the conclusions drawn by the student participants are the focus of the following discussion.

## 5. Discussion

This study explored how 30 student teachers formed pedagogical understanding in response to a ten-day IP focused on notions of insideness and outsideness. The three research questions focused on resources student teachers consider as significant in their initial explanations, their more abstracted responses, and potential action. Using a dialogic perspective, the key moments in the participants' texts that shared experiences of insideness and outsideness were considered as sensing, surmising, and responding [48,49]. This dialogic perspective complements the temporal distinctions of contemporaneous, retrospective, and anticipatory reflection [18]. Furthermore, this study indicates how the quality of student teachers' reflections can vary as they navigate what is and negotiate what could be.

The findings indicate that the participants initially attend to concrete and personal events and experiences as the material for forming understanding [61]. These events and experiences are often keenly felt and emotionally intoned [58,60]. These concrete, personal experiences provided a useful starting point for going behind and beyond individual memories to surmise what it means to experience insideness and outsideness. As the participants surmised the meaning of personal experiences, potential connections begin to form between different experiences, for example, the feeling of being accepted, albeit in different communities or at different times. Through these activities, it becomes possible to empathise with others who have different experiences and to see from different perspectives, enriching the ethical reflections of the participants [21].

Using the dialogical lens of sensing-surmising-responding it is possible to follow the gradual formation of the participants' pedagogical understanding as they become more aware of their own thinking, the significance of their experiences, and new ways of understanding. These findings highlight the value of student teachers' own experiences as a starting point for developing pedagogical understanding with space for contradictions [39], questioning [36], and ruptures [40], rather than temporal proximity. Re-viewing these key moments, whether from the distant or recent past, leads to significant shifts in understanding, which also needed further consideration and reflection. As Participant 16 wrote, *'When I got home though, I didn't really feel like home anymore. Some part of me had change, and I'd learned and experienced things with people who weren't surrounding me anymore and this made me feel a bit as an outsider. This really confused me'*. The profundity of this experience is particularly significant as few teachers experience the disruption of forced immigration or relocation, yet through personal experiences they can perhaps begin to understand the profound implications of these experiences and respond with greater sensitivity.

The participants' experience of time is also an important feature as pedagogical understanding takes shape. That the participants included distant as well as recent events also suggests that the temporal frame of meaningful dialogue can be 'stretched' over longer periods or compressed. This is perhaps the notion of 'great time' that Goethe entered into as he looked at ancient structures as part of a living culture or read the weather from the landscape [44]. As the participants responded to events, whether in the distant or recent past, and re-considered and re-responded to them, by theorizing their experience [41], these events and experiences became part of a dialogue that disregards time—or timespan—as a measure of meaningfulness or relevance. This suggests that in the formation of reflective dispositions [16,17], it is important to keep the dialogue alive, to remember to look with a slow eye, to meet with the particular others in educational communities and to be sensitive to their experience and their being and becoming [4,5], and to allow for uncertainty to be part of education [44,45].

The contrast between the sophisticated participants' responses and their potential pedagogical practice requires further attention. When the participants revisited their experiences, their responses become more abstract as statements of understanding in which they recognise the complexity of insiderness and outsiderness, problematizing simple designations of insiderness as good, outsiderness bad [36]. The quality of these personal insights, however, does not inform their pedagogical responses reiterating Clarà's [8] observation that reflection does not guarantee learning. In the participants' responses, that is in their anticipatory reflections, the negotiation of insiderness and outsiderness is discontinued; these struggles appear resolved. There is no consideration of what resources or qualities outsiders can bring to communities, nor what it might mean for a newcomer to be merged, even submerged or questioned within a community [35,40]. These lacks arguably demarcate the limits of the students' anticipatory reflections potentially stymying contemporaneous reflections in the field when encounters are no longer abstract considerations but lived experiences [10]. If open arms are not positively received, if other students struggle to accept newcomers, if teachers forget how to harness struggles and ruptures or the experiences and qualities of new arrivals, then the cost to individuals and educational communities will continue to be unnecessarily high [4,5].

This study highlights the significant challenge of negotiating pedagogical understanding. Whereas in their own experiences the students have to navigate what has been and then negotiate what this means, when stating their pedagogical intentions the participants' actual others are absent [9,10,32]. This is perhaps why the pedagogical intentions adopt a missional tone and overlook the discomforts and challenges of both insiderness and outsiderness. Rather than problematizing and recognising struggles, the participants paint pictures of idealised classrooms with arms wide open to 'outsiders' ready to bring them 'in'. These dogmatic statements of good intent seem to drop out of the bigger dialogue the participants had just entered into, in effect tightening and prematurely curtailing their pedagogical understanding [36,39].

This idealising tone, however, is potentially a useful indicator to student teachers and teacher educators that reflections are not serving the purpose of enriching pedagogical understanding [15,18,50]. Dogmatic mission statements are more akin to the Bildungsroman narratives in which human becoming involves ‘submit[ting] to the existing laws of life’ [44] (p. 23) rather than recognising that human development should also involve the development of the world. The expressed pedagogical intent tends to address an established system and assume a clear role, without considering whether their ideals will be accepted, whether welcoming ‘arms’ are adequate for mediating insiderness, or what to do if newcomers are not grateful for the kind of welcome that is offered. It is difficult questions such as these that emphasize the importance of recognising that the world is also ‘in process’ and that student teachers’ actions and assumptions contribute to the historical becoming of the world as well [56].

These findings reiterate the complexity of reflection as a practice and as an area for ongoing investment [11] as well as an area for further exploration and theorisation [8]. Existing research has drawn attention to the temporal quality of reflection and the importance of looking forward, as well as looking back [9,18]. The research reported here also draws attention to the quality of the reflections themselves, whether an intuitive sensing, an initial surmising of meaning, a carefully considered response, or a statement of future intention. As with Clarà’s [4] observations, this study illustrates that reflection does not automatically lead to the making of good decisions nor the linking of practice and theory [14]. However, by paying attention to the overall and varying quality of student reflections it is perhaps easier to move towards ‘better thinking’ [11,12].

At this juncture, it is important to return to the role and responsibility of teacher education. As in earlier studies, the different activities and relationships of the IP appear to foster awareness among the participants [24,29]. As participants reviewed their earlier texts, they expressed surprise and saw in new ways suggesting that through these activities and relationships of the ten-day IP, the participants began to enter into a bigger dialogue that went beyond themselves [38,44] and to actively draw on the complexity and openness of intercultural encounters [36,60] to form pedagogical understanding. While the significance of the reported insights suggests that their insights were becoming part of a richer dialogue [30], the dogmatic nature of their pedagogical statements challenges this assumption.

These findings suggest that a significant pedagogical dilemma of teacher education is how to support student teachers to enter into and actively sustain pedagogical understanding as a dialogue and the importance of developing reflection as a shared and individual aspect of teacher education [11]. Arguably, pedagogical understanding needs to acknowledge lack of understanding as well as expertise, openness to otherness as well as sensitivity to self, an ongoing dialogue and sense of responsibility, and willingness to be comfortable when uncomfortable [36]. Framing pedagogical understanding as an ongoing dialogue with concrete others, as well as with socially, culturally, and historically important voices, and as a foundation for ethical actions [29], is hopefully an important step towards the development of education as a sustainable and responsible endeavour in—and between—times of crises. Moreover, bringing the next generation into this dialogue can perhaps better prepare student teachers for the sense of disruption or confusion that can surround moments of crisis. If more educators participate in this ongoing dialogue, there is perhaps greater space for encountering and living alongside others in a more equitable and mutually beneficial manner.

### *5.1. Limitations and Further Considerations*

One limitation of this study is that it was conducted by a single author, although the IP was developed and designed by a much larger team of international educators. To support the integrity of this study, however, the researcher sought to check, question, and theoretically interpret the findings and to present earlier versions of this study to the wider educational community to receive feedback during the study. The integrity of the study is

also supported by the use of dialogic approach that avoided fragmenting the reflections of the participants and sought to be sensitive to the individual accounts of the participants. A wider team of researchers, however, would have provided a wider forum for comparing different readings of the students' reflections. It is hoped that by providing the verbatim texts and participant references in reporting the findings, the reader can also check the veracity of the findings.

The formal texts analysed in this study were only one of several modalities the participants used to document or report their understanding. Another study investigating the aesthetic outputs of participants [22] provides an alternative perspective on the way the student teachers negotiated their understanding and navigated their pathway through the course. The findings from that study highlight the dynamic responsiveness and personal responsibility of the participants, as well as the way different modalities mediate the development and demonstration of understanding. As essays, however, are conventional and often assessed formats in higher education, this study anticipated that participants would seek to present their 'best' understanding through essays. While this choice of data limits the breadth of the dataset, arguably the dogma of the pedagogical statements is an attempt to meet the perceived requirements of formal education, reiterating the dilemma of opening up the space of teacher education as an ongoing dialogue that invites participation.

Another limitation of this study could be the particular conditions of the IP. While the appended programme and evocative report provide insights into how the IP was realised, it cannot be repeated. No experience, however, is repeatable, yet this does not mean we cannot learn from experience; indeed, the sharing of experience is an important way to continue with our navigations and negotiations within education [15,56]. Moreover, it is perhaps short-sighted to think that educators can ever be fully prepared to deal with emergencies, but they can be prepared to fully anticipate contradictions [39], questions, and dilemmas [36] as responsible, ecocentric educators [28,38]. This is a challenge that mainstream teacher education needs to address as the longer timeframe provides greater opportunities for deepening and enriching reflective dispositions than a 10-day programme can afford.

## 5.2. Future Research

For future research, one avenue would be to examine how student teachers engage with course readings, that is, the voices of authorities, as they build their understanding, whether student teachers can be encouraged or enabled to enter into dialogue with more authoritative others, open to learning without minimising oneself, and on the other hand to engage with the stories of concrete others, that is children, students, and families that have endured crises and have experiences to share. This would perhaps be one way of sustaining dialogue as a feature of pedagogical understanding, rather than a finalizable achievement [62,63]. This study offers a novel methodological approach exemplifying how a dialogic lens is sensitive to the complexity of reflecting on pedagogical understanding from the inside as student teachers as well as from the outside as researchers. This dialogical perspective arguably has far more to offer in the development of educational research that is aware of the significant challenges and changes that are part of educational communities.

## 6. Conclusions

This study highlights the sensitivity of student teachers to the world around them and their positive orientation to engage with others, to better understand themselves and to contribute to education. It is perhaps not surprising that student teachers mistakenly think that a final pedagogical answer is available if they have been raised in an educational culture that promotes efficiency and ego on the one hand and, on the other hand, minimises the responsibility and sensitivity of individual selves [28,38]. The sensing, surmising, and responses of the participants highlight their potential to engage with their own experiences from different perspectives and capacity to enter into dialogue around the purpose of education, the significance of insideness and outsideness, and the need to learn how to

come alongside, rather than being carried away by good intentions. Whether and how this dialogue continues and contributes to the ongoing development of pedagogical understanding for individuals and educational communities, however, is also the responsibility of teacher education in order to create a sustainable, beneficial life together, even in the midst of crises.

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**Institutional Review Board Statement:** This study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki and did not require ethical approval. This was approved by the Institutional Review Board (or Ethics Committee) of University of Jyväskylä.

**Informed Consent Statement:** Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

**Data Availability Statement:** The data are not publicly available as permission was not granted by the participants to share the data outside the project team.

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## Appendix A

**Table A1.** IP outline.

What and When	Who
Wednesday, 27 April, <i>Outside in—Day of arrival</i>	
• Travel day	
• Team-building	TS
- Shared meal	
Thursday, 28 April <i>Insights for outsiders—Orientation</i>	
• Practicalities	TJ
• Overview of the course	TS and TK
• Expectations	
• Team building	
• Inside out/Outside in—Title of course/Theoretical framework	TH
• Introducing the Reflective Sketchbook	TA (digitally), TB
• Dérive—exploring different buildings for education on campus	TJ
Friday, 29 April <i>Dropout, Learning + schools</i>	
• Dropouts—Who fails and why?	TE, TBr
• Process drama on dropouts	TK
• Learning initiatives for different communities—seeking success?	TE
• School experiences through community initiatives	TE

museum visits



Table A1. Cont.

What and When	Who	
Saturday, 30 April— <i>Moving through educational spaces and places</i>		
• History of Education—The nation state	TC	
• Educational and school culture	TE	
• Scenario	TP	
• Insiderness and outsiderness in humanistic geography	TH	
• Pedagogical insiderness and outsiderness	TJ	
Sunday, 1 May <i>Relaxing outside and inside in Finland</i>		
• Forest hike	TJ	
• Sauna	TJ	
Monday, 2 May <i>Educational cultures</i>		
• School visit and reflection	TJ	
• Discussing the Finnish school system)	city official/ TJ/students	XXX teacher practice school, 3 local schools
• School systems (systemic overview, What are you proud of? What would you like to change?)	TP/students	
Tuesday, 3 May <i>Insights into dimensions of learning</i>		
• Sharing my learning story	TK	
• Learning styles—cognitive, intuitive	TAu	
• Seminar for Finnish teachers and students—guest lecture	guest lecturer	
Wednesday, 4 May <i>“Every teacher is a language teacher”</i>		
• Finding the common language through drama	TK	
• Cultural literacies—different emphasizes in schools	TJ	
• How to teach language through drama	TB	
Thursday, 5 May <i>Preparing the outcomes</i>		
• “Swimmy” pretext drama	TA	
• Preparation for small group student presentations	(students)	
Friday, 6 May <i>Presenting the outcomes</i>		
• Student presentations	whole team	
- Shared meal		
Saturday, 7 May <i>Inside out—Going home</i>		
• Departure		

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