

## **TEACHERS' WAYS IN TIMES OF FLUIDITY**



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**TEACHERS' WAYS IN TIMES OF FLUIDITY**

**IDIOSYNCRATIC CULTURAL RESPONSES**

**TO GLOBAL EDUCATIONAL REFORM MOVEMENTS**

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'You cannot transport cultures like bananas'

Gjert Langfeldt

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## SUMMARY

### *Purpose and background of the study.*

Through a critical dialectical analysis, the present study explores idiosyncratic cultural patterns of refraction of what is termed 'the global educational reform movements' (GERM) that emerge when stories of Norwegian teachers' lives are interpreted in light of grand narratives and concepts of modernity. 'GERM' refers to current educational agendas of world organisations and corporations, such as the United Nations, the World Bank, the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OECD), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and the Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21, 2017). These are characterised by ambiguous policies of inclusion, diversity and sustainability on the one side, and decontextualised standards, output monitoring and accountability governance on the other.

A central premise of the study has been that local responses to and 'translations' of the policy changes in Norwegian education during the last decades are not necessarily in correspondence with the intentions of the policy initiatives or agreements. Another premise has been that GERM represents a continuation and transformation of the ideals of Modernity, where the efficient and accelerated accumulation of generic knowledge and skills is viewed as essential to societal growth and success. The metaphor of 'policy refraction' expresses a third premise of the study. The concept of refraction as used in the social sciences refers to ways in which the direction of policies is transformed and bent on national, local and individual levels. The concept is a metaphorical abstraction of the behaviour of waves where the direction and shape of a wave is altered because of the interaction with a specific physical environment. Translated into sociological terms, this means that the 'waves' created by changing policies are 'echoed' or 'refracted' in diverse ways, depending on the social structures and unique history of a given human environment. The refractions of political reforms are not only assumed to be seen in repercussions on a grand societal and national scale, but are also expected to be observable on 'micro' levels, as in the actions and expressions of people directly exposed to policy changes in education—in this case teachers.

### *Theoretical and methodological framework.*

The epistemological and methodological viewpoints and philosophical tools developed by Ricoeur and Goodson have made it possible for me to create a research design, which may describe and analyse trajectories and translation of educational policy reforms considering historical, institutional and cultural contexts, as well as phenomenological perspectives. In this study, the structural and subjective dimensions in teachers' enactments of policies are understood dialectically—as related pairs of reality that mutually both exclude and reinforce one another. Societal and individual responses are thus regarded as equally important to address when investigating how global trends and policies within the field of education might be 'bent' on local and individual levels.

Furthermore—to be able to 'read' the policy refractions in a detailed and non-intrusive way, I have chosen Ivor Goodson's Life History approach, which I have placed into the frame of Paul Ricoeur's theories of narrative, metaphor and critical hermeneutics. The combination of Ricoeur and Goodson's approach and concepts of narrative represents an elaboration of their theories, where their theoretical viewpoints and concepts mutually enrich and modify each other, and where the narrative terminology is pragmatically adjusted to perspectives and conceptualisations within neighbouring fields of research, such as history and sociology. While Ricoeur and Goodson's narrative theories primarily serve to structure the various phases and stages of the research process, the application of concepts outside of Narrative serves two purposes:

- To expand the epistemological and ontological premises of the research design.
- To work as metaphorical bridges to new understandings and conceptualisations of the research findings in the final stages of analysis.

In line with the first purpose, my conceptualisation and understanding of how individual teachers respond to educational reform movements is coloured by Stephen Ball's concept of embodied policies, policy enactment, and his definition of GERM, as well as by Pierre Bourdieu's sociological concepts of 'habitus' and 'agency'. Among the theories and concepts serving the second purpose are Ricoeur's work on



‘Memory, History, and Forgetting’, the concept of ‘refraction’ as used by Tim Rudd and Ivor Goodson, and by Bourdieu—as sketches of modernity by critical theorists such as Georg Simmel, Walter Benjamin, Zygmunt Bauman, and Hartmut Rosa.

### *Design.*

Nine life story interviews with teachers practicing in the Norwegian primary and secondary school have been conducted and categorised. Three of these interviews were selected for further translation and re-narration into English and a Life Story design, inspired by Goodson’s Life History approach.

The interpretation of the Life Stories was based on four levels of abstraction, according to Ricoeur’s hermeneutical arch model—the Naïve, Structural, and Deep phases, and the final level where metaphors of wave behaviour are used to reconceptualise empirical findings of the three former levels of abstraction.

### *Findings.*

Through discursive positioning, or hierarchal ranking of priorities disclosed in the Life Stories, all three teachers appeared to have opened a professional and autonomous space in their teaching practices. This space also seems to have provided them with an opportunity to place the needs of pupils, parents and colleagues among their top priorities, *above* the demands and aims of central policymakers and governance. All three teachers appeared to have preserved ideals and practices that resonate with the Norwegian unified school model developed in the period from the 1930s to the 1990s, and its emphasis on egalitarian, democratic, inclusive, formative, and folk-oriented education. The results of the contextual and historical analyses indicated that all three Life Stories expressed various ways of resisting and negotiating central (including global) policy initiatives and governance that failed to match local school context and history, as well as professional and communal discourses of education. The way in which the individual teachers expressed this resistance revealed differences. These differences seemed to be related to local religious, class, and gender practices traceable to the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

In the final part of the analyses, where the results were scrutinised through the metaphorical lens of ‘refraction’, I discovered that the concept of refraction made more sense when contrasted with other metaphors of wave behaviour, such as *diffractive* or *reflective* movements. ‘*Diffraction*’—in a metaphorical sense—points to the bending of reform policies, which seems to occur when institutional or professional autonomy is reduced by external monitoring and control—possibly leading schools and teachers into shadow-practices or ‘pockets of resistance’ to resolve a balance of forces. ‘*Reflection*’, on the other hand, points to superficial reform ‘outputs’, where measured results and activities merely communicate *illusions* of progress—not school-life realities as experienced by the professionals working within the school setting. Because of these considerations, I decided to combine the three concepts in the further metaphorical analyses under the term ‘refraction, diffraction, and reflection’ model (RDR-model).

I found, through the RDR analysis, that aspects of refractive, diffractive and reflective responses to GERM were present in every narrative, just in different proportions and facets, depending on the resonance between the external policies, the local cultural context and the teachers’ professional autonomy and beliefs.

### *Conclusions.*

What relevance has Modernity, with its inherent race for change, rationality, instrumentalism and excellence, to the local refractions of educational policy changes? As portrayed in all three Life Stories of this study, time, pace, and societal acceleration seem to be important dimensions in the comprehension of teacher’s idiosyncratic responses to GERM. These dimensions are sometimes expressed as local cultural ‘slowness’ or an opposite ‘metropolitan’ urge for change and tempo; in other cases, as signs of stress and unfulfillment, or other negative reactions to constant demand for tempo and effectiveness—combined with worries about the strain these demands put on children and pupils.

The results of the present study are not to be understood as 'facts' about Norwegian teacher's attitudes to reforms, but rather as hints or suggestions to the policymakers, and as an invitation to 'listen back' or become more attentive to the experiences and knowledge that Norwegian teachers represent. What seems to be the central 'message' from the three narratives used in this study is that much of the teachers' professional energy is spent on 'caring for' the pupils, protecting them from possible adverse effects of GERM policies, such as instrumentalism and test regimes. The study also points at the possibility that important information about how the reforms are received may not be communicated back to the policymakers, that is, transparently conveyed as true responses that can be rationally treated and constructively applied by the central agencies.



---

## **PART I** — Aims and Theoretical Framework



## INTRODUCTION

The overarching aim of the study is to describe, explain, and understand trajectories of the global educational reform movements as enacted and recontextualised on a local and individual level. The study situates the global policies within a context of ambiguous discourses and ideological tensions. These tensions are visible in the human rights ambitions of quality, inclusion and equity represented by the educational initiatives of the United Nation (UN) and the European Union (EU) on the one hand—and in their concurrent embrace of universal standards ('best practices'), test and output monitoring, and reliance on a growing global education industry (GEI: e.g. OECD, The World Bank, P21), on the other hand. The study puts these contemporary developments into a historical perspective, as expressions of times of 'fluidity', characterised by societal acceleration and marketisation of culture and identity formation (i.e., liquid modernity). Additionally, the study interprets the current global educational agendas as a continuation of a 'modernity narrative', where science and education are perceived as a key to economic growth and personal emancipation. What I have found particularly interesting in this matter is whether the 'modernity narratives' and discursive tensions in the current global agenda are of significance or noticeable in local educational practices, and further, how the global educational agendas are negotiated by individual teachers in their daily life and work settings.

Through a critical dialectical analysis, the study explores and explicates idiosyncratic responses to the global educational reform movements that emerges when stories of Norwegian teachers' lives are juxtaposed to grand narratives of modern development and ideals in the Norwegian history of education, and abstracted through critical concepts of modernity. The main aim of the study is to investigate:

What can Norwegian teachers' Life Stories, analysed in light of grand narratives and concepts of modernity, tell about idiosyncratic cultural responses to global educational reform movements?

The theoretical framework of the study is inspired by Paul Ricoeur's dialectical approach to hermeneutic and narrative theory and Ivor Goodson's Life History approach and concepts of the five Rs of education.<sup>1</sup> The epistemological and methodological viewpoints and philosophical tools developed by Ricoeur and Goodson have made it possible for me to create a research design, which may describe and analyse trajectories and a translation of educational policy reforms in light of historical, institutional, and cultural contexts, as well as subjective phenomenological perspectives. In this study, structural and subjective dimensions in teachers' enactments of policies are understood dialectically—as related pairs of reality that mutually exclude and reinforce one another. Societal and individual responses are thus regarded as equally important to address when investigating how global trends and policies within the field of education might be 'bent' on local and individual levels. To incorporate a perspective of cultural transformation and change I have combined several theoretical 'access points', from phenomenology and hermeneutics to sociology and critical theory. These theories are not necessarily complementary in a strict understanding, but have all been useful in my dialectical approach to the interpretation of the empirical material. The analytic model applied in this study, is an operationalisation of Ricoeur's work on the *hermeneutical arch* (Ricoeur, 1974, 1976, 1991, 1999, 2003), *metaphor* (2003), and *narrative* (1990a, 1990b, 1992, 2004, 2005), Goodson's (2008, 2014) *critical narrative-* and *Life History* approach, Ball's (2017) concept of *embodied policies* and Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* (1977).

Before presenting the research questions, I shall give a brief outline of the motivation for the study and introduce the central concepts used, together with the theoretical basis of the study. The conceptual, theoretical, and methodological issues inherent in the project will be further elaborated in the following two chapters of Part I.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Five Rs: 'Refraction', 'Remembrance', 'Regression', 'Reconceptualisation', and 'Renewal'* (Goodson, 2015). See Chapter 3: *Theoretical framework*.



## 1.1 BACKGROUND

### A GLOBAL EDUCATIONAL AGENDA?

The prime motivation for the study emerged gradually from my former studies of changes in educational policies over the last two decades in Norway (see. Stray, 2008, Stray & Voreland, 2017), that is, the initiation and implementation of quality assurance systems in secondary education. In this process, I became aware of cross-national similarities in the new educational governance, where a strong emphasis was placed on output monitoring and accountability mechanisms. I also noticed that the use of language in policy documents resembled administrative and economic terminologies that characterised the discourses of new public management and ‘knowledge economies’ in the 1980—1990s (e.g., New Public Management (NPM), see Hood, 1995, p. 96, pt. 6 and 7). Educational discourses connected to economical terminology are far from new. The concept of ‘knowledge economy’ was introduced by Drucker already in 1969, and further thoroughly elaborated by theorists such as Daniel Bell (1973) and Manuel Castell (1996) who argued that ‘knowledge’ and information’ represented the new core engine of economic growth in modern, industrialised societies. What struck me as new, and as an obvious paradox, was that the same policies were promoting aims of inclusion and visions of embracing diversity in education (e.g., the Education for All Movement [UN, 2014]).

It might be argued that a universal global agenda in education is highly improbable, due to the multiple outsets and governmental circumstances that characterises the different national traditions and cultures, as well as global networks (see, e.g., Beech, 2009). Although the responses to a global agenda might vary, the fact that it has been constructed and promoted by international agencies and institutions is evident in educational reports of, for example, the World Bank (2005), and OECD (2015). The most prominent examples of a global agenda in education are seen in the Millennium Development Goals and the Education for All Movement [296]<sup>2</sup>, where inclusive and sustainable education for all is anticipated by the year

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<sup>2</sup> The square brackets ‘[]’ point to contextual signifiers in Appendix 2 (the historical periodisation of grand narratives).

2030 (previously 2015). The draft of the new development goals in education (Education 2030), presented at the World Education Forum at Incheon in 2015, uses the expression 'the global education agenda' in the introduction:

Building on and continuing the EFA movement, Education 2030 takes into account lessons learned since 2000. What is new about this agenda is its focus on increased and expanded access, equity and inclusion, quality and learning outcomes as well as lifelong learning. A key lesson of the past years is that the global education agenda should work within the overall international development framework rather than alongside it, as occurred with the separate EFA goals and education-related MDGs

(EFA Steering Committee, 2015, p. 2)

That this agenda of inclusion and lifelong learning also has been coupled with accountability mechanism and output monitoring is also evident in the same draft, emphasising that:

At the national level, countries should evaluate the effect of their education policies on achieving the Education 2030 targets. They must build on monitoring results and research findings to ensure effective evidence-based decisions and results-oriented programmes. An evaluation process would look at all components of an education system with the aim of sharing lessons, opening debate on what works and providing constructive feedback. Key principles for the evaluation approach include the centrality of teaching and learning quality; the importance of school leadership; equity and inclusion as key dimensions; transparency; and partner participation at all levels. Overall, evaluation activities should contribute to the accomplishment of both accountability and development objectives. Furthermore, at the global level, the convening agencies commit to evaluating the effectiveness of their coordination mechanisms and the extent to which their programmes support countries in implementing Education 2030

(Incheon Declaration, 2015, p. 29).

Realising that such a global agenda existed, a question that became increasingly relevant was how teachers respond to and solve this apparent ambiguity of 'embracing diversity through standardisation, accountability and output management' in their daily teaching practice. Equally interesting to me was to gain knowledge of how such an agenda would manifest itself differently depending on the social, economic and cultural context in which the global policies are implemented (see Stray & Voreland, 2017).

## GLOBAL EDUCATIONAL REFORM MOVEMENTS AND LINKS TO MODERNITY.

Policy studies following national and cultural trajectories of what has lately been termed 'Global Educational Reform Movements' (GERM) have grown to be an extensive field of research the last couple of decades. The scholar most engaged in research of policy trajectories is Stephen Ball. Recognising familiar traits in global reform initiatives, Ball (2017) characterise GERM to be composed by five closely interrelated features:

1. A standardisation of education, which involves an emphasis on learning and performing outcomes of education, and national or central curriculum targets and decryptions based on a belief that performance standards will enhance the quality of educational outputs. The standardisation of curricula is also coupled with external evaluation systems, developed to monitor target attainments—creating a global homogenisation of education policies, where standardised solutions are offered at a lower and lower cost.
2. An emphasis on core skills, as literacy, numeracy and science. International tests and comparative surveys, as PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS is applied as indicators for success or failures of national education systems, at the expense of other subjects and content knowledge.
3. A quest for confirmed 'gold standard' approaches to learning (what works), which implies a low level of risk taking in teaching, and leads to restricted use of alternative didactics and pedagogy
4. The use of corporate management models as a framework for quality improvement, borrowing and lending business-practices, ending up targeting productivity and performance rather than humanity and moral values.
5. Introduction and practice of test-based accountability policies, which ties school performance (pupils' achievements) to processes of accreditation, school inspections, teacher promotion, and eventually payment-by-result—leading to practices of 'teaching to the test' within schools, and especially within literacy-, numeracy and science.

(cf. Ball, 2017, p. 8-9)

Ball's characteristics of GERM could support a notion of it being a contemporary manifestation of modernity—as a global acceleration of society. In several fields of research, the Post-War period and up to the present is characterised as a break with modernity. In these research traditions, the shift is marked by the signifier 'postmodernity'. In some fields, one rather talks of an emergence of a new phase of modernity—where the 'break' from 'classic modernity' is more a question of societal

acceleration, political fragmentation and increasing global fluidity (e.g., Baumann, 2008; Rosa, 2015). That the global educational policy discourses could represent such a continuation of modernity is obvious in Gibbins' (1998) discussion of the 'post' in 'postmodernity', where he lists characteristic traits of a 'modern society'. Several of these traits still serves as representative ideals and visions of GERM today, such as a strong belief in education, universal standards (mass culture), evidence-based practices and digitalisation (science and technology) as drivers of sustainable progress and growth:

While there is not agreement [on what characterises the 'post' in postmodernity], most authors see modernity as multidimensional, featuring such diverse elements as industrial production; priority given to production and technology; a class-based social division of labour; the modern state; rationalism; materialism; faith in education, science and progress and the growth of individualism and mass culture, plus a regimented division of the private and public worlds.

(Gibbins, 1998, p. 40)

A present continuation of the modernity narrative may also be supported by the observations of Brown et al.'s (2008) picturing of the 21st century as characterised by a 'digital Taylorism':

If the twentieth century brought what can be described as *mechanical Taylorism* characterised by the Fordist production line, where the knowledge of craft workers was captured by management, codified and re-engineered in the shape of the moving assembly line, the twenty-first century is the age of *digital Taylorism*. This involves translating *knowledge work* into *working knowledge* through the extraction, codification and digitalisation of knowledge into software prescripts that can be transmitted and manipulated by others regardless of location.

(Brown et al., 2008, p. 143)

A similar connection is made by Aslaug Kristiansen (2015), referring to the resemblance between modern ideals of instrumental rationality and society's current investment and belief in 'human capital':

Instrumental rational thinking has been central in the development of modernity and of Western societal life. The ideas can be traced back to the scientific view of knowledge stemming from the scientific and technological revolution in the 17th century. Rationalization means, according to [the] Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy based on Weber's statements, a historical drive towards a world in which 'one can, in principle, master all things by

calculation'. The relation between the human and nature is a subject—object one in which knowledge is considered as an instrument for human control and mastery over nature (Gustavsson, 2001). Today, instrumentalism is taking place in almost all areas of human life. People are living in what Ilan Guur-Ze'ev (2005) describes as 'a multicultural world governed by instrumental rationality and global capitalism' (Guur-Ze'ev, 2005, p. 21). Within the field of education there have, through the years, been different interpretations of instrumental thinking. For instance, instrumentalism and instrumentality are presented as different inspired by John Dewey (Dewey, 1916) compared to the view one can find in a behaviourist position represented by B. F. Skinner's work (Skinner, 1976). The present situation is a more explicit and formal political relation between education and economic growth. Modern capitalism is a rational mode of economic life based on probability and risk calculation. An investment in human capital is considered as one determinant of economic growth. According to the OECD report, 'Human Capital: How what you know shapes your life' (2007), human capital has become a key factor in both people's ability to earn a living and wider economic growth.

(Kristiansen, 2015, p. 117)

In the present study GERM is thus understood as part of a progressive<sup>3</sup> historic wave of development, rooted in modernity. Here, modernity refers to the discourses and ideals that followed the rise of industry in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, where education represented a vital component in the modernisation of sovereign states (Strydom, 1997). To support the perspective that GERM may be interpreted as a current version of the 'modernity narrative', I shall, in Chapter 3, reactualise writings by Walter Benjamin and Georg Simmel, which clearly illustrates the parallels between their sketches of 'classic modernity' in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the present 'postmodern' times (see Chapter 3). In Chapter 5, I shall also try to show the relevance and fruitfulness of juxtaposing Norwegian teachers' life stories to a historical periodisation or grand narratives of modern development and ideals in the Norwegian history of education, in my efforts to comprehend and explicate their idiosyncratic responses to GERM.

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<sup>3</sup> *The use of the term 'progressive' in this study, points to the modern narrative where education is seen as a key component in societal and economic growth, and as a path to personal emancipation and civic success—enabling a move from 'rags to riches'. This has traditionally often been associated with a left-wing agenda in education policy, but it is seen in right-wing policies as well, especially in the last two decades. Within right-wing policies, the modern progress narrative tends to favour marked principles applied to reform particular aspects of a given state system, e.g., privatisation, austerity measures, output monitoring, and accountability mechanisms (cf. Rudd & Goodson, 2017, p. 1).*

## THE NEED FOR CRITICAL STUDIES AND ALTERNATIVE VISIONS IN EDUCATION.

As GERM influence continues to expand and shape national policies around the world, there is an urgent need for studies following the reception and negation of global policy discourses on local and individual levels (Rudd & Goodson 2017). I shall account for the arguments posed for such studies by referring to research-project recommendations suggested by Steven Ball (2017), Paul Ricoeur's reflections on political praxis and philosophical discourse, and Goodson's appeal to educational scholars to engage in critical studies of refractions of ideology and power.

Ball (2017) points to the growing use of dynamic concepts in policy analysis, and argues for the need for additional research that might discern how policy work is shaped and done within the discursive practices, relationships and frames of people's daily lives and labour. To comprehend global movements of educational reform and policy—as I understand Ball—one needs to place a greater emphasis on how they are attained in practice. He points at studies that avoid a macro-micro division in their policy analyses, and how they can recognise 'the limits and possibilities of actor's enactment of policy' and to 'appreciate both the reiterations and creativity of such enactments' (Ball, 2017, p. 15). He holds that:

Policies both change what we do (with implications for equity and social justice) and what we are (with implications for subjectivity, personhood and sociality). However, the focus of policy analysis and policy research is not solely on what "we do", but also, as Foucault puts it, what we do does. That is, on the outcomes, consequences and effects of policy in terms of well-being, equity, democracy and social justice.

(Ball, 2017, p. 15)

In a dialogue between Ricoeur and Richard Kearney (2004, p. 137), Ricoeur addresses how political language basically must be seen as rhetorics of persuasion, and that it is pointless to distinguish between ideological praxis and philosophical discourse. In this sense, a political discourse, such as neoliberalism<sup>4</sup> (or marxism for that matter), can never be approached or claim the status of a universal science. However, Ricoeur suggests to use the idea of 'a right to capabilities' as a valuable

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<sup>4</sup> For example, the rhetoric neoliberal phrase, or the so-called TINA-slogan of Thatcher: 'There is no alternative, or 'There is no society.'

criterion when evaluating, justifying or comparing political initiatives and ideas, to prevent monopolistic and elitist ideologies to restrain people's freedom to think and act according to their beliefs (cf. Ricoeur, 2005, p. 149)

Recently, Goodson called for fellow researchers within the field of education to join forces in a quest to change and promote optimistic and alternative visions of education to those of neoliberalism. He proposes replacing the traditional three Rs of education (Reading, wRiting, and aRithmetic) with five alternative Rs, which he argues could serve as useful steps towards resistance of a neoliberal influence in education (GERM): 'Regression', 'Remembering', 'Reconceptualisation', 'Refraction', and 'Renewal'. He justifies this rethinking of the educational Rs by stating:

Together they [the five Rs] can provide at least a partial antidote to the dubious and damaging educational rhetoric associated with the promotion and normalisation of the neoliberal order. Identifying them, and acting on them, represents a useful step towards the 6<sup>th</sup> R: resistance.

(Goodson, 2015, p. 34)

In efforts to explain the adoption of 'regression' in a sociological and narrative perspective (not psychological or statistical), Goodson (2015) points to the belief in 'change and progress' of our time. He notes that the 'austerity-regimes' following the several economic breakdowns of the last decades have caused peoples' anticipations of the future to become more obscured and pessimistic, resulting in a narrative of '*regression*' rather than '*progression*':

The dawn of a 'regress narrative' transforms the political landscape and the positionality of 'change forces'. If things are getting worse change may not be progressive, as was once the case, but regressive. In fact, in such a case the progressive position may be to 'conserve' the current situation rather than embrace changes towards a worse situation. I have argued at length that, in a regress narrative, progressive social reforms face a classic 'crisis of positionality' (Goodson, 2003).

(Goodson, 2015, p. 35)

To approach such attitudes of 'regression' in a constructive manner, rather than as indicators of political retreat, nostalgia or inconsistent reasonings, Goodson (2015) recommends scrutinising our historical backgrounds, arguing that a way of 'getting a sense of where we have come from and where we might be going' is by remembering

where we and those before us have been. He gives an example of how to accomplish this, by referring to one of his previous studies:

It is possible to identify particular historical periods where maximal 'windows of opportunity' for broad-based restructuring exist (for an extended commentary on historical periodisation and education see Goodson 2005). For this reason, it is crucial, when dealing with educational transitions and reform initiatives, to identify and understand historical periodisation and its conceptual and methodological limitations. The definition of periods allows us to define the possibility for professional action and professional narratives at particular points in historical time. We have found in the Profknow project that the capacities for action and narrative construction differ greatly according to the historical periods studied. Moreover we can begin to see how each country, and in some cases regions, has different systemic trajectories. These historical trajectories mean that restructuring approaches each state or region from, so to speak, a different angle.

(Goodson, 2010, p. 768)

Goodson (2015, p. 36) emphasises that 'Remembering' or the studies of historical movements and periodisation face the risk of promoting a deterministic vision of development, turning the actors of a given time into merely passive recipients of ideology and power. His solution to this problem is studies of *refraction*,<sup>5</sup> where systemic narratives of educational change are juxtaposed to qualitative accounts of practitioner's approach by researchers in order to explore

how, and to what extent, their own trajectories, life histories and professional identities influence their practice, mediate policies, and negate the effects of ideology and power.

(Goodson, 2015, p. 36)

The concept of refraction, in this case, refers to the way in which a person's (or a community's) beliefs and course of actions are at odds with a hegemonic discourse or societal progress. According to Goodson (2015), the benefit of studying refractions of policies, is that alternative visions of the future, which risk being silenced or ignored in the public discourse at a given time, are given a voice.

Goodson (cf. 2015, p. 36) stresses that educational research needs courage to engage in critical studies which 'travel' alongside the political meta-narratives, and

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<sup>5</sup> See Chapter 2 for a more thorough presentation of the different meaning and use of 'refraction' in research studies, and Appendix 3 for a cartography of different networks of scientific strands that apply 'refraction', or closely related concepts and terminologies.



which reconceptualises what he terms ‘totalitarian and global discourses’. He encourages researchers to ally themselves in such pursuit of reconceptualisation, despite the global movements’ disavowal of ideological critique and creative imagination at the time being:

For while neoliberalism seeks a uniform social and economic order, such universalising tendencies have been far from successful. Any social inquiry that is seriously pursued will uncover considerable variety in the social and political responses to global movements. Our reconceptualisation needs to move beyond the dominant narratives in education such as: ‘school improvement’, ‘key competencies’, ‘change forces’, ‘restructuring initiatives’, ‘knowledge societies’ and ‘economic competitiveness’ to explore the variations and alternative conceptualisations which co-exist with these totalising impulses. Reconceptualisation leads on to analyses of re-contextualisation, and from there to the detailed study of refraction.

(Goodson, 2015, p. 35)

Unlike the former Rs which point towards history, Goodson’s final R, ‘*Renewal*’, shows how historical responses could serve as sources to reimagine and reconceptualise alternative futures in educational policies and practices (cf. Rudd & Goodson, 2017, p. 8).

## 1.2 MY MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

In the preparation of this project I wanted to carry out a critical analytical study of the refractions of the newer educational reforms in Norway, seen through the eyes of practising teachers. A traditional and well-accepted way of doing this would be to ask for the teachers’ opinions through, for example, questionnaires and surveys, based on a large, representative sample of Norwegian teachers. Such a study might have given interesting results, by showing the distribution of teacher current opinions and attitudes to the reforms. However, as I have pointed out in my previous study on the use of surveys in educational research (Stray, 2008), important teacher experiences are ‘silenced’ by the questionnaire design and the wording of the questions. Large survey projects might be meaningful in demonstrating quantitative ‘effects’ of policy changes or research innovations. However, in many cases it is hard to draw conclusions as to what has particularly contributed to these effects. And when a positive ‘effect’ is shown it is not obvious that the same effect will be seen when the practices that meet policy standards are transferred from one region to another. In a

grand Norwegian survey study *'Lærende regioner'* ('Learning regions') four regions of Norway were compared to understand and explain why the particular county of Sogn-og-Fjordane had excelled markedly in the national tests (Langfeldt, 2015). Both quantitative (survey) and qualitative methods were used. The conclusions drawn were that the differences in measured school results could be understood primarily as culturally determined, rooted in the particular history and cultural heritage of the Sogn-og-Fjordane region. The researchers also concluded that since locally rooted heritage is not exportable, the research findings could not be transformed into standardised educational procedures on a national scale.

The study illustrates that the local refractions of changing educational policies are always different, depending on local cultural, historical and contextual circumstances, in the way that these structures are embodied and expressed in the local schools and teachers. Realising this, I began looking for methods of research which might give insight into these 'micro-enactments' expressed by the teachers themselves as *subjective statements (discourse)*—not 'filtered' through a questionnaire.

In this process, I considered Q-methodology<sup>6</sup> as a possible approach. At that point Q-methodology seemed to be well suited to collecting and exploring in-depth data of the range of positions and the complexity of attitudes and opinions held by teachers (Thomas & McKeown, 2013). However, when working on the methodological design, I found that the study of teachers' subjective positioning towards educational policies alone was insufficient in addressing the context from which their attitudes and beliefs had originated. Getting acquainted with the narrative methodology of Goodson and Ricoeur I decided to leave the Q-sort design in exchange for the Life History approach of Goodson and the methodological directions obtained from Paul Ricoeur's theory of narrative. Listening to teacher's Life Stories would allow me to incorporate a perspective on change, not just how teachers currently position themselves towards education policies and ideals. The use of the narrative design would enable me to

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<sup>6</sup> *Q-methodology is a quantitative research method used in social sciences to study people's 'subjectivity' or points of view on a particular matter. The methodology bears some resemblance to factor analysis ('R-method'). However, in a Q-sort, each subject is treated as a variable, which results in a 'factoring' of **subjects** sharing similar preferences or priorities, in contrast to the factoring of resembling **measurements** of traits or responses across individuals, as applied in traditional factor analysis.*

situate teachers' Life Stories in a broader historical and cultural frame of interpretation. It also opened a possibility for explaining and understanding the interplay between societal structures and individual (and group) agency by which the course of societal development is shaped and directed. Like the Q-methodology, the aim of the narrative approach is not to reveal 'the truth out there', but rather to explain and understand the rationale behind the personal stories that a person acts upon in their life—representing both embodied beliefs (*habitus*) and personal agency.

### 1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In the following, I shall give a short presentation of the narrative approach as implemented and operationalised in my project, together with the research questions addressed in the study.

The empirical material used is based on nine initial interviews with Norwegian teachers. Three of these have been reconstructed into a Life Story design (see Appendix 1), and subsequently analysed in light of grand narratives of Norwegian history of education on a national and local level (see Appendix 2).

Following the stages of Ricoeur's (1974) hermeneutical arch (presented in Chapter 4), I have divided the empirical presentation and analysis of the teachers' Life Stories/Life Histories into four levels of abstraction. In addition to Ricoeur's three levels of interpretation, the Naïve, Structural, and Deep phases, I have added his Rule of Metaphor as a final level of abstraction, expanding the particular narratives of the teachers to a perspective of cultural heritage and modern development in education.

**The Naïve Phase:** The first level entails a limited degree of evaluation and analysis. Here, systemic timelines and teacher's Life Stories are presented in full, without further comments and analysis. There is no research question related to this level. The texts will represent the phenomenological reference base of the study's 'data' (see Appendix 1).

**The Structural Phase:** The second level of abstraction represents a more structural phase of analysis in which a statement is approached as a semiotic unit representing a signifier to a textual 'map' or 'index of meaning' in the Life Stories—explicating the

immersed core structures and professional priorities visible in the narrative emplotment. The research questions posed at this level were:

1. What are the embedded core structures identified in the use of language in teachers' Life Stories?
2. What professional priorities can be discerned from the teachers' Life Stories?

**The Deep Phase:** In the third level of abstraction, grand narratives of the Norwegian history of education are used as a contextual and conceptual framework to reconstruct a cultural heritage of the teachers' Life Histories. This is obtained by juxtaposing the grand narratives with the teacher-narratives—visualised in a matrix of responses (see Chapter 6). Concepts of modernity and narrative identity are further used as a theoretical framework to discern idiosyncratic cultural responses to the Global Educational Reform Movements. Based on the three levels of analysis, a set of 'tensive truth claims' are generated (see sections explaining the stages of the analyses and the concept of tensive truth claims in Chapters 3 and 4). The research questions were:

3. What cultural heritage and professional priorities can be identified if teachers' Life Stories are juxtaposed with grand narratives of the Norwegian history of education?
4. Which inference can be made from the tensive truth claims deduced from research question 3?

**The Rule of the Metaphor:** Based on the three levels of abstraction, a theoretical synthesis is generated, enabled by Ricoeur's instructions in *The Rule of Metaphor*. The findings of the analysis is reconceptualised into a model of policy refraction. The following question was raised in this final level of abstraction:

5. How may a metaphor of policy refraction illustrate idiosyncratic cultural responses to the Global Educational Reform Movement (GERM)?

#### 1.4 THE STRUCTURAL COMPOSITION OF THE DISSERTATION

The dissertation contains four parts, with three closely related appendices (data material). The present part (I) consists of three chapters. After the introduction given in this chapter, Chapter 2 presents a conceptual cartography of 'policy refraction'. (Cartographic procedures are outlined in Appendix 3). Chapter 3 addresses literature

and important concepts of relevance to the applied theoretical framework of the study, with a strong emphasis on the works and concepts of Paul Ricoeur from 1976 to 2005. This section will be followed by an introduction to Ivor Goodson's 'critical narrative', Bourdieu's concepts of 'habitus' and 'agency', and Ball's concept of 'policy'. The final part of Chapter 3 gives an in-depth presentation of modernity sketches retrieved from the critical theories of Georg Simmel, Walter Benjamin, Zygmunt Bauman, and Hartmut Rosa.

Part II (Chapter 4) presents the methodological framework and design of the study. The first sections give a thorough account of the methodological operationalisations and my elaborated model of Ricoeur's hermeneutical arch, followed by Ivor Goodson's Life History approach. The last part of the chapter addresses the final design of the study, including procedural descriptions and ethical considerations.

In Part III (Chapters 5-7), the different phases of analysis and levels of interpretation will be accounted for in detail. Chapter 5 provides a preliminary phenomenological ('Naïve') understanding, the categorisation, selection, and Life Story reconstruction of the transcribed data material retrieved through the interviews with nine teachers. This section precedes a semiotic analysis of the three finally selected transcriptions and Life Story reconstructions. (The fully presented Life Stories are available in Appendix 1). An in-depth contextual, historical/cultural and metaphorical analysis is carried out in Chapter 6, followed by a metaphorical elaboration in Chapter 7. Here, the analytical inferences from the three former levels of interpretation are abstracted through a metaphorical lens of 'policy refraction'.

A broad historical account of the Norwegian history of education in different periods of modernity, on both a national and local levels, is given in Appendix 2. This material represents the historical and cultural context (grand narratives), applied as a structural background against which the Life Stories are juxtaposed and metaphorically linked (Chapter 6 and 7).

Part IV (Chapter 8) presents the final discussion of the findings and answers to the five research questions of the study. The theoretical and methodological limitations, as well as ethical dilemmas, are handled in the latter part, ending in a final conclusion

where the possible contribution and relevance of the study to the field of education policy research, and future educational reform initiatives are outlined.

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### THE CONCEPT OF REFRACTION IN POLICY RESEARCH

The tasks of describing, understanding and explaining social movements requires comprehensive concepts of interaction and transformation. Movement of educational reforms is often expressed metaphorically, as ‘waves of reform’ or as analogies of ‘liquidity’ and ‘drifting’ (e.g. Baumann, 2004; Appadurai, 1996; Steiner-Khamsi, 2014). In my approach to the study teachers’ idiosyncratic responses to GERM, I have chosen to explore trajectories of policy through the metaphoric lens of ‘refraction’. Since ‘refraction’ serves as an important link between a structure perspective and an actor perspective in the study, a thorough account of the concept is considered necessary. Thus, in this chapter I shall start by giving a brief outline of the concepts’ general traits, followed by a cartography of studies of policy refraction.<sup>7</sup> The study’s adoption and use of ‘refraction’ will be presented at the end of the chapter.

#### 2.1 THE CONCEPT OF REFRACTION

Within natural science, theoretical models of refraction have been developed to describe, measure, and explain the bending of refracted rays/waves. An acknowledged model in this respect is Snell’s law, which provides researchers with a tool to calculate the angle of a refracted physical wave with great precision. Referring to this model of refraction, Shelby, Smith, and Schultz (2001, p. 77-79) have described what characterises the wave behaviour of refracted rays. According to these researchers, a refracted ray is bent towards the ‘normal’, but never on the same side of ‘normal’ as the incident rays. The alteration of a ray’s direction (angle of refraction) depends on the difference and interaction between the materials through which the rays are mediated. Researchers within the field of natural science argue that singular wave models, such as ‘diffraction’, ‘reflection’, and ‘refraction’ models, might not be

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<sup>7</sup> See Appendix 3 for procedures and network maps.

sufficient to understand and explain how waves behave differently in different physical environments. For instance, sea waves behave differently in different harbour settings. Concerning the sheltering effect of breakwaters, Ito and Tanimoto (1972, p. 503) suggest that one should rather ‘treat theoretically together with all factors of disturbance in a harbour as diffraction, reflection, and refraction of waves.’ I shall return to the concepts of reflection and diffraction used as sociological metaphors in Chapter 7. The concept of refraction as used in the social sciences refers to ways in which the direction of policies is transformed and bent on national, local, and individual levels. The concept is a metaphorical abstraction of the behaviour of waves where the direction and shape of a wave are altered because of the interaction with the specific physical environment. Translated to sociological terms, this means that the ‘waves’ created by changing policies are ‘echoed’ or ‘refracted’ in different ways, depending on the social structures and unique history of a given human environment. The refractions of political reforms are not only repercussions on a grand societal and national scale, but may also be observed on ‘micro’ levels, as in the actions and beliefs of groups and individuals affected by the reforms. The differences in local social environments, social structure, local history, and heritage will in turn be of great importance to the particular refractions coming from individuals. Refractions are also to be expected in the way people express themselves, verbally and textually.

The following sections present different examples of where and how the concept of refraction or closely related terms and concepts has been used in studies of policy trajectories in education.

## **2.2 A CARTOGRAPHY OF REFRACTION AS APPLIED IN POLICY STUDIES**

In my search for literature and research networks related to ‘refraction’, I have narrowed my scope to publications within educational research that encompasses a dialectic perspective on educational policy implementations. To gain knowledge of terminologies and research applied to study such relations, I chose to engage in a cartography of studies where the term or concept of ‘refraction’ has been applied directly or indirectly through closely related terms.



The approach has been explorative, following networks of references and researchers in a rather ‘inductive’ way. The figure below (Figure 1) is an illustration of the different networks of articles and researchers preoccupied or connected to research of ‘policy refraction.’ Here, closely grouped names represent intra-networks of co-authors within each of the seven flowcharts.

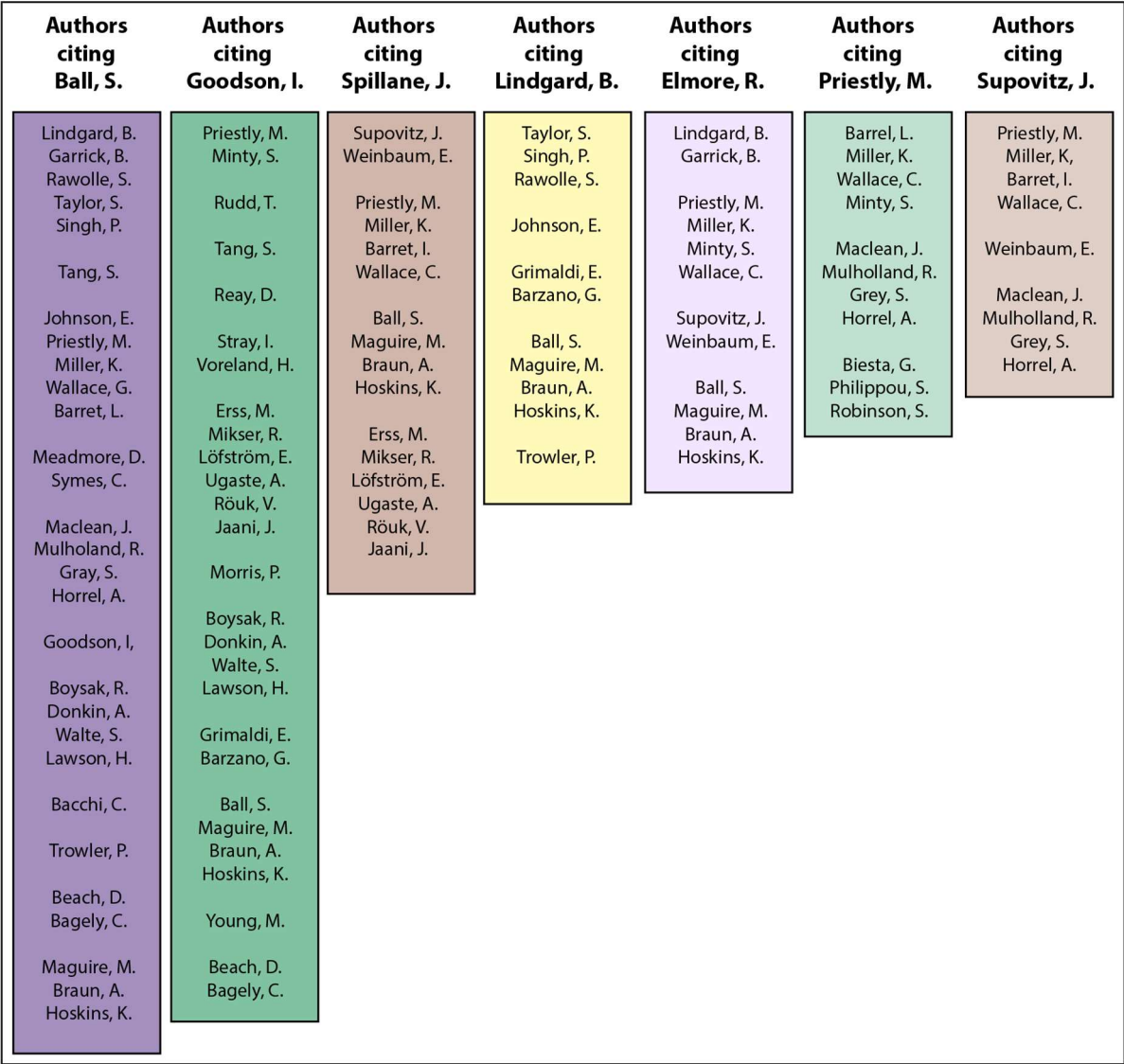


Figure 1. A cartography of interrelated research networks related to studies of ‘policy refraction’, based on a cross-reference analysis.

The cartography is not to be understood as a systematic review (Bryman, 2008). Compared to a traditional review where the emphasis is on findings, the mapping procedure used in this study is more in line with an ‘actor/network theory’ analysis

(ANT-analysis, see e.g. Latour, 2007), where the aim is to visualise the interactions between society and (techno) sciences, that allows symbols and materials (concepts, ideas, artefacts or actions) to perform or succeed in a given environment. My intention in ‘mapping’ the relevant fields of research has been to discern and visualise how ‘refraction’ is given different meanings, depending on the scientific strands and methodologies in which the term is applied.

#### EDUCATIONAL STUDIES OF POLICY REFRACTION.

The use of ‘refraction’ mostly appears in research approaching educational policies from, for example, critical-theorist, post-structural, post-humanist and feminist perspectives. In such studies, ‘refraction’ also tends to serve as a metaphor for local renewal or individual resistance to global policy reforms, discourses, and ideals<sup>8</sup>. A cross-reference analysis of publications applying the concept of ‘refraction’ revealed a strong influence from the works of Bourdieu, Bernstein, Foucault, Giddens, Young, and Lyotard<sup>9</sup>.

In studies inspired by critical theories or the post-structural perspectives of Foucault, I found some examples of ‘refraction’ being applied in the research texts, but most often other resembling and closely related terms were much more present, such as, for example, ‘trajectories’, ‘recontextualisation’, ‘enactment’ (e.g. Ball, 1998, 2008, 2009, or Spillane, 1999). References to research preoccupied with aspect of flow, like ‘epistemic drifting’ and ‘policy borrowing’ in educational policy was also observable within this group of publications. Writings by Arjun Appadurai were, for example, cited by Lingard, Rawolle, and Taylor (2005), Barzano and Grimaldi (2013),

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<sup>8</sup> (E.g. Bacchi, 2000; Ball, 1998; 2008; 2009; Boyask et al., 2013; Braun et al., 2011; Braun et al., 2010; Dooley et al., 2000; Elmore, 2004; Erss et al., 2014; Goodson, 2010, 2015; Goodson & Rudd, 2012; Goodson & Rudd, 2016; Grimaldi & Barzano, 2014; Henry et al., 1993; Johnson, 2002, 2003a, 2003b, 2005; Lauder, 2000; Lingard & Garrick, 1997; Lingard et al., 2005; Maton, 2005; Meadmore & Symes, 1997; Mistry & Sood, 2015; Morris, 2012; Rawolle & Lingard, 2008; Reay, 2012; Rudd & Goodson, 2014; Singh & Taylor, 2007; Singh & Taylor, 2004; Spillane, 1999; Stray & Voreland (2017); Tang, 2011; M. Taylor & Moeed, 2013; S. Taylor, 1997; S. Taylor & Henry, 2003; Trowler, 1998).

<sup>9</sup> (e.g. Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu & Johnson, 1993; Bourdieu & Nice, 2000; Bernstein, 1971; Bernstein, 2000, 2003, 2004; Foucault, 1982; Rabinow, 1984; Giddens, 2011; Giddens, 2013; Giddens & Pierson, 1998; Young, 2008; Lyotard, 1984; Lyotard, 1993).

Singh and Taylor (2004), and Ball (1998), while Gita Steiner-Khamsi was cited by, for example, Morris (2012) and Ball (2017). It appears that ‘refraction’, compared to concepts such as ‘recontextualisation’ and ‘enactment’ and terminologies of ‘flow’, entails a higher notion of capacities of individuals as agents of change. In this sense, ‘refraction’ more strongly communicates dynamics of *resistance* or a principle of power-levelling in structure/actor transactions. In ideographic<sup>10</sup> studies, like the present study, I consider ‘refraction’ to be better suited, since it addresses to a greater extent than the other terminologies the empowered role of individuals in reform development and implementation.

#### INITIAL USE OF THE CONCEPT OF ‘REFRACTION’ WITHIN EDUCATION POLICY STUDIES.

The earliest publication applying the concept of ‘policy refraction’ in an educational research study was John Freeland (1981, p. 363), who said, ‘An analysis of the refractions can provide insights into where interventions can be effected, by whom, and into the nature and direction of those interventions.’ Even though Freeland appears to be one of the first researchers within the social sciences who has made use of the concept in educational research, I found his work cited in education policy studies only in Australia (Henry et al., 1993; S. Taylor, 1997).

After Freeland, ‘refraction’ did not appear until 1993—this time applied by Bourdieu (1993). When following cross-references in the selected publications, I discovered that writings of Bourdieu often were cited in publications where ‘refraction’ was a frequently reoccurring word in the text (Lingard & Garrick, 1997; Lingard et al., 2005; Maton, 2005; Reay, 2012; Rudd & Goodson, 2016). Within these publications, the most reoccurring quotation of Bourdieu was:

The important fact, for the interpretation of works, is that this autonomous social universe functions somewhat like a prism which refracts every external determination: demographic, economic or political events are always retranslated according to the specific logic of the field, and it is by this intermediary that they act on the logic of the development of works.

(Bourdieu, 1993, p. 164)

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<sup>10</sup> *Ideographic studies represent an individual and subjective approach, in contrast to nomothetic or cartographic approaches, where statistical methods, generalisability and network perspectives are applied.*

## THE CONCEPT OF 'POLICY' IN STUDIES OF 'REFRACTION'—THE INFLUENCE OF STEPHEN BALL.

The mapping process clearly showed that Stephen Ball's concept of 'policy' has served as a major theoretical influence in studies of policy refraction in education (e.g., Ball, 1998; Ball, 2003, 2012; Braun et al., 2010). Ball makes no direct use of the term or concept of refraction himself, but like other studies originating from critical theory and post-structuralism, he is applying highly resembling and related concepts, like Bernstein's concept of recontextualisation and Foucault's concept of policy enactment. Because of this, Ball's influence on the field first became noticeable in the cross-reference analysis, where I noticed various research publications of Ball to be cited in nearly every retrieved publication in the review. Closer readings of the different publications citing Ball reveal that it is his concept of *policy*<sup>11</sup> that ties his work to studies of policy refraction in education. Ball's critical and post-structural concept of policy, fusing the actor/structure perspective, seems very much to 'fit' the dialectical and transactional foundation upon which the concept of refraction is resting.

### *CURRENT STUDIES OF POLICY REFRACTION—DIFFERENT AGENDAS AND RESEARCH CONTEXTS.*

The term and concept of 'refraction' have been used in quite diverse ways, referring to different agendas, theoretical frameworks and research approaches. Common to all of them is an interest in capturing the interaction in policy mediation and local trajectories of educational policies.

### REFRACTION USED AS WAY TO PREDICT AND MONITOR POLICY IMPLEMENTATION PROCESSES.

As mentioned, the natural sciences have developed methods to calculate refractions of waves with high precision. Similar efforts can be observed in studies seeking to estimate 'refractions' of educational reforms to evaluate the effects of current and future policy initiatives (e.g., May & Supovitz, 2006; Weinbaum & Supovitz, 2010).

To help educational program designers and school-level implementers avoid 'a sense of failure' in the implementation processes, Jonathan A. Supovitz and Elliot H.

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<sup>11</sup> See Chapter 3.3. 'Habitus, Agency and Policy', for Ball's definition of 'policy'

Weinbaum have studied how to create educational programmes that recognise and consider policy refraction caused by the various adjustments a programme faces on its way through the multiple layers of an educational system. They state:

Too often, program implementation has been treated as an inscrutable period during which forces too numerous to name or analyze cause programmes to mutate in unpredictable ways. It's common to hear that a program isn't being implemented with "fidelity." Program designers, program implementers, and program evaluators often seem surprised about this lack of fidelity even though, over 30 years ago, we learned that complex programs go through a process of "mutual adaptation" in which both developers and implementers make adjustments to work more effectively (Berman and McLaughlin 1978).

(Weinbaum & Supovitz, 2010, p. 68)

According to Weinbaum and Supovitz (2010), decisions of adjustment repeatedly occur within each level of the educational system, causing what they call 'iterative refractions'. They argue that the term 'iterative' signals that the process of refraction comprises courses of change happening over time, and that attention to such processes might contribute to making a program implementation 'more predictable than previously thought' (Supovitz & Weinbaum, 2010, p. 70).

#### REFRACTION AS A CRITICAL LENS IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH.

Based on my cartography of the field, it seems that only Tim Rudd and Ivor Goodson (Goodson & Rudd, 2012; Goodson, 2015; Rudd & Goodson, 2014, 2016, 2017) have been addressing the critical research potential inherent in the concept of refraction. These researchers have aimed at developing a conceptual lens that might help researchers describe the contextual and bending trajectories of current and historical periods of educational policy reform and discourse. According to Goodson (2015), 'refraction' is a concept well suited when studying the trajectories of educational policy:

They [policies] are mediated through a plethora of cultural, institutional and individual identities, prefigurative practices, beliefs, values and cultures. In exploring reflection, we are thus better placed to both elucidate alternatives and see the ways in which the symbolic violence exerted may be mediated and subverted through individual and collective action.

(Rudd & Goodson, 2017, p. 8)

Refraction of policy, in this sense of the word, implies juxtaposing systemic narratives of educational change with qualitative accounts of practitioners.

Goodson claims that a benefit of studying refractions of ideology and power is that it may highlight oppositional discourses (narratives) and options for future courses of action in a given field of practice that is at risk of being ‘silenced’ or ignored in the ‘official’ discourse of a given time (Goodson, 2015, p.36). During the last couple of years, Goodson and his fellow researcher, Tim Rudd, have been exploring how ‘refraction’, as a conceptual lens, might serve to inform educational researchers seeking to provide ‘rich, contextualised, and detailed understanding of practice and action in education’ (Rudd & Goodson, 2014).

#### REFRACTION AND THE FIELD OF EDUCATION—EMBODIED POLICIES EVIDENT IN PRACTICE.

Maton (2006) finds that some of the tensions generated within the field of higher education today might be better explained if one addresses the aspect of ‘refraction’ and the current weakening autonomy within this field—‘creating a contradictory modality of autonomy: Actors within the field are charged with the creation and implementation of policies based on principles recontextualised from the field of economic production’ (Maton, 2006, p. 702).

Like Maton (2006), several researchers have entered the field of educational policy, through the lens of Bourdieu (Singh and Taylor, 2004; Lingard, Rawolle, & Taylor, 2006; Lingard and Garrick, 1997; Rudd & Goodson, 2016). What these studies seem to have in common, including the publications where the use of the term ‘refraction’ is limited, is that they approach the formation of educational policies as relational and contextual processes, in which structure is embodied and evident in practices (micro-politics). Policy ‘text production’ and policy ‘reception’ are viewed as somewhat diffuse and indistinguishable processes (cf. Lingard & Garrick, 1997), which contradicts the dichotomy of actor/structure.

#### REFRACTION AND EFFORTS TO MEND THE POLICY ‘IMPLEMENTATION GAPS’.

Educational researchers involved in action research seem to have adopted ‘refraction’ to mend some observed challenges residing in an ‘implementation gap’—aiming to develop more contextual and culturally grounded curriculums (Priestley,

2011; Priestley et al., 2015; Priestley & Miller, 2012; Priestley et al., 2011; Priestley et al., 2014). In contrast to the critical approaches, these studies seem to have a higher preference for inductive and constructivist perspectives, for example, the constructivist grounded theory approach developed by Kathy Charmaz (2000).

The Scottish curriculum researcher Mark Priestley and his co-researchers (Priestly et al., 2010, 2011, 2014), refers to Supovitz and Weinbaum's concept of 'iterative refraction' (Supovitz & Weinbaum, 2008), but do not often apply the term 'refraction' in their texts. However, the processes and challenges of curriculum implementation they describe closely resemble those of Supovitz & Weinbaum, in that they apply terms and metaphors such as 'policy enactment' and 'tweaking of reforms' when studying how to develop more sustainable curriculums and curriculum implementations. Referring to Cuban's (1988) distinction of 'first- and second-order changes', Priestly et al. (cf. 2011, p. 267) note that superficial improvement of efficiency is far easier to establish than changes in 'core of teaching' and the 'grammar of schooling'. They also turn to closely related research concluding that educational change is likely to fail when the programmes are not locally grounded and when restriction in the teachers' mandate and autonomy is limiting creativity and experimentation (cf. Priestly et al., 2011, p. 270). The Scottish researchers recommend a change in the way educational reforms are developed and implemented, and suggests a more ecological (bottom-up) approach, attentive to the local responses and adjustments to top-down policies:

The research evidence suggests that the challenge in successfully enacting a reform is to move beyond the statement of intent typically represented by curriculum documents, to genuine, meaningful, deep-seated and long-lasting change in curriculum provision, pedagogy, the role of the teacher and the place of the learner. To achieve this, a long-term strategy of change management is needed; the research literature provides us with clear messages about the ingredients that might contribute to a successful change strategy. These appear to consist of a mixture of top-down and bottom-up approaches to the management of change, involving coherent policy, good leadership and the situated expertise of practitioners.

(Priestly et al., 2011, p. 268)

## 2.3 REFRACTION AS AN INTERNATIONAL FIELD OF RESEARCH

A review of the literature on policy refraction shows that studies of policy mediations and translation are gaining ground in international research (see Appendix 3 for the review data). The list below illustrates where studies of 'refraction' are geographically distributed:

Australia: (Bacchi, 2000; Dooley et al., 2000; Henry et al., 1993; Johnson, 2002, 2003a, 2003b, 2005; Lingard & Garrick, 1997; Lingard et al., 2005; Maton, 2005; Meadmore & Symes, 1997; Rawolle & Lingard, 2008; Singh & Taylor, 2007; Singh & Taylor, 2004; Taylor, S. 1997; Taylor, S. & Henry, 2003)

England UK: (Ball, 1998, 2003, 2012; Boyask et al., 2013; Braun et al., 2011; Braun, Maguire, & Ball, 2010; Goodson, 2010, 2015; Goodson & Rudd, 2012; Lauder, 2000; Mistry & Sood, 2015; Reay, 2012; Rudd & Goodson, 2014, 2016; M. Taylor & Moeed, 2013; Trowler, 1998)

USA: (Maclean et al., 2015; May & Supovitz, 2006; Supovitz & Weinbaum, 2008; Weinbaum & Supovitz, 2010)

Scotland UK: (Priestley, 2011; Priestley et al., 2015; Priestley & Miller, 2012; Priestley et al., 2011; Priestley, Minty, & Eager, 2014)

Estonia: (Erss et al., 2014)

Sweden: (Beach & Bagley, 2013; Trowler, 1998)

Norway: (Stray & Voreland, 2017; Trowler, 1998)

China: (Law, 2006; Schulte, 2012)

Hong Kong: (Tang, 2011)

Nepal: (Stray & Voreland, 2017)

The use and conceptualisation of 'refraction' appeared to vary among countries. This might imply that the use of the concept is influenced by local research traditions and the demands and preconditions of the country. An example of this is Scotland's emphasis on 'sustainable development curriculums' during the last decade. This emphasis highly resonates with the Scottish studies of 'refraction' by Priestly et al., mentioned above, considering that a weight on action-research approaches and grounded theory might be a relevant and useful approach in this particular policy context. In contrast to the Scottish tradition, researchers in the USA have adopted an 'evidence-based' approach in which 'refraction' is measured scientifically by the use of large-scale surveys.



## 2.4 THE CONCEPT OF REFRACTION AS USED IN THIS STUDY

In this study, the concept of refraction is used to shed light on policy enactment in teachers' narrations, approaching 'educational policy' as embodied discourses or textual mediations. I shall investigate how verbal and textual statements may disclose how educational reforms are refracted on micro levels, both in a contemporary and a historical perspective. As in the mentioned models of wave behaviour used in natural science, I have found the concept to be even more fruitful when accompanied by the concepts of 'diffraction' and 'reflection', opening for a more differentiated analysis of teacher's idiosyncratic responses to GERM. The models of wave behaviour are used as a metaphor to 'think more' or move beyond the limits of the single life narratives—not to *generalise* my findings, but to 'cast on to' a more abstract or broader conceptual level of interpretation. To justify and allow for the use of 'refraction, diffraction, and reflection' (referred to as the RDR model) as a gateway to such a metaphorical abstraction I have leaned heavily on the writings and directions given by Paul Ricoeur in *The Rule of Metaphor* (Ricoeur, 2003) and much of his earlier work on the hermeneutics of narrative. I shall elaborate further on Ricoeur's thinking in the next two chapters, which delineate the basic theoretical and methodological framework and special scope of my study.



### THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

The relevance of Ricoeur's thinking to the concept of 'policy refractions in times of fluidity' may not be immediately appreciated by all readers. His rigorous and often intellectually demanding ways of reasoning may seem overly academic and abstract to some people. Hopefully, it will become clear through this chapter and the next that Ricoeur's approach to narrative has much to offer, both to the understanding of the refractions of educational policy changes studied through the narratives of teachers, and not the least when seen in light of the critical sociological theories of Benjamin, Simmel and Rosa, and in the critical-narrative approach developed by Ivor Goodson and associates.

I shall thus start with a rather rigorous presentation of Ricoeur's philosophy of narrative and the use of metaphor as a dialectical-hermeneutical approach to scientific analysis, and—building on this platform—widen the scope to encompass the broader concepts of modernity introduced by the above-mentioned researchers and authors.

#### 3.1 RICOEUR—HERMENEUTICS, NARRATIVE AND IDEOLOGY CRITIQUE

INTERPRETATION AND HERMENEUTICS.

##### *LANGUAGE AS DISCOURSE.*

In Ricoeur's philosophy the actor/structure perspective permeates every component of his theories, all the way down to language 'signs' (letters, words, sentences, stories and so on). Ricoeur emphasises the difference between message and code in the use of language. The message should be considered as belonging to the individual, while the code belongs to a collective speaking community. He states that the way they belong to *time* differs:

A message is a temporal event in the succession of events which constitute the diachronic dimension of time, while the code is in time as a set of contemporaneous elements, i.e., as a synchronic system. A message is intentional; it is meant by someone. The code is anonymous and not intended. In this sense it is unconscious, not in the sense that drives and impulses are unconscious according to Freudian metapsychology, but in the sense of a nonlibidinal structural and cultural unconscious

(Ricoeur, Interpretation theory, 1976, p. 3)

Ricoeur emphasises that the task of semantics, or the science of the sentence, must be to provide a remedy to the epistemological problem that the fluid and temporal character of language events or *parole* creates. This philosophical argumentation is based on the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure's distinction between *langue* and *parole* (Ricoeur, 1976). Ricoeur points to a parallel distinction between semantics and semiotics, arguing that a sentence (semantics) is a unity that cannot be reduced into the sum of its symbolic parts (semiotics) (cf. Ricoeur, Interpretation theory, 1976, p. 7). Semantics, Ricoeur argues, concerns itself with the concept of *sense* (rationale), while semiotics is a science of signs and symbols, which implies a detachment of language into basic components (predicatives). The sentence will always be a carrier of a noun and a verb, both inherent with a meaning. Additionally, the verb carries with it a prediction of time. Ricoeur defines this predicative trait of the sentence as *discourse*. He notes, however, that if discourse merely were to be considered as something instant, one would lack a justification for studying it. He solves this problem by arguing that:

An act of discourse can be identified and reidentified as the same so that we may say it again or in other words. We may even say it in another language or translate it from one language into another. Through all these transformations it preserves an identity of its own which can be called the propositional content, the "said as such".

(Ricoeur, 1976, p. 9)

Ricoeur elaborates further on this problem, claiming that *discourse* cannot be reduced to the simple opposition between *parole* and *langue*. According to his reasoning, *discourse* has an element of structure (patterns of action), but in a synthetic/symbolic sense, not analytical/semantic. A word conveys more than its separate letters—it signifies a sense of meaning. He notes, however, that such an abstraction depends upon the concrete whole, or what he describes as: 'the

dialectical unity of the event and meaning in the sentence' (cf. Ricoeur, 1976, p.11). He clarifies this by explaining that discourse is understood as *meaning* (sense), while actualised as an *event*. The concept of *meaning* can be interpreted in two different ways in this context, 'the utterer's meaning' and 'the utterance meaning'. Ricoeur, nonetheless, points to a dialectic relationship between the two. Since language does not speak, but people do, the self-reference of discourse will cause the utterance meaning pointing back at the utterer's meaning. The discourse of an utterance is always *addressed* communication. It presupposes both a teller and a listener. Since the discursive event not only includes speaking, but also listening, the dialectic movement between event and meaning also actualises intersubjective exchange:

The instance of discourse is the instance of dialogue. Dialogue is an event which connects two events, that of speaking and that of hearing. It is to this dialogical event that understanding as meaning is homogenous.

(Ricoeur, 1976, p.16)

*'THE PROBLEM OF WRITING' AS A SOLUTION TO THE STUDY OF DISCOURSE.*

Working with interpretations of text, one will be confronted by 'the problem of writing'. Ricoeur locates this problem in the fixation of *discourse*. When moving from speaking/thinking to writing, *discourse* as an *event* disappears by being materialised through its inscription in text. Ricoeur argues that the dialectic movement between the utterance meaning and the utterer's meaning, which overlaps in the present of speaking due to the self-reference in spoken discourse, ceases to coincide in written discourse; disconnecting the mental intention of the author from the verbal meaning of the text (cf. Ricoeur, 1976, p. 29). In this sense, the semantic autonomy of the written text places more emphasis on what the text means, than what the author meant when writing it (or utterer meant when speaking it). Ricoeur (cf. 1976, p. 30) does, however, point to two fallacies in this case. The fallacy of either overlooking the autonomy of the verbal meaning in a text, and the fallacy of reducing a text into natural objects, by not recognising that within the written text remains: 'a discourse told by somebody, said by someone to someone else about something'. However, as spoken discourse is addressed to an identified person (audience), a written text is also addressed to an unknown reader, potentially Ricoeur states, to whomever knows how to read. He pictures this as a process where a discourse becomes 'spiritual',

liberated from a face-to-face situation. Creating its audience, the written text creates unpredictable events of how the text will be recognised by the audience. He argues that:

It is the response of the audience which makes the text important and therefore significant. This is why authors who do not worry about their readers and despise their present public keep speaking of their readers as a secret community, sometimes projected into a cloudy future. It is part of the meaning of a text to be open to an infinite number of readers and, therefore, of interpretations. This opportunity for multiple readings is the dialectical counterpart of the semantic autonomy of the text.

(Ricoeur, 1976, p. 32)

It is the *distanciation* created by the writing production's distortion of the temporal dialogical situation that Ricoeur approaches as an opportunity for in-depth interpretations of a text. By extending the temporal distance between the author and the reader, discourse becomes 'reflected in parallel alterations of the ostensive character of the reference' (cf. Ricoeur, 1976, p. 35). In other words, it makes it possible to make sense of the text in new ways—meanings which refers to something other than what the author (utterer) intended when writing (or speaking). One might say that the originally intended/spoken meaning is *reconstructed* in the text as verbal meaning which in turn can be *reconceptualised* into a new comprehension the text.

#### *THE HERMENEUTIC ARCH OF INTERPRETATION.*

Ricoeur points to a weakness in the Romanticist tradition of hermeneutics (referring to Schleiermacher and Dilthey) and its ambition to uncover the author's original intentions with the text (Ricoeur, 1976, p. 22). He claims that the problem with the Romantic form of hermeneutics is that it disregards the disjunction of the verbal and mental meaning in the transformation from voice, or thought, to text. They no longer coincide. The text is 'mute', in the way that it 'is no longer the voice of someone present (cf. Ricoeur, 1976, p. 75). Ricoeur claims that the semantic autonomy of the text enforces the reader to guess the meaning of the written accounts, since the author's (or utterer's) intention is out of reach:

If the objective meaning is something other than the subjective intention of the author, it may be constructed in various ways. Misunderstanding is possible and even unavoidable. The problem of the correct understanding can no longer be solved by a simple return to the

alleged situation of the author. The concept of guess has no other origin. To construe the meaning as verbal meaning of the text is to make a guess.

(Ricoeur, 1976, p. 76)

In the same way that a sentence is more than its constitutive parts, semantically speaking, the structure and meaning of a text cannot be derived from one sentence. To reconstruct the meaning of a text is thus a circular process, based on a specific kind of judgement in which 'the presupposition of a certain kind of whole is implied in the recognition of the parts.', and vice versa. However, here again, the judgement of what is important or not will also have the character of guessing (cf. Ricoeur, 1976, p. 77). Ricoeur compares the reconstruction of a text with how an observation of an object always involves a perspective. Just as one can observe an object from different angles, but not all at once, a textual reconstruction will always be coloured by its perspective. To situate one's perspective, such as through classification of codes and structures, is thus essential. However, this will once again be based on guess (cf. Ricoeur, 1976, p. 77).

Recognising that our comprehension of a text is based on guesses, the question becomes how to validate the guesses that are made. Ricoeur reasons that the process of validation lies closer to a logic of probability than to a logic of empirical verification. He claims that there is a difference between showing that something is probable and showing that it is true. Validation in this sense should not be confused or mixed with verification. It is, he claims: 'a logic of uncertainty and of qualitative probability'. Faced with several interpretations, the validation would rest not only upon being recognised as probable. It would have to be justified as the most probable or, in a dialectical sense, seek agreements between the different interpretations' discourse validations (cf. Ricoeur, 1976, p. 77). In conclusion, interpretation is to be seen as a constant dialectical and hermeneutical movement between guess and validation.

Ricoeur's theory of hermeneutics is radical in that it redeems the traditional gap between structuralism and phenomenology. Even though, as mentioned above, it is people who speak; language is 'in itself' an unconscious system of signs which merely refer to other language units of the system. Language in structuralism is seen as a self-referential system. This affirmation of structuralism thus excludes the texts

connection to both the author and its readers (Ricoeur, 2003, p. 376-377). It is on this polarity between existentialism and structuralism that Ricoeur based his theory of the hermeneutical arch:

Confronted by this situation [existentialism vs. structuralism], I tried to react in the following way. First, I tried to become more competent in linguistic problems. Secondly, I tried to incorporate within hermeneutics as much as I could of this structural approach by means of a better connection between the stage of objective explanation and the stage of subjective appropriation... The concept of 'hermeneutical circle' is not ruled out by this shift within hermeneutics. Instead it is formulated in new terms. It does not proceed so much from an intersubjective relation linking the subjectivity of the author and the subjectivity of the reader as from a connection between two discourses, the discourse of the text and the discourse of the interpretation

(Ricoeur, 2003, p. 377)

Ricoeur argues that, similar to Gadamer's 'fusion of horizons', the final appropriation is more a process of a merging of two worlds, the reader's and the text's, than a projection of the readers prejudices into the text (cf. Ricoeur, 2003, p. 378). According to Ricoeur (1974), Gadamer's hermeneutic approach lacks an external (Kantian) position that enables the interpreter to discriminate hierarchically the level of precision and plausibility of different and maybe even contradictive interpretations of the whole of a text. On the other hand, Ricoeur also points to the (impossible) challenge of the Romantic hermeneutical tradition of Schleiermacher, of accessing the author's original intentions through textual interpretations. Approaching the distancing created through writing, between the author and the reader of a text, as a possible solution (and not the problem) to the interpretation process, is in my opinion what distinguishes Ricoeur's hermeneutical approach from that of Gadamer (2004) and Schleiermacher (1998). It somehow confronts and redeems the fallacies within both.

#### *EXPLANATION AND UNDERSTANDING.*

Ricoeur (cf. 1976, p. 73) refers to a traditional dichotomy, on both an ontological and epistemological level, in Romanticist hermeneutics, where methodology is divided into two spheres of reality, that of nature and that of mind. *Explanation*, Ricoeur argues, has been limited to the natural science paradigm, appropriated to communicate the discovered facts and laws of nature, while *understanding* has been



related to the human sciences, relying on the meaningfulness of our experiences of others. Ricoeur confronts the strong dichotomy between explanation and understanding, stating:

Just as the dialectic of event and meaning remains implicit and difficult to recognize in oral discourse, that of explanation and understanding is quite impossible to identify in the dialogical situation that we call conversation. We explain something to someone else in order that he can understand. And what he has understood, he can in turn explain to a third party. Thus understanding and explanation tend to overlap and to pass over into each other

(Ricoeur, 1976, p. 72)

Ricoeur further claims that explanation is made possible by the process of writing and the generative codes of literature, where the event can be approached as exterior to meaning. Understanding belongs to the intentional unity of discourse, while explanation addresses the analytical structure of the text (cf. Ricoeur, 1976, p. 74). He warns, however, to view this polarity as dualistic, and emphasise that they should be considered 'a complex and highly mediated dialectic' of interpretation (cf. Ricoeur, 1976, p. 74). Interpretation should not, therefore, be reduced to understanding alone, but be considered as the dialectic of comprehension moving in hermeneutical phases between explanation and understanding (cf. Ricoeur, 1976, p. 74).

To describe the process from explanation to comprehension of a text, Ricoeur (1976) refers to the work on myths by Levi Strauss and on folklore (narratives) by Barthes and Greimas, who approach the whole of a text as an extended structural unit, or a sequence of signs that are longer than the largest sentence unit in linguistics. This moves the linguistic model to the theory of narrative (cf. Ricoeur, 1976, p. 86). The justification for doing so, lies in the recognition that units above the level of the sentence are constituted by the same principals as those below it, stating: 'The meaning of an element is its ability to enter into relation with other elements and with the whole work' (cf. Ricoeur, 1976, p. 84). A structural analysis of a text thus entails both horizontal and hierarchical aspects, requiring both a segmentation of the whole into parts and the integration of parts into a whole. Using narrative texts to clarify, Ricoeur notes: 'To explain a narrative is to get hold of this symphonic structure of segmental actions' (cf. Ricoeur, 1976, p. 85). The structural analysis will

thus bring forth a correlation between a hierarchy of actors (not in a psychological sense) and a hierarchy of actions (cf. Ricoeur, 1976, p. 85). Ricoeur argues that Explanation, in this case, proceeds not as a concept from the field of natural science transferred into the social sciences, but rather as a concept grounded in the sphere of common language. One can justify this appropriation of the concept of explanation, according to Ricoeur: ‘thanks to the analogical transference from the small units of language (phonemes and lexemes) to the large units beyond language, including narrative, folklore, and myth’, concluding that ‘this is what the structural schools mean by explanation in the rigorous sense of the term’ (cf. Ricoeur, 1976, p. 86). Explanation, as a structural analysis, is located between the stage of a naive interpretation (surface) and the stage of a critical interpretation (depth). In this hermeneutical arch, explanation and understanding are located in different stages (cf. Ricoeur, 1976, p. 87). Comprehension as the result of critical interpretation is in Ricoeur’s line of thinking, about moving from an understanding of what the text says, to an understanding of what it is about. In this phase, due to the structural analysis, one transcends the ostensive reference of the spoken word (pointing to existing things in a present situation), to looking at things in new ways—within a context (non-ostensive) outside the ‘here and now’ (atemporal). Since the reader’s access to the mental intentions of the author (utterer) is exterior to the text, the non-ostensive reference brings the reader into a new mode of orientation (cf. Ricoeur, 1976, p. 87).

#### *THE HERMENEUTICS OF METAPHOR.*

Building upon his argument of the non-ostensive reference of discourse in texts, Ricoeur expands his theory of interpretation of discourse to yet another level—to that of *metaphoric reference*. He justifies the use of metaphor, by posing that in contrast to poetic discourse, which Ricoeur argues is fundamentally non-referential and centred on itself: ‘Metaphor is the rhetorical process by which discourse unleashes the power that certain fictions have to redescribe reality’ (Ricoeur, 2003, p. 5). In this, Ricoeur finds what he describes as a ‘kinship’ between the functions of metaphor in arts and scientific models. This kinship ‘constitute[s] the principal arguments of this hermeneutics of metaphor’ (Ricoeur, 2003, p. 5). Referring to Aristotle, he points out that *poësis* (imaginary imitations of the real) arises out of the

bond between *mythos* ('is not', read: is fictional) and *mimesis* ('is like'; mimics what 'is'), Ricoeur notes:

The metaphorical 'is' at once signifies both 'is not' and 'is like'. If this is really so, we are allowed to speak of metaphorical truth, but in an equally 'tensive' sense of the word 'truth'. This incursion into the problematic of reality and truth demands that the philosophy implicit in the theory of metaphorical reference be elucidated.

(Ricoeur, 2003, p. 6)

Within the truth tensions lies an expansive power of discourse. The hermeneutic of metaphor reference moves from pointing to already articulated meanings ('is'), to possible meanings that are still not articulated (Ricoeur, 2003, p. 353). Anchored in an initial field of reference, new meanings are constituted by being *cast into* another already functioning and resembling ('is like') field of reference (cf. Ricoeur, 2003, p. 353). Ricoeur describes this potential movement as a 'living' quality metaphor:

Metaphor is living not only to the extent that it vivifies a constituted language. Metaphor is living by virtue of the fact that it introduces the spark of imagination into a 'thinking more' at the conceptual level. This struggle to 'think more,' guided by the 'vivifying principle,' is the 'soul' of interpretation

(Ricoeur, 2003, p. 358)

## NARRATIVE.

### *TIME AND HISTORY.*

In the final volume of his work *Time and Narrative*, Ricoeur (1990b) confronts the phenomenology of Husserl and critical thought of Kant, as well as the philosophical considerations of Augustine with the ones of Aristotle. He infers from these confrontations that the connection between time and space is linked to the consciousness of existence—our deepest level of experience. Ricoeur points to a dialectic tension, that is, a mutual interdependence between our immediate consciousness of the outside world (phenomenology), and our critical capability to distance ourselves from this immediate consciousness. Ricoeur emphasises the mutual dialectical relationship between the two forms of consciousness of time, but states that 'phenomenology and critical thought borrow from each other only on the

condition of mutually excluding each other. We cannot look at both sides of a single coin at the same time' (Ricoeur, 1990b, p. 57).

*Historical time as narrated time.*

As with the concept of 'time', Ricoeur (1990b, p.103) contends that history also consist of the contradictive tensions and mutual reliance between historical consciousness and the historical condition—or 'historical narrative' and 'actual history'. The historical narrative refigures time through the interplay between our future anticipations, past traditions, and the 'untimely upheaval of the present'.

Ricoeur (1990b, p.105) finds that the first bridge between lived and universal time, was constructed through the time of the calendar, introduced by historical practice, and its institution of a third form of time—the historical time. Calendar time is, according to Ricoeur (1990b, p.106-107), mediated through sociology of religion and religious history, constructed on the components of myth and rituals. The ritual concerns the measurement of recurrent natural phenomena, observed in the science of astronomy, which establish a linear and chronological continuum of time which makes it possible to follow the tracks of time in two opposite directions. Ricoeur (1990b) comments, however, that the chronological calendar does not concern itself with the tension between the past, present, and the future. It is first when viewed in the calendar's relation to religious myths that this narrative/historic tension of calendar time becomes apparent:

[T]he principle governing the division of calendar time is not reducible to either physics or astronomy. As Benveniste rightly says, the features common to every calendar 'proceed' from the determination of the zero point of some computation...To have a present, as we also learned from Benveniste, someone must speak. The present is then indicated by the coincidence between an event and the discourse that states it. To re-join lived time starting from chronological time, therefore, we have to pass through linguistic time, which refers to discourse. This is why any date, however complete or explicit, cannot be said to be future or past if we do not know the date of the utterance that pronounced it [entailing the reference to the zero-point of 'mythic time' in a specific religious calendar (discursive narrated-time)].

(Ricoeur, 1990b, p.107 and 109)

### *Narrative emplotment.*

In history (viewed as narrated time), fragmented lived events are interpreted by means of a network of retellings, which fuses past, ongoing and anticipated events into a meaningful, emplotted and cohesive storyline:

[The] story of my life is a segment of the story of your life; of the story of my parents, of my friends, of my enemies, and of countless strangers. We are literally 'entangled in stories... Ultimately, history cannot make a complete break with narrative because it cannot break with action, which itself implies agents, aims, circumstances, interactions, and results both intended and unintended. But the plot is the basic unity that organizes these heterogeneous ingredients into an intelligible totality.

(Ricoeur, 1991, p. 5)

An event can be retold and interpreted in numerous ways, but at the same time the retellings or reinterpretations must be negotiated and justified within the frame of other people's stories of the same event. In this sense, the individual, subjective stories are, to a certain degree, constantly restrained/opened by the surrounding network of stories and its established image of history. This does not imply, however, that the framework within which the stories are elaborated represents a static border. Narrative and history are meaningful only to the extent that they manage to encompass the features of temporal existence (cf. Ricoeur, 1990a, p. 3). This constant call to adjust the storyline, so that the plot always stays in sync with a situated temporal context, forces the narrative events into a state of flow. Reflecting on this flexible character of narrative, Ricoeur (1992) refers to Walter Benjamin's concepts of *Rettung* (revision) and *Ursprung* (origin) to explain the dynamic and revisional function of the plot:

Even though the surging forth of the narrative event cannot be coordinated with some totality, it does not exhaust itself in its effect of rupture, of caesura; it contains potentialities for development that have to be "saved." This *Rettung* of the *Ursprung*—a central theme in Benjamin—is, in my opinion, the workings of the plot. The plot "redeems" the origin of the "fall" into meaninglessness.

(Ricoeur, 1992, p. 142)

Thus, both history (and 'redemption' of it) and our actions in the present depend on how we emplot anticipated and occurring events in our temporary life and world narratives. Ricoeur ([2004] 2006) argues that narrative coherence (historic and

discursive) is rooted in explanation and articulated through understanding. Explanation is seen in the narratives' synthetic coordination of heterogeneous and multiple events, pointing to causes and intentions, which in turn are articulated from the understanding of the meaning of the narrative units as a whole. The role of the narrative plot is to function as the literary coordinator between explanation and understanding. To picture the way in which the plot guides the complex actions in a story line, from its beginning to its end, Ricoeur ([2004] 2006) refers to Aristotle's characterisation of the 'probable' or the 'reasonable': 'The reasonable constituting the face that the probable turns towards the readers in order to persuade them; that is, to induce them to believe precisely in the narrative coherence of the told story or history' (Ricoeur, [2004] 2006, p. 243).

#### *Narrative truth.*

Truth, in a narrative sense, will never be absolute, only negotiated, justified, and acted upon within the realms of the narrative networks and their emplotted storylines and borders. In this process, however, it is reasonable to believe that big and small narratives will have a habit of reinforcing one another, generating established discourses of what is held to be true/false, good/bad, and so forth. It is also likely, that this reinforcing process could risk blurring the gap between narrative events and reality, overlooking the emancipative power which lies in the awareness that 'between living and recounting, a gap—however small it may be—is opened up. Live is lived, history is recounted' (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 5).

In this sense, history recounts for the discursive traces of something absent or 'dead'. The narrative of history is, according to Ricoeur ([2004] 2006, p. 366), the only thing left 'speaking' in the traces or absence of life, claiming that there is no other place to make sense out of the 'relics' of the living than in discourse. Ricoeur (1990b, p. 221) notes, however, that through the generated meaning provided by the traces of discourse, one escapes a 'dead' interval between the interpretation of the past (lived lives) and the interpreting present (the self in the 'here and now'): 'To give notions of meaning and interpretation their full scope, we must provisionally place between parentheses the question of truth. The notion of tradition, taken in the sense of tradition, signifies that we are all in the situation of being heir' (Ricoeur, 1990b, p. 221).

Ricoeur states that narrative history involves a mode of *care* ('soin') in the face of life times that have passed away, filling their absence with memories. He distinguishes himself from Heidegger's concepts of 'being-towards-death', Ricoeur ([2004] 2006, p. 505) asserting that the care in memory is the fundamental structure of our historical condition, rooted in our capacity to remember, and to remain concerned about the past. In contrast to Heidegger, Ricoeur ([2004] 2006, p. 364) considers the narrative history to be temporarily constituted on an ontological noting of 'being-in-debt-to-past' and the epistemological act of 'standing for'. The question of narrative truth must thus be seen in relation to a traditional heir of presumptions:

In the face of criticism that devours itself, the truth claim of the content of traditions merits being taken as a presumption of truth, so long as a stronger reason, that is, a better argument, has not been established. By a "presumption of truth," I mean that credit, that confident reception by which we respond, in an initial move preceding all criticism, to any proportion of meaning, any claim to truth, because we are never at the beginning of the process of truth and because we belong, before any critical gesture, to a domain of presumed truth.

(Ricoeur, 1990b, p. 227)

Returning in his final work, *The Course of Recognition*, to Descartes and Kant's theories of judgment of true and false, Ricoeur (2005) suggests approaching the process of judging another person as an act of distinguishing/identifying one's own preconceptions and 'truths' of the other. Truth will, according to Ricoeur (2005), be a discursive operation where I aim 'to see myself through the eyes of the other', in order to scrutinise if my preconceptions and 'suspicions' of the other are plausible, or based on false presumptions. In turn, the predicatives of meaning signified in the other person's use of language (discourse) enables me to re-imagine the inherited world views (meanings/perspectives) of the other (e.g., her or his respective environment/tradition of what is recognised as righteous, good, plausible, and reasonable).

The notion of oneself as another makes it possible to gain 'external' knowledge of oneself and the world, but the risk of that knowledge being based on misinterpretations will consequently follow since one cannot 'access' the mind of another, only model the other in action. Ricoeur concludes that 'the investigation of mutual recognition can be summed up as a struggle against the misrecognition of

others at the same time that it is a struggle for recognition of oneself by others' (Ricoeur, 2005, p. 258).

Ricoeur's 'course of recognition' implies four levels of abstraction (*poësis*) to arrive at a new comprehension of another (narrative 'care').

#### *History as care.*

While condoning Heidegger's metaphor of 'being-towards-death', and Emmanuel Levinas' consideration of death as 'a violent murderer in the night' as the living desire to stay alive, Ricoeur adds that the state of being in time is not a move towards death but 'being-in-face-of-death,-against-death'. In the fight to survive death, one is facing the death of others. Responding to others' death involves the process of mourning their absence, remembering their lives, and a consciousness of how people around you might mourn your own death and remember your life when you pass away. In this sense, Ricoeur ([2004] 2006, p. 369) agrees with Heidegger, that there is a presence of 'death' in the temporal state of living. However, he does not agree that life is a movement towards death, but rather finds it to represent a *care* for those who have passed away. 'Being-in-debt' to the memory of others is also a care for what one 'stands for' in life. Encompassing the state of mourning, the time of living is a state of 'being-in-the-face-of-death, against-death' (Ricoeur, [2004] 2006, p. 369)—or in other words, *to care*. History's reliance on peoples' care to remember the lifetimes that have passed, implies an understanding of *forgetting* as the very antithesis of 'history', since forgetting one's past in this perspective would be an act of 'carelessness'.

#### *Memory, History, and Forgetting.*

Memory will always be determined by the process of remembering because it is being 'renovated' from a present point of view—influenced by the passing of time (thoughts, imaginations, experiences, health, and so on.). Ricoeur ([2004] 2006) points to a tension in narrative history, enforced by the counter-movements of memory and forgetting. To be able to act in life, or for renewal, our memory needs to be censured in order not to move around in constant pain and anger towards others and oneself. A happy memory thus relies on the ability to forget ones sufferings, fights, and sorrows. As a counterpoint to Walter Benjamin's 'angel of history' (see p.



53), where the angel loses its capacity to move due to the progress of history, Ricoeur suggests Kierkegaard's way of embracing forgetting as liberation of care:

Kierkegaard notes, 'Yet this is so only if the person in distress actually gives his attention to the lilies and the birds and their life and forgets himself in contemplation of them and their life, while in his absorption in them he, unnoticed, by himself learns something about himself' (. 161-62)

(Ricoeur, [2004] 2006, p. 505)

*Forgetting vs. perjury.*

In addition to a 'caring forgetting' or 'careless forgetting', which allows one to forgive oneself and others, Ricoeur points to the opposite—the deliberate abuse of forgetting. This he claims can often be seen in politics—relying on people forgetting the unforgettable in order to make sense. Peoples' memory could at some point show resilience towards such an abuse, as the process of mourning springs from the work of remembering (take care not to forget):

The work of mourning is the cost of the work of remembering, but the work of remembering is the benefit of the work of mourning..." a sorrow which...cannot be done away with, cannot forget" (Electra, v.1246-47)

(Ricoeur, [2004] 2006, p. 72 and 501)

Such resilience towards forgiveness and forgetting could be caused by a lack of confidence in politics. Judged by history, people might not trust that politics is affected by forgetfulness, but rather perceive it as a deliberate form of perjury—which implies a conscious act of power not to 'care'. Ricoeur (2005) points to 'forgetting' and 'perjury' as two distinctively different ways of affecting memories. The function of forgetting could cause one to mislead both oneself and others, but it is quite 'innocent' in its form compared to perjury. Ricoeur accentuate that:

What is frightening about perjury is that it is a form of power, inseparable from the power to promise, the power not to keep one's word. By destroying the trustworthiness of the one who promises, this power of betrayal weakens the whole institution of language, insofar that it depends on our confidence in what others say.

(Ricoeur, 2005, p. 257-258)

### *Justice vs agape.*

Ricoeur argues that the way of justice is not necessarily a way of peace, since the elements of measurement, justification, and calculations (accountability) belonging to the concepts of justice (and rights) in all respects appear to be in contrast to that of *agape* (unselfish non-judgmental love). The close connection between *agape* and peace is revealed in the way in which *agape*, even in the case of justice, allows disputes to be dispensed by the choice of forgetting and ‘letting go’ of the past in an act of forgiveness (Ricoeur, 2015, p. 220-221). *Agape*, in this sense, represents not only an open-endedness towards the future, but also towards the past. One could return an act of justice with an act of *agape* (e.g., ‘forgive them because they know not what they do’), but Ricoeur argues that it does not work the other way around (accounting logic):

The dominant tonality of the actions of the person who makes the first gesture, the person who acts out of *agape*, and those of the person who makes the second gesture, that of justice, can be characterized only by misunderstanding.

(Ricoeur, 2005, p. 225)

Up to now, I have presented a range of hermeneutical and narrative concepts, retrieved from both the early and late contributions of Ricoeur (from 1976 to 2005). In the later phase of his life, Ricoeur developed his theory in a direction that, to my understanding, put a greater emphasis on normative issues, approaching the critical theorist position (Kearney, 2004; Ricoeur, 2005; Ritivoi, 2010). In the following, I will place the theoretical framework of this study within a closely associated research tradition known as critical narrative (or ‘critical pedagogy’).

## **3.2 GOODSON AND GILL—CRITICAL NARRATIVE**

### CRITICAL NARRATIVE AND PEDAGOGY.

In *Critical Narrative as Pedagogy*, authors Ivor Goodson and Scherto Gill (2014) approach critical narratives as a form of pedagogy. By drawing on Paulo Freire’s concept of learning as ‘world-making’ and on how Charles Taylor grants an ontological status to ‘respect for human life, rights, autonomy, and similar moral concerns’, they call attention to how the consideration of ‘critical narrative as

pedagogy' springs from a perspective which places human dignity and emancipation at its forefront (Goodson & Gill, 2014).

Grounded in what they hold to be sources of selfhood and the primary determinants of identity,<sup>12</sup> Goodson and Gill (2014) locates a critical and narrative capacity in human beings. They hold that we can make sense and give moral accounts of what is good and how we ought to live our lives—responding and identifying characteristic qualities of 'meaning, goodness, morality, dignity, and integrity' (Goodson & Gill, 2014, p. 19-23). Describing the ethical and moral dimensions of selfhood and identity, and the mutual relation between life and narrative, they quote Ricoeur, who states:

The self of self-knowledge is not the egoistical and narcissistic ego whose hypocrisy and naivety the hermeneutics of suspicion have denounced, along with its aspects of an ideological superstructure and infantile and neurotic archaism. The self of self-knowledge is the fruit of an examined life (Ricoeur, 1988, p. 247).

(Goodson & Gill, 2014, p. 39-42)

Goodson and Gill points to how people's inner sense of self and their capacity to act in the world is influenced and constrained by the external cultivating forces and dynamics which characterise their social and institutional surroundings. However, they argue in return, that:

As persons are also agents who can make choices (to a certain extent) in life, so as to follow their own pathways and not merely react to what life has thrown in front of them...we are not passive recipients but actors in, for example, the production of culture, construction of meaning, cultivation of ways of being and identification of paths of future social actions.

(Goodson & Gill, 2014, p. 19-23)

Expanding the frame of narrative identity also to encompass the history of a community, Goodson and Gill (2014, p. 38) lean on Ricoeur's consideration of how—in the web of narratives in which human lives are embedded—history and time become *human* and *caring* through the act of narrative. They state that:

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<sup>12</sup> Human capacity of 'evaluation, moral sensibility, purpose and deriving meaning from moral action in the world' (Goodson & Gill, 2014, p. 19)

Ricoeur suggests that the notion of narrative identity can be applied to both individuals and communities because individuals and communities are 'constituted in their identity by taking up narratives that become for them their actual history' (Ricoeur, 1988, p. 247)... Ricoeur (1992) argues that the evaluative nature of narrative gives primacy to the 'other-than-self' over the self. One recounts moments of one's responsiveness to others, aiming at contributing to the betterment of life for others and oneself. In this way, Ricoeur concludes, narrative recounts care and care only.

(Goodson & Gill, 2014, p. 42-44)

The moral, world-centred, responsiveness in narrative is also emphasised in Goodson and Gill's quotation of Alasdair MacIntyre: 'The good life for man is the life spent seeking for the good life for man, and the virtues necessary for the seeking are those which will enable us to understand what more and what else the good life for man is (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 219)' (Goodson & Gill, 2014, pp. 82-84). Approaching 'learning' as the process of 'becoming more fully human', inspired by Paulo Freire, they focus on the processes of transformation and reconciliation as key elements of a critical narrative pedagogy. Transformation, in this context, points to the renewed understanding which people gain of themselves, their relations, and social world through narrative, while reconciliation refers to the process of coming to terms with one's past, one's purpose in the world, and future courses of action (cf. Goodson & Gill, pp. 8-11). Building on these processes, Goodson and Gill (2014) introduce and connect the concepts of 're-storying' and 're-selfing' to what they describe possibilities of social imagination and collective transformative action. Through re-telling their narratives, people are posed with an opportunity to revise their courses of action, or what Goodson and Gill (2014) describe as a process of healing and reconciliation. They state that such re-tellings or re-selfings may contribute to:

A life of direction with integrity, meaning and purpose. Indeed, through engaging in critical narrative, learning is an act of developing a 'deeper social story and meaning' (Lederach, 2005). Such a vision of learning is compelling both in affluent societies struggling to provide an educational experience aimed at enabling well-being for all and in conflict-ridden and divided societies striving for peaceful relationships.

(Goodson & Gill, 2014, p.)

The concept of critical narrative as pedagogy, in this sense carries with it elements and aims of innovation, seeking to change people's (or societies) courses of action

and perception of themselves. To me, Goodson and Gill's (2014) concepts seem to resonate with Ricoeur's suggestion of understanding narrative as a condition of temporal existence that allows humans to reconfigure their thoughts and anticipations of the past, present and future. They (Goodson & Gill, 2011, pp. 102 and 104) have described a similar way of thinking in their previous works, arguing that the way people act and perceive the world is grounded in the narratives they tell about themselves and others.

To understand human agency or cultural transformation, Goodson and Gill (2011) finds it crucial that narrative research analysis encompass both the aspect of structure and individual responses, in terms of degree of 'scriptedness' (acting in a predictable way) and 'elaborativeness' (being critically reflective/explorative) of people's 'course of action' (way of thinking and acting). In my view, Goodson and Gill's concepts of 'scripted/elaborative' are closely associated with Bourdieu's concepts of ' ' and 'agency'. This also applies to Ball's action-oriented concept of 'policy' with its emphasis on 'embodied geographies' encompassing both structural and individual aspects in cultural transformation processes (Ball, 1994). In the following sections, I shall describe these concepts of Bourdieu and Ball in more detail.

### 3.3 HABITUS, AGENCY AND POLICY

'HABITUS AND AGENCY'—THE INDIVIDUAL AS CARRIER OF HISTORICAL NARRATIVES.

When the cultural heritage of teachers' is addressed in the study, it is understood as 'habitus' in a Bordieuan sense<sup>13</sup>—where power is symbolically and culturally refracted (renewed and reinforced) through the transactional interplay between

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<sup>13</sup> When I use the concept of 'habitus' in this sense it points to the transactional relations between the hierarchy and rules of 'fields', 'agent habitus' and 'agent capital' (economic, social and cultural capital), as applied by the Bourdieu tradition. 'Habitus' is here also to be understood in the light of Bourdieu's later work and concept of 'refraction' (Bourdieu, 1993), where the 'works' of the individual are more accentuated in processes of cultural transformation within a given field. 'Cultural heritage' is added to emphasise the contextual and historical preconditions of these transactions and transformations. 'Heritage' is not to be understood in a deterministic sense, but as part of a dialectical process where individuals are also perceived as agents of structural and cultural change.

societal structures and *individual agency*.<sup>14</sup> Through the process of socialisation, societal norms and tendencies become deposited in individuals or groups' *embodied* mind sets and character—unconsciously influencing the way they think and act in the world:

Between the child and the world the whole group intervenes, not just with the warnings that inculcate a fear of supernatural dangers, but with a whole universe of ritual practices and also of discourses, sayings, proverbs, all structured in concordance with principles of the corresponding habitus. Furthermore, through the acts and symbols of that are intended to contribute to the reproduction of nature and of the group by the analogical reproduction of natural processes, mimetic representation helps to produce in the agents temporary reactions (such as, for example, the collective excitement associated with lakhrif [autumn feast]) or even lasting dispositions such as the generative schemes incorporated in the body schema) attuned to the objective processes expected from ritual action—helps, in other words, to make the world conform to the myth. Because the subjective necessity and self-evidence of the commonsense world are validated by the objective consensus on the sense of the world, what is essential *goes without saying because it comes without saying*: the tradition is silent, not least about itself as a tradition...a world which has no place for an *opinion* as liberal ideology understands it[.]

(Bourdieu, 1977, p. 167)

According to Grenfell (2008), the concept of 'habitus' in essence points to a *relational mode* of being and thinking, stating that:

Where many approaches reduce practice to one dimension of a dichotomy, such as either the individual or the social, and thus dissolve dualisms through reductionism, *habitus* provides a means of maintaining but relating such dualisms. Moreover, it compares favourably to other similarly proclaimed concepts. Giddens's notion of "structuration" (1984), for example, brings together structure and agency but at the cost of their analytical integrity, disabling the capacity to capture either (see Archer 1995, 1996). With *habitus*, Bourdieu aims to allow structure and agency (and, likewise, the individual and social, "outer" and "inner", etc.) their analytical integrity, but also to relate them to each other....practice is not reducible to habitus but rather a phenomenon emergent from relations between social agents' habituses and their contextual social fields.

(Grenfell, 2008, p. 61)

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<sup>14</sup> '*Individual agency*' refers to how teachers might enact practice and engage with policy in a broad socio-ecological sense (Priestley et al., 2015).

There are categories of habitus, including ‘class habitus’ and ‘individual habitus’. The first is ‘communal’ in character—pointing to a shared orientation in lifestyle, norms and cultural capital within a group or a community in a given field (e.g., education, teaching profession, etc.). The ‘individual habitus’ represent the particular layers of ‘class habituses’, or the cultural and symbolic *embodiment* of the various milieus that individuals are socialised into (Bourdieu, 1977).

In association with the concepts of habitus and individual agency, the concept of ‘policy’ adapted in this study is based on Stephen Ball’s definition of ‘policy’, describing it as:

an ‘economy of power’, a set of technologies and practices which are realized and struggled over in local settings. Policy is both text and action, words and deeds, it is what is enacted as well as what is intended. Policies are always incomplete in so far as they relate to or map on the ‘wild profusion’ of local practice. Policies are crude and simple. Practice is sophisticated, contingent, complex and unstable.

(Ball, 1994, p. 10)

In addition to Ball’s ‘post-structuralist’ stance on ‘policy’, this study will place the concept of policy and GERM, in particular, within a critical theorist perspective of modernity. In the next section, I will present sociological sketches of modernity, spanning from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century up to the present.

### **3.4 CRITICAL THEORIES OF MODERNITY**

To grasp more than a sequential listing of events, as in chronological accounts of national, local, and individual history of education (see Chapters 5 and 6), critical meta-perspectives of modernity have been applied in the narrative analysis—connecting GERM to a long progressive global movement and not just a contemporary characteristic of international policies and agreements in education. There is not a clear definition of the concept of modernity in research, as its content and timeline differ depending on the field of research and theoretical perspective. In this study, modernity is understood as *societal acceleration*, as defined by Hartmut Rosa (2015), where accumulation of knowledge represents a key ingredient in societal progress and economy. I customise critical accounts of technological and societal progress as metaphorical sketches of acceleration and fragmentation

(liquidisation) of society—using the writing of Walter Benjamin, Georg Simmel, Zygmunt Bauman, and Hartmut Rosa. Besides their relevance as temporal perspectives on societal developments of different periods of time, the work of the four thinkers has also been chosen in accordance with how they resonate with, adjust, and broaden the theoretical framework of my study. In addition to Ricoeur’s and Goodson’s theories and concepts, the use of metaphorical sketches from critical theories has further enabled me to address cultural undercurrents in the Norwegian history of education.

#### METAPHORICAL SKETCHES OF MODERNITY.

As counterpoints to the optimistic spirit and visions of progress which characterises modern society, the sociological observations of Simmel, Benjamin, Bauman, and Rosa provide a regressive attitude towards the societal development. Rosa (2015) recognises that such representations of societal development offer rather pessimistic perspectives, and to some extent deterministic world views, but hold that:

Perhaps it is in precisely this kind of disquiet that a creative contemporary social theory can find the impulse to discover a fifth ending for the history of acceleration. “When it is profound and consistent, sociology is not satisfied with a kind of mere observation that could be deemed deterministic, pessimistic or demoralizing,” as Pierre Bourdieu maintains in his contribution to defining the task of contemporary sociology. He goes on to say that it does not rest until it can offer means “to work against the immanent tendencies of the societal order. And whoever calls that deterministic should recall that the law of gravity must first be known to those who build a flying machine that effectively overcome it.” Today, however, the challenge lies in overcoming the laws that made the invention of flying machines possible: a no less difficult task.

(Rosa, 2015, p. 322)

Critical modes of sociological perception are thus not to be confused with deterministic world views, but rather as possible enablers of societal learning, or correction of certain courses of action—supporting society to step into an alternative, more sustainable path of development.



*BENJAMIN AND SIMMEL—CRITICAL SKETCHES OF MODERNITY.*

In many ways, Benjamin and Simmel's sociological 'attitude' has more in common with the thoughts of Ricoeur and postmodern research than the modern scholars of their time. Like Ricoeur, Simmel and Benjamin nurtures the value which critical assumptions and metaphor could have in interpretative processes when trying to explain and comprehend something 'not yet established' or articulated. In contrast to the spirit of the time, Benjamin and Simmel seemed to look back, locating the lost values of society in its rush towards the future. Benjamin illustrates such mode of 'meta-societal' observation quite clearly when reflecting on the possible thoughts of an angel, painted in the sky, staring down at earth in the middle of a storm:

A Klee painting named 'Angelus Novus' shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing in from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such a violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.

(Benjamin, Adams, & Prochazka, 2009, p. IX)

In a comparison of Benjamin and Simmel, Ann T. Martinez (1984) refers to the two thinkers as marginalised outsiders of their time, devalued by the academic community. This distanciation to societal affairs might be one of the reasons why Benjamin and Simmel both managed to capture the shape of progress in their contemporary societies as clearly as they did (Martinez, 1984).

*The overload and detachment of modernity.*

In *The Storyteller* (Benjamin, [1936] 2006) Benjamin seems to mourn what he anticipates to be society's loss of the gift of storytelling; ended by the rise of modern press technology. From his meta-perspective as an outsider, Benjamin recognises 'the problem' of writing in the way in which the modern novel, unlike oral storytelling, lacks the reference to real life experience. He also shows how the daily press information appears 'empty' of moral guidance that could support the listeners in comprehending and validating their experience and understandings. Information will,

according to Benjamin's accounts, prohibit such an engagement since it is already penetrated with pre-validated facts and explanations. His mourning seems rooted in the fear that the growing dissemination of information and printing of novels will lead to a loss of people's ability to express their experiences to each other and that this incommunicability of experience could create a distance to or a loss of lasting (living) meaning to life and death:

Every morning brings us the news of the globe, and yet we are poor in noteworthy stories. This is because no event any longer comes to us without already being shot through with explanation. In other words, by now almost nothing that happens benefits storytelling; almost everything benefits information. Actually, it is half the art of storytelling to keep a story free from explanation as one reproduces it. Leskov is a master at this (compare pieces like "The Deception" and "The White Eagle"). The most extraordinary things, marvelous things, are related with the greatest accuracy, but the psychological connection of the events is not forced on the reader. It is left up to him to interpret things the way he understands them, and thus the narrative achieves an amplitude that information lacks...The value of information does not survive the moment in which it was news. It lives only at that moment; it has to surrender to it completely and explain itself to it without losing any time. A story is different. It does not expend itself. It preserves and concentrates its strength and is capable of releasing it even after a long time."

(Benjamin [1936] 2006, p. 365-366)

This critical attitude towards modern progress is quite similarly expressed by Simmel. In *The Metropolis and Mental Life* (Simmel and Wolff, [1903] 1950, p. 414), people living in the metropolis end up having a 'blasé' attitude towards the world, as a response to sensory overload caused by their rapidly changing environments. Simmel also describes how habitual and slow-moving processes, which characterise rural areas, thus get a grey 'boring' tone to them in the eyes of a metropolitan, leading him to be intellectually oriented towards the world, instead of emotionally grounded in life.

The metropolis exacts from man as a discriminating creature a different amount of consciousness than does rural life. Here the rhythm of life and sensory mental imagery flows more slowly, more habitually, and more evenly. Precisely in this connection the sophisticated character of metropolitan psychic life becomes understandable as over against small town life which rests more upon deeply felt and emotional relationships. These latter are rooted in the more unconscious layers of the psyche and grow most readily in the steady rhythm of uninterrupted habituations. The intellect, however, has its locus in the transparent, conscious, higher layers of the psyche; it is the most adaptable of our inner forces.

(Simmel and Wolff, [1903] 1950, p. 410)

*The self-centredness and pseudo-living of modernity.*

In *The Storyteller*, one can recognise a resembling reflection on how the high pace and self-centredness activity in the city detaches the inhabitants from the self-forgetful work rhythm of a listener—rooted in the relaxing and giving state of boredom of weaving and spinning. In this, like in the case of press technology, Benjamin anticipates a loss of the gift of storytelling in the cities, due to the lack of the boring spaces (slow habitual rhythm of human craftwork in a social community) needed to listen to each other's stories:

If sleep is the apogee of physical relaxation, boredom is the apogee of mental relaxation. Boredom is the dream bird that hatches the egg of experience. A rustling in the leaves drives him away. His nesting places—the activities that are intimately associated with boredom—are already extinct in the cities and are declining in the country as well. With this the gift for listening is lost and the community of listeners disappears. It is lost because there is no more weaving and spinning to go on while they are being listened to. The more self-forgetful the listener is, the more deeply is what he listens to impressed upon his memory. When the rhythm of work has seized him, he listens to the tales in such a way that the gift of retelling them comes to him all by itself. This, then, is the nature of the web in which the gift of storytelling is cradled. This is how today it is becoming unravelled at all its ends after being woven thousands of years ago in the ambience of the oldest forms of craftsmanship.

(Benjamin, [1936] 2006, p. 367)

Like Benjamin, Simmel 'warns' of how a distancing from reality might lead to a form of 'pseudo' living:

If sociability entirely cuts its ties with the reality of life out of which it makes its own fabric (of however different a style), it ceases to be a play and becomes a desultory playing-around with empty forms, a lifeless schematism which is even proud of its lifelessness.

(Simmel and Wolff, [1903] 1950, p. 55-56)

*The societal cost of impatience.*

Noticing a societal acceleration, Simmel portrays the impact of metropolis on the mind and actions of its inhabitants:

The psychological basis of the metropolitan type of individuality consists in the intensification of nervous stimulation that results from the swift and uninterrupted change of outer and inner stimuli. Man is a differentiating creature. His mind is stimulated by the difference between a momentary impression and the one which preceded it. Lasting impressions, impressions which

show regular and habitual contrast—all these use up, so to speak, less consciousness than does the rapid crowding of changing images, the sharp discontinuity in the grasp of a single glance, and the unexpectedness of onrushing impressions. These are the psychological conditions which the metropolis creates.

(Simmel and Wolff, [1903] 1950, p. 410)

Like Simmel, Benjamin ([1936] 2006, p. 368) observes how society seems to be losing its will to spend time, or devolve into this ‘lifeless schematism’, as Simmel would say. It is a society where everything is to be abbreviated to such degree that things lose their sustainability. Benjamin refers to how one has lost sight of the value of time-consuming craftwork, the kind of work that grew out of years of patience, building and refining new layers, even if it would take generations of man craft to finish it properly:

The intellectual picture of the atmosphere of craftsmanship from which the storyteller comes has perhaps never before been sketched in such a significant way as by Paul Valéry. “He speaks of the perfect things in nature, flawless pearls, full-bodied, matured wines, truly developed creatures, and calls them ‘the precious product of a long chain of causes similar to one another’”. The accumulation of such causes has its temporal limit only at perfection. “This patient process of Nature,” Valéry continues, “was once imitated by men. Miniatures, ivory carvings, elaborated to the point of greatest perfection, stones that are perfect in polish and engraving, lacquer work or paintings in which a series of thin, transparent layers are placed one on top of the other—all these products of sustained, sacrificing effort are vanishing, and the time is past in which time did not matter. Modern man no longer works at what cannot be abbreviated.” In point of fact, he has succeeded in abbreviating even storytelling. We have witnessed the evolution of the “short story,” which has removed itself from oral tradition and no longer permits that slow piling one on top of thin, transparent layers which constitutes the most appropriate picture of the way in which the perfect narrative is revealed through the layers of a variety of retellings.

(Benjamin, [1936] 2006, p. 368)

Just as with information technology, and the lack of boredom and slow rhythmic crafting, the occupation of the rising modernity of saving time or shortening all things and processes is portrayed by Benjamin ([1936] 2006) as one of the forces of modern times which threatens to make the craft of storytelling extinct and the wisdom of fairy tales and narratives into mere proverbs. The despair in Benjamin’s expressed anticipations is repeatedly grounded in the assumption that humans need to spend time on telling and listening to each other’s stories to connect with, and not distance

themselves from, the process of life and death. It is the assumption, which Benjamin seems to share with both Ricoeur and Goodson, that when people tell the story of their life, it helps them understand themselves and others and to make sense of their lives and others. It is an act of pedagogy, where people encounter themselves:

The storyteller joins the ranks of the teachers and sages. He has counsel—not for a few situations, as the proverb does, but for many, like the sages. For it is granted to him to reach back to a whole lifetime (a life, incidentally, that comprises not only his own experience but no little of the experience of others; what the storyteller knows from hearsay is added to his own). His gift is the ability to relate his life; his distinction, to be able to tell his entire life.

(Benjamin, [1936] 2006, p. 368)

### *The fragments of wholeness.*

Benjamin ([1940], 2005, p. XVII) confronts what he depicts as an additive approach in historicism, deriving from the lack of a theoretical framework which leaves it filling up a homogenous time vacuum with heap of facts. Like Simmel, Benjamin's 'lonesome' position as a thinker, can also be read to be embedded in his portrayals of how the constructional foundation of the historical materialist thinking enforces a break with the established (same) and oppressing narratives of history:

The materialist writing of history for its part is based on a constructive principle. Thinking involves not only the movement of thoughts but also their zero-hour [*Stillstellung*]. Where thinking suddenly halts in a constellation overflowing with tensions, there it yields a shock to the same, through which it crystallizes as a monad. The historical materialist approaches a historical object solely and alone where he encounters it as a monad. In this structure he cognizes the sign of a messianic zero-hour [*Stillstellung*] of events, or put differently, a revolutionary chance in the struggle for the suppressed past. He perceives it, in order to explode a specific epoch out of the homogenous course of history; thus exploding a specific life out of the epoch, or a specific work out of the life-work. The net gain of this procedure consists of this: that the life-work is preserved and sublated in the work, the epoch in the life-work, and the entire course of history in the epoch. The nourishing fruit of what is historically conceptualized has time as its core, its precious but flavorless seed.

(Benjamin [1940], 2005, On the Concept of History, p. XVII)

Grounded in this metaphysical and critical dialectic reasoning, Benjamin argued that historical narratives necessarily are incomplete, since an entirely self-referential narrative would have to be 'non-human' in essence—referring only to itself and not to something outside of language. He held that since the historical narrative always

will be posited from outside the 'ontological' (Godly) enclosed language system, by humans, it will never be completely self-referential. So, no matter how much fact one places into a linear timeline, the limits of human language will prohibit a complete (universal) referral of history. At some point, the historical narrative must come to a 'halt' ('*Stillstellung*') (cf. A. Benjamin, 2005, p 4).

Simmel's occupation with partial aspects of the whole resonates with Benjamin's description of the historical materialist,<sup>15</sup> Similar to impressionistic artwork, rejecting structural rigidity, the totality of society was not of interest for Simmel, only a particular aspect of it (Martinez, 1984, p. 119). He seemed, however, to be engaged with the 'relatedness' of the fragmental elements of society (as a total whole). Martinez notes that:

Simmel, as detached observer, sought to free each cultural phenomenon from its allegedly autonomous stance, and demonstrate its attachment to the "major constellations of life." At the same time, he attempted to liberate things from their "individual isolation" through analogy.

(Martinez, 1984, p. 120)

Benjamin and Simmel's approach to societal understanding was highly unconventional and probably also greatly misunderstood during their lifetimes. A review of Simmel's work by an acknowledged researcher at the time illustrates just how far from common scientific practice Simmel work was considered to be:

Simmel's method entirely lacks either experimental approach, quantitative investigation, or any systematic factual study of the discussed phenomena. In vain one would look in his work for a systematic method like that of the Le Play school, or of the methodological principles of social sciences developed by A. Cournot...; or some principles like those of H. Rikkert [sic] and W. Windelbandt [sic] concerning the classification of sciences...; or something like Max Weber's method of the 'ideal typology'; or Galton's, Pearson's, and A. Tchuproff's quantitative methods of investigation; or even a simple, careful and attentive study of the facts he is talking about. All this is lacking. What there is represents only the speculative generalization of a talented man, backed by the 'method of illustration' in the form of two or three facts incidentally taken and often one-sidedly interpreted. Without Simmel's talent the same stuff would appear poor. Simmel's talent saves the situation, but only as far as talent compensates for lack of scientific methodology. Under such conditions, to call the sociologists 'back to

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<sup>15</sup> *Historic materialism, was a concept introduced to sociological theory by Karl Marx (1818–1883) in his Critical Theory of societal development.*

Simmel,' as Drs. Park and Spykman do, means to call them back to a pure speculation, metaphysics, and a lack of scientific method. Speculation and metaphysics are excellent things in their proper places, but to mix these with the science of sociology means to spoil each of those sciences.

(Quote by Pitirim A Sorokin, cited in Simmel & Wolff, [1903] 1950)

Even though Sorokin's review was meant as a disavowal of Simmel's work, it reveals the uniqueness of his writing. Recognising the potential value of Simmel's writings, Wolff emphasised that 'The study of Simmel is worth our effort provided we realise that Simmel's vagueness derives from an attitude and that this attitude is of great importance and can be clarified by analysis' (Simmel & Wolff, [1903] 1950, p. xxxv)

*BAUMAN AND ROSA—MODERNITY AS SOCIETAL ACCELERATION AND LIQUIDITY.*

Zygmunt Bauman highlights the importance of examining our conceptions of history and society, and being aware of reinforcing the relationship between history and interpretation, and declares: 'The way you are making history depends on what image you have of the conditions under which you are acting' (Bauman, 2004, p. 11). Truth, in this sense, will never be absolute, only negotiated or justified. An example of this is Bauman's comment on how critical theorists today find themselves in a curious situation. The resonance to Goodson's (2015) concept of regression is quite striking at this point. In Goodson's terms, Bauman (2006) describes a process of regression on how critical theorists today find themselves in a self-contradictive position, fighting against a direction of development which they traditionally have been accused of encouraging. Their former quest of preserving and protecting private autonomy from public and state interference has by the force of consumerism, and the global market made the scene a lot more ambiguous. Leaving their former battle behind, critical theorist 'retreat' by starting to question the progress in which a 'private sphere' has become severely intrusive in its occupation of public spaces—a penetrating and all-consuming discourse, where everything that cannot be translated into private interests and discourse gets banished (Bauman, cf. 2006, p. 255).

*Identity and selfhood in a 'liquid modernity.'*

Bauman (2008, p. 12) addresses a change in society where identity is no longer inherited and ascribed to you by birth but 'achieved' and flexible, constructed for

continuous assembling and disassembling (Bauman, 2008, p. 13). He notes that by this, the design of one's identity is not built to last forever, or to designate the path of a 'whole life' project:

The skills required to meet the challenge of the liquid modern reprocessing and recycling manipulation of identity are akin to those of a juggler, or, more to the point, to the artfulness and dexterity of a prestidigitator.

(Bauman, 2008, p. 13)

When identity is liquidised, former values and beliefs need to be constantly sacrificed and exchanged with the new ones. To make such sacrifices as painless as possible, Bauman (2008, p. 14) claims that people seek 'short-cut' options which are little time and energy consuming, and thus easier to 'trash' or give up on in the face of change. He recognises the observation made by Simmel more than 100 years ago, of the assessment of values in societies characterised by the high pace of change:

As Georg Simmel, one of the founding fathers of social science, pointed out a long time ago, values are measured by the other values which have to be sacrificed to obtain them, and delay in gratification is arguably the most excruciating of sacrifices for people cast in the fast-moving and fast-changing settings characteristic of liquid modern society of consumers.

(Bauman, 2008, p. 13)

Bauman notes that in contrast to settling with who you are and whom you want to be (acceptance), the request of a liquid society is to rediscover continuously or reinvent your identity and selfhood, by replacing your 'old skin' with a purchased prefabricated identity—'*escaping from one's own self*' and '*acquiring a made-to-order self*' (Baumann, 2008, p. 14-15). Bauman portrays this condition of identity consummation as a way of 'slicing life into episodes,' where every episode is in need of a new casting and plot, and where limitations on the range of possible new plots and castings would be seen as a barrier for the successful commencement of the 'life' series. Commenting on this metaphor of liquid identity, he elaborates:

In a society of consumers all ties and bonds have to follow the pattern of the relationship between buyer and commodities bought: commodities are not expected to outstay their welcome and must leave the stage of life once they start to clutter it up instead of adorning it, whereas buyers are neither expected nor willing to swear eternal loyalty to the purchase they bring home or grant them permanent rights of residence. Relationships of the consumerist type are, from the start, 'until further notice.'



(Bauman, 2008, p. 15)

Bauman reflects on the societal risk that such liquid transformation of meanings and values might entail, by noting that the pace of change might be too hasty. When a certain change passes by at high speed, the public might barely notice its form or character:

It bars the experience from crystallizing, settling and solidifying attitudes and behavioural patterns, value syndromes and worldviews, fit to be recorded as durable traces of the 'spirit of the time' and recast as unique and lasting characteristics of a generation.

(Bauman, 2008, p. 62)

Bauman's characterisation of how identity and selfhood have become liquid in our contemporary society can thus be viewed as a societal disregard for history, or what Ricoeur would portray as a lack of *care* towards one's heritage. A liquid modernity thus ignores society's historical debt to the efforts and battles of the past. The conscious act of 'standing for' or protecting a more stable (inherited) identity or selfhood, is (ignorantly) responded to as a malfunctioning rigidity or out-dated attitude towards contemporary interests and future investments.

*The dialectics of societal temporalisation and detemporalisation.*

Slightly more differentiated in his concepts of modernity than the three others, Rosa (2015) distinguishes between 'pre- and early modernity,' 'classic modernity,' and 'late modernity.' Rosa describes nuances and distinctions between and within each modern period, by placing them in contrast to each other.

Rosa (2015, p. 290) distinguishes between the three stages regarding 'pace of endogenous social change', 'occupational and family structures', 'time perspective,' 'historical perspective', and 'life perspective.' In the following, I will first present a summarised introduction of how Rosa (2015, p. 290) portrays the characteristics of each of the three phases of modernity before I present Rosa's concept of societal acceleration.

**The nuances and periods of modernity.**

According to Rosa (2015, p. 290), modernity is an expression of societal acceleration, and phases of modernity can be distinguished by the way they differ in light of the pace of societal change and perspective of time. In late modernity, the

acceleration of structural and cultural transformation appears to be higher than the speed of generational turnovers. Family structures and work occupations change at a higher pace than generational turnovers. In classic modernity, changes in career and family constellations were more in sync with 'generational' shifts. Pre- and early phases of modernity followed an even slower pace when it came to societal change, more stable across generations, representing a 'cyclical' perspective of time where there was a stable correspondence between peoples' lived experience and their horizon of future anticipations. In classic modernity, Rosa points to a concept of time that has become more divergent in character, creating a linear time perspective, which both points towards past and future. Even more drastically the world has entered a 'timeless time' or 'temporalisation of time' in late modernity, where present courses of action determine the rhythm, duration, sequences and point in time. Rosa's characterisation of the time perspective of late modernity is very similar to Bauman's concepts of a 'liquid modernity.'

The historical perspective seems to be distinctly different in each of the three phases of modernity. In pre- and early modernity, historical time appeared to be equal to the 'spaces of histories,' grounded in a situational perspective and metaphysical and cultural beliefs, where changes in life were explained as the intervening of external forces. Rosa (2015, p. 290) argues that peoples' mastery of daily, externally caused problems relied on 'substantial a priori identities,' or a 'scripted course of action' as Goodson would say. In contrast, the historical perspectives in classic modernity were indexed from a more temporal and rational outlook on the historical sequels of events—expected to follow the rhythmic patterns of politics, between progressive- and conservative influences in time. Peoples' roles and identities were becoming more rooted in a belief that people's life courses could be individually and institutionally planned, and thus perceived to be more self-determined and a posteriori in nature than in the former periods of modernity. This sense of control is again lost in the phase of late modernity, with its 'situational' perspective on identity, and detemporalised and institutional forms of life course. A whole new perspective of history enters in late modernity, introducing a notion of an 'end of history', 'messianic hour' or 'liquid modernity' where a detemporalisation of history leads to a loss of the former political index of progress and direction, and

where people have abandoned stable identities and life projects (see Fukuyama, 1992; Benjamin, [1940] 2009; Bauman, 2004; 2006; 2008).

*Societal acceleration-deacceleration.*

To Rosa (2015), modernity has been dialectically transformed through history by means of societal acceleration, generating a tension between the structural dynamics of temporalisation and detemporalisation. Modern history has accelerated from a static history in 'pre- and early modernity' onto a temporalised history in 'classic modernity', until the counterforces of this growing acceleration have led to what Rosa pictures as a frenetic standstill in the 'late modernity' (contemporary postmodernity)—a picture closely in line with Benjamin's 'messianic hour':

The two diagnoses of the time that appear so contradictory, social acceleration and societal rigidity, are only at first glance contrary to one another. In the memorable metaphor of a 'frenetic standstill' (*rasender Stillstand*), which we owe to an inspired translation of Paul Virilio's *inertie polaire*, they are synthesised into a *posthistoire* diagnosis in which the rush of historical events only provides scant cover for (and ultimately, in effect, produces) a *standstill* in the development of ideas and deep social structures.

(Rosa, 2015, p. 15)

Tracing a movement of acceleration-deacceleration and temporalisation-detemporalisation in from pre- and early modernity to late modernity, Rosa (2015) concludes that the challenge today lies in an increased problem of synchronisation of functional spheres of society, primarily between scientific-technological and economic developments, and between politics and the educational system. Generational interchange becomes endangered when the capacities of social integration and cultural reproduction are pressed to the limit by a societal acceleration (Rosa, 2015, p. 319). Rosa also claims that one of the driving forces behind this social acceleration is the political actors' affirmation of it, based on the more or less implicit assumption 'that autonomy is heightened by speed' (Rosa, 2015, p. 320). The combination of acceleration-induced change and the loss of synchronisation of time leads to a gradual restructuring of the order of values in society, which paradoxically leads to a reduction of autonomy instead of a heightening. Rosa refers to the study of qualitative time use and the participant Odön von Horváth's notion of his identity and selfhood, finding that he conceived himself

to be a different person, but that he just never got around to being this person. Rosa states: 'I concluded from this that the time structures of the acceleration society get people 'to will what they do not will,' that is, to pursue, of their own volition, courses of action that they do not prefer from a temporally stable perspective' (Rosa, 2015, p. 317). Rosa's analysis recognises how societal acceleration coerces people into self-contradictive scripted roles, by generating a gap between what people want to do (need) and what they are required to do.

#### THE CONCEPT OF MODERNITY IN THE STUDY.

Modernity in Norwegian education will, by the application of Rosa's phases of modernity, be a matter of interpretation of characteristic traits in civic, cultural and technological development—since they emerge in different nations and local cultures at different times. In Norwegian cities, qualities of modernity appear long before they do in rural areas. In periphery communities, modern development in education gradually emerged in the early 1700s as a result of the king of Denmark-Norway's School Act in 1739, which demanded the establishment of a minimum level of common schooling for all in rural areas. This period of progress, seen in-between 1739-1860 is defined in the study as *pre- and early modernity*. The phase of *classic modernity* belongs to the years when school represented a nation building project and growing part of social service and support, in the years 1860-1960. This period is characterised by a folk movement where education represented an opportunity for social mobility and transitions for the working class and farming communities. The final phase of *late modernity* is defined here as the years from 1960 to the present, where Zygmunt Bauman's 'liquid modernity' is used to define a dividing line between the reform-pedagogical era in Norwegian history of education, and the 'neoliberal turn' and 'global fluidity' in educational administration and management from 1990 to the present.

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## **Part II—Research Design and Approaches**



### RESEARCH DESIGN

In this chapter, I intend to operationalise the theoretical framework outlined in this chapter into a methodological approach, which presents and explains the application and adaptation of theories, as well as choice and use of research material, within each phase of the research process. An overview of the research design will be summarised and illustrated before the empirical procedures and adaptations of theories and concepts are presented in more detail.

#### **4.1 AN OVERVIEW OF THE METHODOLOGICAL OPERATIONALISATION OF THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The use of Ricoeur's hermeneutical arch in combination with his work on narrative is predominantly found in nursing studies (e.g., Åström et al., 1993; Lindseth et al., 1994; Söderberg et al., 1996; Häggström & Norberg, 1996; Rasmussen et al., 1997; Frid et al., 2000). These studies put Ricoeur's work into a hermeneutical-phenomenological framework (Frid et al. 2000). Recognising that few have seen the advantages of adapting Ricoeur's work to a more critical or post-structural framework of analysis, I have elaborated Ricoeur's phases of interpretation by letting them be accompanied by his later theories of narrative, history, and metaphor. In addition, I have extended the hermeneutical arch to include concepts and approaches derived from critical narrative- and sociological theories. In this way, the arch model, as used in this study, explicitly address transactional (actor/structure) perspectives in the interpretation of the texts.

The methodological approach presented in this chapter represents an operationalisation of Ricoeur's hermeneutical arch (1976) and his theories of *Rule of Metaphor* (2003), *Time and Narrative* (1990), and *The Course of Recognition* (2005), together with Goodson's 'Life History approach' and Gill and Goodson's concept of

critical narrative (Goodson, 2008; Goodson & Gill, 2011, 2014). The combination of Ricoeur and Goodson's approach and concepts of narrative represents an elaboration of their theories, where their theoretical viewpoints and concepts mutually enrich and modify one another, and where the narrative terminology is pragmatically adjusted to perspectives and conceptualisations within neighbouring fields of research, such as history and sociology.

While Ricoeur and Goodson's narrative theories primarily serve to structure the various phases and stages of the research process, the application of concepts outside of narrative serves two purposes:

- To expand the epistemological and ontological premises of the research design.
- To work as metaphorical bridges to new understandings and conceptualisations of the research findings in the final stages of analysis.

In line with the first purpose, my conceptualisation and understanding of how educational reform movements, cultural heritage, and teacher's agency is coloured by Ball's concept of embodied policies, policy enactment, and his definition of GERM (Ball, 2017). The habitus concept introduced by Bourdieu is also central to my understanding of 'cultural heritage' (Bourdieu, 1977). Among the theories and concepts serving the second purpose, are Ricoeur's (2006) work in *Memory, History Forgetting*, various sociological theories and sketches on modernity (i.e., the works of Benjamin, Simmel, Bauman and Rosa), and the concept of 'refraction' as used by Rudd and Goodson, and by Bourdieu (Rudd & Goodson, 2014; Goodson, 2015; Rudd & Goodson, 2016, 2017; Bourdieu, 1993).

#### NARRATIVE INTERPRETATION AS THREE LEVELS OF ABSTRACTION.

The interpretation of the Life Stories will be based on three levels of abstraction, inspired by the three phases of Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutical arch—the Naïve, Structural, and Deep phases—representing a dialectic approach to critical narrative analysis.

- First level of abstraction: Naïve/Surface phase of interpretation (non-evaluative representation):



In the 'Naïve phase of interpretation (Appendix 1) three Life Stories of Norwegian teachers will be presented in full—representing the primary empirical material of the study. The reconstruction of the Life Stories has been characterised by a dialectic process. Ricoeur's interpretative approach emphasises the dialectical relationship between explanation and understanding, distanciation and appropriation, and guess and validation (Ricoeur, 1976). This way of studying narratives neither represents a deductive, nor an inductive approach, but rather resembles the abductive<sup>16</sup> approach applied by researchers within pragmatist traditions (see Strydom & Delanty, 2003, p. 278). Moving back and forth between the life story transcriptions and the reconstructed and translated English Life Stories, I have tried to ensure a high level of authenticity in the Life Story narration. None of the research questions of the study address this level of interpretation, since the texts are meant solely to represent the teachers' subjective access points (phenomenological perspectives).

- Second level of abstraction: Structural phase of interpretation (explanation/understanding of the semiotic index of the narratives):

According to Ricoeur, a direct mediation between the narrator and recipient is lost in transcription.<sup>17</sup> When people use language, the meaning becomes 'fixated' in a text—either in symbolic actions (i.e., meaningful action considered as text), or as verbal meaning traceable in written texts. Ricoeur refers to both forms of textual meanings, as 'discourse'. Seeing that the original (mental) intention never can be fully retrieved from a text, since language refers only to language, and not to 'inner states' of people, only discourse remains observable to the interpreter (listener/reader). Recognising the dialectic character of a text (language as self-referential/language as discourse), Ricoeur argues that the structural components of a text needs to be explained (what is said and how it is said) to understand what the text is about, and comprehend its meaning, or significance, as a whole. To reconstruct a sense of meaning in the written Life Stories, I thus have to identify the remaining signs ('relics') of discourse embedded or disclosed in the text. By engaging in a semiotic analysis, through tending to 'what' is said and 'how it is said', I should, according to

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<sup>16</sup> 'Abduction' can be understood as inferences to probable, approximate truth (cf. Douven, 2017).

<sup>17</sup> The problem of writing and 'death of the author', maintaining that a language (in itself) is a self-referential system, only referring back to language, and not something outside of language. See Chapter 3.

Ricoeur, be able to 'decipher' the textual signifiers of meaning (predicatives) in the teachers' Life Stories.

Understanding narratives as expressions of historical 'care' or, the non-ostensive predicatives in the Life Story texts (non-textual pointers/predicatives) allow for a transgression from a *Life Story* to a *Life History* (context) analysis. Through a dialectic movement, the interpretation will guide me closer to a comprehension of the 'narrative plots' (i.e., Ricoeur's 'hierarchy of actions and actors') and the embodied beliefs (i.e., habitus) of the Life Histories. In efforts to construct a contextual and historical background against which the Life Stories can be juxtaposed, a historical periodisation or grand narratives of historical of modern education in Norway on a national and a local level has been constructed (Appendix 2). This historical periodisation in Appendix 2 represents the secondary data material of the study. It is also constructed and functions as a historical index to the main text of the thesis. As in the case of the Life Story reconstruction, the construction of the historical periodisation (grand narratives) of Norwegian history of education has been highly characterised by a process of guess and validation (abductive). The final historical outline and selection is a result of moving back and forth between contextual signifiers found in the Life Stories and information of modern development in education (nationally and locally). The historical and contextual information has been retrieved from historical literature or media sources that have come forth as relevant in the process of analysis.

The Life Story emplotments (hierarchy of actions and actors) are juxtaposed with the historical periodisation in the grand narratives, tracing resonating (metaphorical: is not, but is like) ideals and responses to modern reforms in the small and grand narratives. This contextual analysis is further presented in a Life History matrix<sup>18</sup>, with the use of both national and local categories of resonating responses. This matrix will further enable me to reconstruct a cultural heritage ('care') in the *Deep phase of the interpretation*,

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<sup>18</sup> 'Life History', as used in this study, refers to the final phases of analysis, where the single Life Stories are juxtaposed to grand narratives of Norwegian history of education.

- Third level of abstraction. Deep phase of interpretation (reconstructing cultural heritage and deducing tentative truth claims)

Throughout the interpretation, I gradually expand the semiotic unit of analysis, moving from Statement to Life Story and from Life Story to Life History (read: habitus/cultural heritage). Finally, the justifications of interpretations are enabled by juxtaposing the “‘small narratives’ (teachers’ Life Stories) with ‘grand narratives’ (Norwegian history of education, on national and local levels)—allowing them to correct or reinforce one another’s legitimacy—functioning as mutual contextual compasses (signifiers) to the (signified) interplay between societal structures and individual agencies (teachers’ Life Histories).

The reconstructed cultural heritage of the Life Stories may eventually serve as signifiers of teacher’s embodied beliefs (habitus) and deliberate courses of action (agency).

- Fourth level of abstraction. Theoretical synthesis by the use of Keystone Metaphors

In the fourth level of abstraction, Bourdieu’s (1993) and Rudd and Goodson’s concept of ‘refraction’ is here used as a metaphor to enable what Goodson refers to as a ‘reconceptualisation’ of the Life Story emplotments. Based on the findings in the cartography of the networks and use of ‘refraction’ in research literature (see Chapter 2 and Appendix 3), the concept of refraction will, in this study, be complimented by the concepts of ‘diffraction’ and ‘refraction’.

I apply Ricoeur’s methodological ‘instructions’ in *The Rule of Metaphor* (Ricoeur, 2003), to ‘cast on to’ new ways of thinking about the significance of teachers embodied beliefs (habitus) and agency to comprehend and conceptualise idiosyncratic cultural responses to modern educational development represented by GERM.

#### THE HERMENEUTICAL ARCH—A VISUALISED MODEL.

Figure 2 shows the study’s operationalisation of the hermeneutical arch through a dialectic model. The model is visualizing the analytic process from narration through reconstruction and further metaphorical abstraction. The ‘Keystone position of Metaphors’ (violet field) represents the fusion of horizons, or the interpreter’s

appropriation, which—through the rule of metaphor—permits a distancing from the singular narratives to an abstracted theory of idiosyncratic teacher responses to GERM. See Chapter 3 for the description of the interpretative phases.

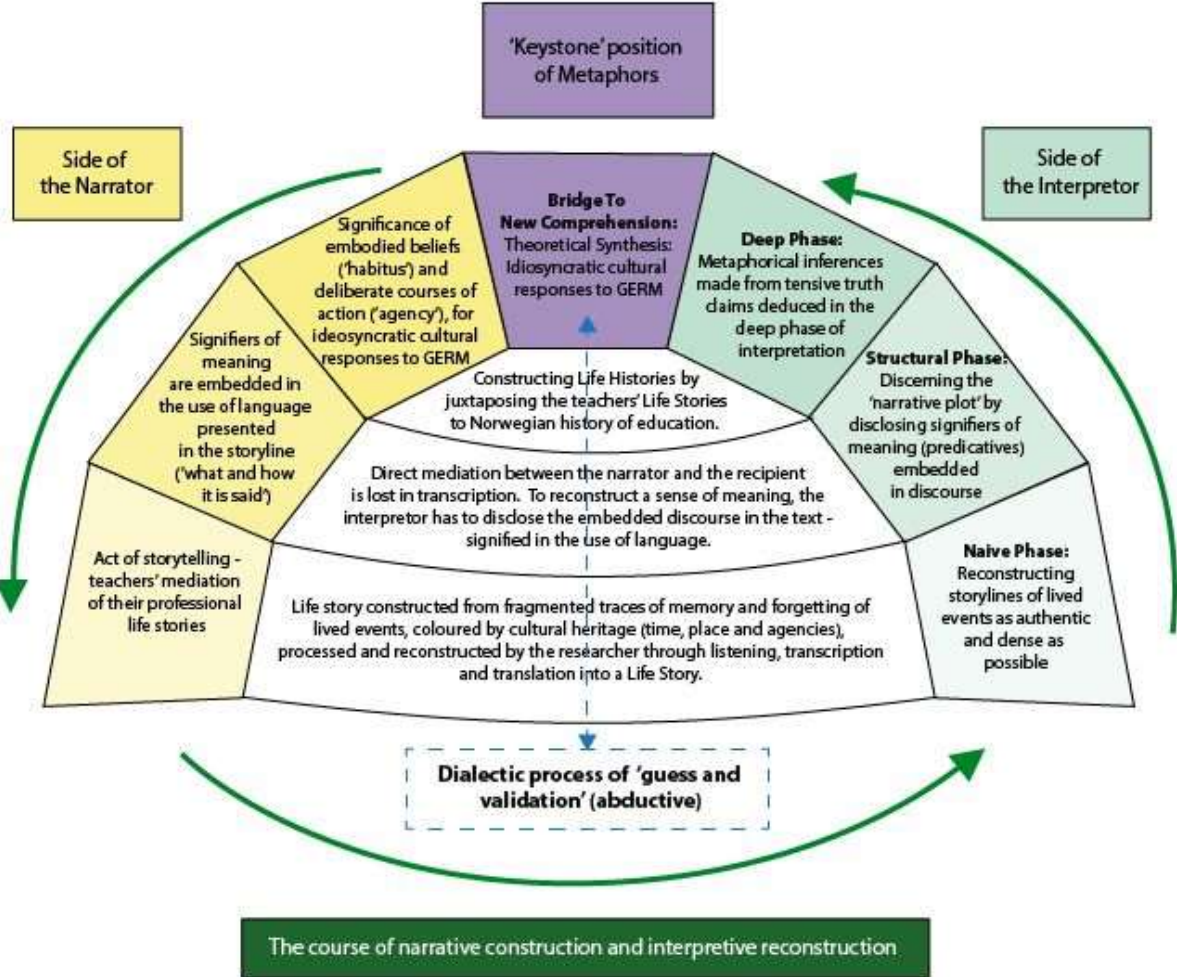


Figure 2. The hermeneutical circle is represented by the green arrows encircling the model. Yellow fields illustrate the process of narration, while the green fields represent the phases of interpretation. The middle white fields give a description of the dialectic process between narration and interpretation, which at all levels are subordinated to the 'abductive' process of 'guess and validation' (blue dotted line). The violet field represents the theoretical abstraction or synthesis 'cast on to' by the 'Rule of Metaphor'.

### 4.2 NARRATIVES OF TEACHERS' LIFE AND WORK

The study of life narratives is one of many methods within the field of narrative research. What makes life narratives relevant in my study is the potential it entails to capture both individual and structural aspects, in the light of time, place, and

agency—making it possible for me to explain and understand Norwegian teachers' ways of responding to the movement of educational policies and ideals. The narrative approach in my study, as mentioned, was inspired by the Life History approach of Ivor Goodson and Paul Ricoeur's works on narrative. I also lean on Nina Horsdal (2012) and Plummer (2001) when discussing the aspect of validity and trustworthiness of a life narrative.

#### *IVOR GOODSON'S 'LIFE HISTORY.'*

Goodson (2008) describes Life History as a middle ground method, encompassing both the structural and the individual perspective. This provides the researcher with a tool to analyse how the political and historical context connects with the lived experience of human beings. One of the reasons that Goodson's approach is particularly relevant for my study is his engagement with research within the field of education, especially the teaching profession. The approach, to my understanding, also provides a way to encompass both a micro and a macro perspective on teacher's stories (Goodson & Anstead, 1980; Goodson, 2008). Although a Life Story represents teachers' personal narration of their lives and work, Goodson argues, by quoting Faraday and Plummer, that Life Histories also can be considered to utilise theory:

There is not intrinsic disconnection of the life history from theoretical work. It is clearly not very good at testing or validating existing theory, although it might be useful in finding a falsificatory case. It is quiet [misspelling in quote] good when combined with a general orientation in theory which enables one to see how the theory might make sense of that field as a whole, but in no conclusive way. It is at its best when it is being used in an exploratory fashion for generating many concepts, hunches and ideas, both at the local and situational level and on a historical structural level and within the same field and in relationship to other fields' /Faraday and Plummer, 1979, pp. 773-795)

(Goodson, 2008, p. 23)

### **4.3 EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES**

Methodological and epistemological challenges apply to any research method. Usually these challenges have been addressed by the developers of a specific method themselves, or in research reviews and methodological handbooks. In this study my methodological approach is inspired by and adapted from several conceptual frameworks. This represents an extra challenge in that in many ways I had to break

my own ground in trying to reconcile different methodological frameworks and adapt the research method to fit my own purpose. This was especially the case when using Ricoeur's hermeneutical procedures on narrative, which, as far as I am aware, has not been done before within the field of educational policy studies.

In the following, I shall discuss specific methodological challenges in the use of Life Histories concerning validity, trustworthiness and interpretation.

#### RESEARCH COLLABORATION AND THE QUESTION OF VALIDITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS.

Goodson and Gill (2011) refers to the collaborative phase as a 'grounded conversation' which opens for an extended interchange or narrative exchange with the storyteller. Following Ricoeur's line of thinking, the distancing that happens in the writing process, leaves the 'owner of the words' behind. So, when I analyse how teachers portray and discursively position themselves in their life narratives, I cannot claim to refer to what the living teachers, speaking in the interview, actually meant or intended. The analysis is based on a narrative reconstruction of the teacher, a textual subject that I as an author produce (craft) when transforming experienced and recorded conversations into a translated storyline, from Norwegian to English, of a teacher's life. Editing the Life Story based on a new conversation with the participant, will imply a second reconstruction of the narrative teacher and the narrative meaning of the spoken life story. That the narrative composition and interpretation involves a reconstruction of the meaning, solely based upon the given text in front of me, does not imply that the life narratives are to be considered as pure fiction, in the meaning of being 'made up'. The life narratives are based on textual mediation of the discursive events that have taken place in the interview settings, but it moves from being voiced by the teller to being produced and constructed by me as an author. When I interpret the story, my mental intentions, as an author, are also no longer present. Only verbal meaning remains. This epistemological and methodological challenge does not imply that a conversation with the participant about the Life Histories and my interpretations of them in not of value. Rather, it may imply only that it, epistemologically speaking, will be a danger of making the written discourse equivalent with the spoken discourse, by confusing the narrative teacher to be equal with the living teacher. Nonetheless, perceived as representations of themselves, it is

of ethical importance to show the participants that I have not put ‘words in their mouth’ by ensuring that the narrative reconstruction is recognisable to the original storytellers. To justify the external validity of the text to a potential audience, it is also important that the text come forth as ‘authentic’ as possible. In this sense, the collaborative element in Goodson’s approach might contribute to enhance the trustworthiness of the interpretation and representation of the life histories. This is due to the reciprocal exchange, which allows the respondent to disagree and discuss the researcher’s analysis. In this sense, the approach might help to enhance the validity or the justification of the analysis—leaving the final research product less at risk of being criticised for being overly cohesive, deceitful, or misrepresentative (see Plummer, 2001).

The use of collaboration also introduces a risk of losing critical and analytical distance to the narrative material. My ‘external’ perspective as a researcher might leave the participants with a feeling of unease in the experience of being objectified. In the later communication of the results with the participants, I would thus avoid, as far as possible, explaining and categorising the elaborated Life Histories, since it could come forth as an evaluation of their actions from my side and not as an interpretation of the verbal meaning of the story.

The term ‘Life History’ is used by Goodson mostly when referring to the collaborative phase of the methodology, involving assessment of narrative learning and action potential among the participants. In this study, I do not address narrative learning potential, which would involve repeated interviews with participants. Thus, when the term ‘Life History’ is used, it exclusively refers to the analytic process where the personal Life Stories are juxtaposed with historical and systemic narratives.

#### THE QUESTION OF PLAUSIBILITY.

The reconstructed narratives must not only be recognisable to the storyteller, they also need to be perceived as plausible and recognisable in the local school context. These criteria not only apply to me as an author, but also to the teachers as storytellers. For me as a listener to accept the life story told as a valid representation of somebody’s life, it must also appear as plausible and recognisable for me (as a portrait of a Norwegian citizen, teacher, woman, from the countryside, and so forth)

or as convincing (plausible). There is, of course, always a chance that people tell a story that appears convincing to me but not to witnessing bystanders (relatives, co-workers, etc.) as representations of 'what really happened'. A life story can be narrated, told and interpreted in multiple ways, ranging from inauthentic fiction to reliable reconstructions of lived events. Since it is impossible to prevent fictional elements in life stories, the question is to what degree the story appears plausible to the audience (see Horsdal, 2012). Plausibility is very much determined by the degree of coherence and authenticity of the story. On the one hand, it is possible to construct coherence in an inauthentic story. On the other side, an authentic story can be perceived as implausible due to the way in which it was told. A reliable story would have to account for both conditions—coherence and authenticity—to be justified as plausible (see Horsdal, 2012).

#### LIFE STORIES AND NARRATIVE COMPETENCE.

Out of the problem of trustworthiness emerges another problem, the narrative competence of the teller and the listener—or skills in and knowledge of the art of telling stories (see Horsdal, 2012). To interpret, understand, and evaluate the plausibility of a life story is to a large degree dependent both on how able the teller is to remember and make a meaningful selection of fragmented lived events. According to Ricoeur's theory of narrative, it requires a symphonic capacity to compose a narrative 'melody' that moves naturally between the past, present, and one's predictions of the future. This capacity is also required of me as a listener and author of the written Life Story. My ability to justify the narrative's plausibility/implausibility also relies on my own 'reading competence', related to my insights and knowledge of how humans construct narratives in different ways in different contexts. One could also argue that this sort of competence cannot simply be learned by reading a handbook on the matter but is rather gathered and developed in an ongoing hermeneutical process based on reading, living, and listening experiences. To a great extent, it also relies on my skills (craftsmanship) as a writer of life narratives and my language skills in Norwegian and English.



## THE QUESTION OF VALIDITY.

In the interview setting, the message of the teachers' stories was addressed to me as a listener (and the possible imagined future listeners of their story). Why the teacher told their stories in a particular manner was thus coloured by the interpretation of our interaction. To describe the different interview settings is thus important to the judgement of external validity of the study, concerning, for example, external influences on the storytelling and possible biased representations of the spoken life stories.

In terms of evaluating internal validity however, concerning the justification of the textual interpretation commenced after an external validity of the study has been affirmed, the contextual issues related to the interview setting are not regarded to be of relevance in this study. According to Ricoeur, the mental intentions of the author and listener will never be within reach in a textual interpretation. One is forced to reconstruct the meaning from the outset of one's interaction with the text as a reader. My comprehension of the Life Histories involves a movement from being in listening mode to the mode of being within a text. As I understand Ricoeur, my textual interaction, moving in between explanation and understanding, and the process of guess and validation, will contribute to fuse the horizon of the verbal meaning of the text with the horizon of my subjective comprehension of it. This fusion of horizons will prohibit the interpretations of the Life Histories from being mere projections of my own presuppositions.

### **4.4 DESIGN**

According to Goodson and Gill (2011, p. 36) there is no definite procedure for doing Life History research. Rather they suggest certain stages in the Life History construction process: the selection of participants, setting the scene, and building trust, the interviews, and the construction of life histories. In the following section, I present how the research procedures were planned and carried out.

## PARTICIPANTS.

Referring to Jerome Bruner, Goodson & Gill (2011) argues that one of the main tasks for the researcher in selecting participants is to provide a spectrum of respondents, for example in terms of age, gender, and class. In this lies the potential risk of being biased by choosing respondents whom I as a researcher believe to share similar views. To avoid a skewed selection of participants, I thus arranged for a group of people with different backgrounds and political/professional preferences to recruit teacher participants. The only criteria given was that the teachers should represent what they would describe to be 'an ordinary teacher'.

### *FINAL SELECTION.*

Nine teachers, two men and seven women, participated in the study. There were originally three male teachers, but one cancelled because of time pressure. The variety of teachers were heterogeneous in character, in terms of age, education, and current working place.

All were given new traditional Norwegian names: Åse, Sissel, Martin, Karen, Heidi, Gunhild, Linn, Kristian, and Hanne.

### *Age category, period of higher education.*

- Åse, belonging to the age-category (56-67), worked as a journalist in the 1970s, and was approved as a teacher in the 1990s just before Reform-94 was implemented.
- Heidi, Sissel, and Martin, in the age category (46-55), started their studies in the 1980s.
- Karen, Gunhild, and Linn, belonging to the age-category (36-45), began their studies in the 1990s.
- Kristian and Hanne in the age-category (25-35), started their studies after year 2000.

### *Variety of teacher educations.*

- One teacher, Gunhild was a kindergarten-teacher in the outset. To teach in first grade, she had taken the additional study courses PAPS<sup>19</sup> at the local university college.

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<sup>19</sup> PAPS: 'Pedagogisk Arbeid På Småskoletrinnet'. An extended course in early childhood teacher education, that certified early childhood teachers to teach in primary education levels. In 2015 the government renewed the certification requirements of teachers, and the early childhood teachers with PAPS-study course were no longer considered qualified and authorized to teach at school levels.

- Two teachers, Åse and Hanne, had not followed the ordinary teacher education programme but had a combined education based on an education within a specific subject discipline or profession plus the additional course in practical pedagogical education, PPU<sup>20</sup>. Åse had a background as a journalist and had followed study courses in Norwegian, history and religion, beliefs and ethics (RLE) before taking the PPU study course. Hanne had a ‘composed’ bachelor, based on study courses in social science, history and religion, beliefs and ethics (RLE). She got her approval as a teacher combining her bachelor with the PPU-study course.
- Six teachers had followed the ordinary teacher education programme provided at the time.

### *Geographical variations.*

- Two teachers, Heidi and Gunhild, taught in schools located in a rural community in the county of Vest-Agder in the south of Norway. Heidi and Gunhild worked at the same school.
- One teacher, Linn, taught in a small city in the county of Aust-Agder, in the south of Norway.
- Three teachers, Åse, Hanne, and Martin, taught in large city schools in Kristiansand, a large city in the county of Vest-Agder, in the south of Norway. Åse and Hanne work at the same school.
- Two teachers, Sissel and Karen, taught in schools located in the suburbs of Kristiansand, one located in the west and one in the east of the city.
- One teacher, Kristian, taught in Oslo, the capital city, located in southeast Norway.

### *School variations.*

- All of the teachers were in a current teacher position at the time of the interviews, practicing in schools with more than 100 pupils.
- Four of the teachers, Kristian, Åse, Hanne, and Linn, had worked in lower secondary schools.
- Six of the teachers, Karen, Sissel, Martin, Heidi, Gunhild, and Kristian, had worked in primary schools.
- Three of the teachers, Karen, Heidi, and Kristian, had worked at different levels, at both lower or upper level of primary school or lower secondary school
- Two schools practiced open-landscape architecture and taught on whole levels instead of class-based teaching.
- All of the schools, except one, were involved with a current research or development project in the municipality.

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<sup>20</sup> PPU: ‘Praktisk Pedagogisk Utdanning’. A two-year study program in practical pedagogical education that certifies people with degrees in subject disciplines to teach at all school levels.

- Two working places were lower secondary schools.
- One of the schools, located in a more or less homogenous and prosperous area, had achieved very high rankings on the national test, ranking among the top 25 schools in the country. Characterised by a more or less homogenous group of pupils
- One school, located in a quite heterogeneous area, with a low socio-economic index, has archived at an average level on the national tests. Characterised by a highly heterogeneous group of pupils in terms of ethnicity and special needs.
- One working place was a combined school (1st-10th grade) located in a heterogenous area in terms of socio-economical index and ethnicity, achieving below average level on the national test. Characterised by a highly heterogeneous group of pupils, in terms of both ethnicity and special needs.
- Four working places were primary (lower/upper) schools:
  - Two located in a fairly homogenous and prosperous area. Consisted of a fairly homogenous group of pupils.
  - One located in an area with a low socio-economic index. Consisted of a highly homogenous group of pupils in terms of ethnicity and special needs.
  - One located in an average homogenous/heterogeneous area in terms of socio-economic index. Consisted of a fairly homogenous group of pupils in terms of ethnicity, but more heterogeneous when it came to special needs.

#### MOVEMENT FROM INTERVIEW TO LIFE STORY.

In the following, I shall present the procedure of moving from an interview setting to constructing translated and written Life Stories. The presentation will describe theoretical guidelines for this process viewed in light of reflections on my experience of each phase.

##### *The context of the interviews.*

To establish trust in the interview setting, Goodson & Gill (2011) stresses the value of being up front with the participant about the methodological processes which will be undertaken. They state:

Sharing methodology not only empowers the participants to engage more actively in the research, but also reinforces the participants' awareness of the importance of their experiences and stories in the research[.]

(Goodson & Gill, 2011, p. 37).

According to Goodson and Gill (2011), building trust with the participants in a Life History study is not a quick-fix. Explaining the intention and the stages of the research might help both the researcher and the respondent avoid a stressful interview situation. Another aspect in establishing trust is the recognition of the unfamiliar and atypical setting for telling a life story. Sharing the stories of one's life to a total stranger might feel somewhat unnatural or intimidating, especially if the respondent feels obligated to make direct eye contact with the researcher through the whole interview. Initially, I planned to avoid an awkward setting by placing myself in an angular position to the respondent. However, by allowing the participants to initiate contact and guide me to the interview location, in most cases at their workplace, they frequently chose a more direct face-to-face position. The role as a visitor and the need for a place to talk as privately as possible resulted, in most cases, in the teacher showing me to a room designed for collegial meetings, offering me a seat opposite to him or her at a table and with something to drink. In this sense, the teachers themselves were setting the scene.

In the interview, my aim was primarily to encourage 'flow' in the storytelling. Following Goodson's (2011) advice of taking a 'vow of silence', I as a researcher tried to restrain my need to interfere and question the respondent—allowing them to sequence and develop their stories as freely as possible. This is based on the assumption that if the participants are given time and space to narrate their own life stories without a feeling of being interrogated; the degree of agency is more likely to emerge. At first, I planned to follow Horsdal's (2012) advice of writing the life story down word by word as it is told, to constrain myself from interrupting the storytelling. According to Horsdal (2012), this would slow the telling and give the respondent opportunity to think, remember, and construct their story. However, to ensure that I did not lose any words, I also planned to record the interview. To write down every word as they come requires skill and experience. I quickly drew the conclusion, during the first minutes of the first interview, that it would be wise for me to stop writing and rather be present solely as a listener. The reason for this was that the participant, Heidi, seemed to be distracted by my writing and that my writing seemed not to influence the tempo of her speech, but prohibited her from making full sentences and storylines. When her eyes followed my writing, she used a lot of

'fill words' like 'emm', 'shall we see', and 'and.. ehh. and... In this case, it seemed as if eye contact actually was quite important for her in order to narrate her story. I found this only natural, since eye contact usually is a central part of intersubjective communication and dialogue. In every interview, I noticed that the participant also seemed more able to narrate their story when I was responsive to it through body language, laughs, and sighs. In my second interview, with Martin, I had a difficult time restraining myself from interfering, since he touched upon so many topics and issues which were of special interest to me. Biting my tongue and keeping my responses to a minimum, in order not to interfere, might in this case have hindered the flow, rather than stimulating it.

#### *TRANSCRIBING THE INTERVIEWS.*

The interviews were transcribed as close to an orthographic standard as possible, writing down every cough, sigh, and laughter, and marking every second of pause with a punctuation mark (e.g. '..' = 2 seconds pause). Long breaks were marked by entering the time a pause was started [hour, minute, second]. This noting down the pace of speech turned out to be of great value in the later analysis process in that significant differences between the teachers' ways of using language and portraying their lives could be detected this way. In the final Life Stories, commas were inserted to increase the readability of the texts.

#### CATEGORISATION OF THE INTERVIEWS AND SELECTION OF CASES.

After transcribing the spoken life stories, the teacher narratives were analysed roughly in terms of categorising the life stories into larger units. Since the group of participants was quite heterogeneous in terms of educational background and teacher experience, the only categories I had at the start of the interpretation process were *teacher generation*. In the 'Naïve phase', categorisation by age appeared to be of little use in the process of selecting interviews for further Life Story preparation, since some of the teachers had entered the profession late in life. However, after further reading, a rough categorisation based on *professional ambitions* could be justified. This categorisation resulted in the following three groups:

1. Teachers who emphasised professional development in terms of raising the quality of teaching (Kristian, Martin, Linn)
2. Teachers who placed their professional mandate in the support of pupils with special needs and challenges (Karen, Åse, Sissel)
3. Teachers who described working as a teacher to be a job, among other alternatives, that added meaning and joy to their daily lives. (Heidi, Gunhild, Hanne)

Issues of trust and security, both in themselves and me as a researcher, appeared to be essential to the narrative construction. In some cases, the interview setting seemed to distress the teachers, both concerning the task of making a coherent storyline and insecurity about what I was looking for (expressed in comments like: 'I don't know if this is of any value to you at all', or 'this story is probably not supposed to be about that is it?'). The lack of involvement on my behalf could perhaps have made the teacher look for clues or consents that they were on the right track or that I shared their position on a matter. Three teachers, Martin, Linn, and Sissel, appeared more constrained by the interview setting than the other teachers in terms of constructing a life story without interference or supportive questioning. Their narratives were thus excluded from further analysis.

My age, gender, and appearance seemed to have an impact on how the teachers' spoke and related to me, whether I represented an authority as a researcher, a 'peer' in age or 'spirit', or a young and naïve girl. Among the oldest teachers, it seemed to be the last perception of me that coloured the interviews, making the storylines somewhat 'paternalist' in character. Among the youngest participants, the opposite often seemed to be the case. Realising this, my selection of cases was not only influenced by a thematic categorisation, but also an evaluation of the possible degree to which the perspectives and assumptions of who and what I represented and what I wanted/needed to know, had impacted the teachers' narrations. Thus, I chose to concentrate on interviews in which the teachers appeared to express themselves somewhat freely, more directed towards their life experiences than to my research project or position. In addition to such considerations of trustworthiness, the final life stories were selected with respect to similarities in educational background,

searching for teachers with a general teacher education. The reason for the emphasis was the risk of a 'skewed' representation of the 'class habitus' of other professions and disciplines. For instance, in Gunhild's case, the pedagogical perspectives of early-childhood education seemed to influence heavily her views and approach to teaching and education in terms of being preoccupied with the importance of play and meaningful activity in learning, in contrast to theoretical and 'lecturing' practices. Her perspectives could be judged to represent the profession of early-childhood teachers, who traditionally has been more critical of formal (academic) learning approaches than school teachers in Norway . An inclusion of her narrative would increase the probability of an overrepresentation of my own professional prejudices in the material (i.e., early childhood teacher background and critical position to GERM and neoliberalist education). The teachers who had followed the PPU program and not the general teacher education also appeared to be socialised into their former professional and disciplinary perspectives. As a former journalist, Åse was among the teacher participants who was most informed and critical of the 'manufacturing' of the educational crisis in schools and the effects of neoliberal thinking, which, in her opinion, had led to an increased de-normalisation of pupils with academic challenges. I found it likely that the narrative emplotment in Åse's life story would be embedded in her former journalist occupation rather than in a 'teacher' belief and agency. In Hanne's case, her story reflected her former engagement in foreign aid and religious studies, more than a professional teacher perspective. I decided to exclude these teachers from the final selection based on the assumption that the narratives would confound the direction of interpretation by representing a class habitus more critical to neoliberalism than I would expect to find in Norwegian teachers' work narratives.

The three teachers selected, Heidi, Karen, and Kristian, shared similar background traits. All three were experienced teachers who had worked both at the upper and lower levels in compulsory school and had followed the ordinary teacher education programme available at the time they began their studies. They also described themselves as average pupils during the primary and secondary school years. None of them claimed to have had a particular plan of becoming a teacher at the outset. Based on my experience as a teacher and teacher educator, I found the interviews of



the selected participants to represent stories of what may be termed 'general teachers'.

*CONSTRUCTING THREE ENGLISH LIFE STORIES BASED ON THE NORWEGIAN TRANSCRIPTIONS.*

After the selection of the three stories, the interviews were translated into English and reconstructed from interview transcriptions to a Life Story design.

To preserve the authenticity of the stories, I chose to keep the translated construction of the life narratives as close as possible to the Norwegian transcripts. I did this by following the semantics of the original statements, and quoting the participants as much as possible.

*FEEDBACK TO AND FROM THE PARTICIPANTS.*

In this study, the involvement of the participant at a later stage has been limited to reading and giving comments to the Life Story. Comments typically involved level of recognition, contextualisation of a comment, correcting historical facts in the stories, such as dates, numbers, names, and so on, which did not conflict with the emplotment of the narrative events. An example of such a correction was a mail from Kristian in which he made me aware of an error concerning the years he had been working as a teacher.

The structural analysis and interpretation of my findings was interpreted and read in relation to the 'whole' of the study, including background and theoretical perspectives, and so on. Because of this, I found it best not to include the participants in any part of the *analysis* of the text material.

**HISTORICAL PERIODISATION: GRAND NARRATIVES ON NORWEGIAN HISTORY OF EDUCATION.**

In this study, a broad and fairly comprehensive account of the Norwegian history of education was considered necessary (see Appendix 2). Following Ricoeur and Goodson, I assume that teachers' prospects for the future are projected from personal and systemic narratives of the past. An analysis will easily appear superficial if the Life Stories are detached from broader cultural and societal narrative networks. To investigate how teachers' beliefs and agency might shape and bend (refract) the direction of educational policies, it is thus essential to situate their narratives in a

historical context. The contextual frame in this case will be based on Rosa and Bauman's phases of modernity (see Chapter 3).

Local responses to modern development in education are exemplified through the 'case' of Kristiansand and its surrounding counties (Agder). All the participants in the study have a close connection to this region, either through upbringing, teacher education, or work. There are, however, marked differences in cultural heritage between the urban Kristiansand and its surrounding rural districts (and in different city areas of Oslo). It would thus have been preferable to have covered the detailed historical outlines of the particular communities of each participant. This has not been done due to the risk of exposing the identity of the participating actors and environment. In the account of the local history, emphasis has been put on Kristiansand (and region) as a cornerstone in modern development in education in Norway with its close strategic and economic connection to Denmark and the European continent.

The historical storyline constructed in this study may not be considered historical research (emphasis on relics and primary sources of accounts) but, rather, a narrative approach to history. Here, acknowledged or generalised representations of history are presented to enable metaphorical references to 'grand narratives' in the individual Life Story accounts. 'Metaphorical', in this sense, represents what are found to be resonating similarities ('is not, but is like') in ideals and beliefs between Life Stories and modern developments in Norwegian education on national and local levels. The metaphorical coupling of small and grand narratives helps connect the atemporal character of the Life Story texts to historical timelines (calendar time), and also theoretical perspectives that help 'casting on to' new ways of comprehending what the texts are about.

#### *SELECTION OF LITERATURE AND HISTORICAL SOURCES.*

In modern accounts of school history, the pre-war period and earlier centuries are often left out. Telhaug (1997) notes that researchers engaging in the 1700s to 1800s are mainly seniors in the field. The younger generations' entrance point to history mainly covers post-war times—missing vital parts of the educational heritage and ideals which could help place current developments into a broader and more

nuanced framework. Telhaug (1997) gives a short account of the newest contributions to 'older history'. A characteristic trait of the listed studies is that they all keep a rather narrow perspective, focusing on specific developments or events. This tendency is in line with descriptions of a postmodern rejection of 'meta-narratives'—dismissing the belief in deep structural currents' impact on human action. Comprehensive storylines of general societal development have, because of this turn in world views, come to be considered out-dated within the field of social research. Contemporary representations of grand narratives are thus mostly represented within popular science and fictional publications.

Studies of refraction and Life Histories will, as mentioned, represent a crossing point between the structural and subjective positions. Approaching history and agency from a transactional and dialectic perspective thus makes grand narratives equally important to address as the smaller narratives (in a non-deterministic sense). Further on, this perspective also underlines the value of including the legacy of educational pioneers in Norwegian history of education, as capacitated agents of change in their time that might have coloured or influenced the course of educational development and policy through their actions and ideals. The historical literature used to support the contextual analysis of the teachers' cultural heritage will, therefore, be oriented towards both societal development and institutional and individual legacies. In other words, cultural heritage or history is not to be understood as structure on one side and actor on the other, but as unfolding embodied geographies, policies, and practices.

#### *Final selection.*

Realising that there has been a drastic decline in publications presenting comprehensive storylines of educational development in Norway, I have turned to older publications in my historical narration of the modern and postmodern eras in Norwegian history of education. Most of the literature was published in the 1940-1999 period. This especially concerns my sources to local school development in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Among the selected publications on Norwegian history of education, I place a special emphasis on the historical narrations of Høigård and Ruge (1963), Dokka (1967), Telhaug and Mediås (2003), Dale (2008, 1999), Briseid (2009), Thuen (2010),

and Tønnessen (2004, 2011). In my judgement, these authors have presented highly detailed and comprehensive historical timelines. Their contributions also represent rather balanced portrayals, neither too one-sided nor relativistic in their accounts. Even though the narrative emplotments might be slightly biased towards a left-wing perspective, they all provide comprehensive and recognisable grand narratives of the Norwegian educational heritage—ranging from philosophical, critical theorist, to learning-theoretical perspectives.

As mentioned above, since the participant teachers in the study have a historical connection to Kristiansand, the historical presentation will include local refractions of reform movements in this particular municipality. Most of the literature on local history is written in the 1950-1970 period (e.g., Aarek et al., 1964; Jansen, 1951; Jørgensen, 1950; Kummen, 1949; Leewy, 1956, 1958, 1961; Sandvik, 1999; Steen, 1948). Few authors have covered school development in Kristiansand between 1970 and 2000. My main sources for this period have been Sandvik (1999) and official reports and newspaper articles. I found no comprehensive publications on educational development, neither on a local or national scale, and I had to rely on search platforms such as 'Retriever' (a newspaper search monitor) and the official websites of the municipality and county to access local accounts of historical events and perspectives on education. The historical coverage of this period is thus characterised by being more fragmented and less generalised and cohesive than the former accounts.

To ensure participant anonymity, the history of rural communities or city districts in the capital, where some of the teachers' life stories are situated, has been only briefly sketched in the introductions to the Life Stories (see Appendix 1). However, realising that such contextual frames were of great importance in my analysis of, for example, historical tensions between rural and urban cultures, class perspectives on education, and teacher identity, I have placed much weight on Tønnessen's (2004, 2011), Dokka's (1967), or Høigård and Ruge's (1963) general descriptions of local developments and responses.

### *THE PURPOSE OF GRAND NARRATIVES IN THIS STUDY (APPENDIX 2).*

The Life History and narrative approach to structural/subjective identities and courses of action are much in line with Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus', which acknowledges that immanent and culturally-derived core structures' influence on the behaviour of individuals—as embodied dispositions—even if one, from a subjective point of view, might be blind to their existence. In turn, the individual has the capacity to influence the cultural communities in which they take part and with which they engage (the class habitus of fields). The historical presentation is intended to function as a contextual framework in the narrative analyses—to locate the cultural heritage signified in the narrative emplotment of the Life Stories. The grand storyline is comprehensive in that it seeks to capture changes in societal acceleration (modernity) at different periods of time. This broad frame and chronological presentation is characterised by being highly detailed and dense with information, often moving beyond the historical periodisation and ideals signified in the teachers' Life Stories. The purpose of such a broad historical account is that it permits identifications of refraction, not only on subjective levels, but within local and national frames as well. The compressive historical approach is also important in that it makes the process from Life Story to Life History transparent and justifiable to the reader—both to make the degree of selectiveness and possible biases in my appropriation of historical events more apparent and apt for 'analytic replication' and critique, and for reasons of justification. My presumption is that, by juxtaposing the small narratives against the grand ones, the trustworthiness of the teachers' Life Stories is heightened, and also increases the likelihood that the results of the narrative analyses will provide plausible and recognisable portrayals of developments within their local and professional communities.

### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GOODSON'S FIVE RS IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT.

The five Rs, 'Remembering', 'Regression', 'Reconceptualisation', 'Refraction', and 'Renewal', outlined by Goodson as conceptual tools of resistance, are central concepts in the study design:

1. The concept of Refraction is embedded in the main research issue of the project, referring to the analysis of how the GERM might be responded to or transformed on local levels in Norway.
2. The study also places a great emphasis on Remembering, representing the first level of abstraction, where the grand and small narratives are presented. It can also be said to be present in the study's re-actualisation of the writings of the modern thinkers, Walter Benjamin and Georg Simmel. Most of all, 'Remembering' is a vital part of the insights that the Life Histories bring about, not only telling about the teachers' memories of their life, but also constituting the 'habitus' of memories embodied in the teachers' beliefs and enactments with the world.
3. Regression is addressed in the interpretation of text passages or discursive plotments in the Life Histories, signifying individual or 'communal' (class-habitus) attitudes of de-accelerating and conserving a present or former state of development, rather than following a current path of progress and societal acceleration. Such regressive acts may also point to beliefs or practices which the individual or particular community previously opposed (e.g., progressive turning conservative and vice versa).
4. During the interpretation process, the effort and aim of Reconceptualisation is present in the way in which the global educational architecture is recontextualised in the teacher narratives and further conceptualised in new ways by Ricoeur and Goodson's narrative theories of identity and history, and the use of metaphorical sketches of modernity.
5. Renewal is pursued in the final stage of interpretation, where the use of metaphors could open for new understandings of how teachers adjust or could adjust their practice in a 'liquid' work environment.

#### METAPHORICAL USE OF CONCEPTS AND SKETCHES.

With reference to Ricoeur's suggestions of using established articulations and symbols of meaning within neighbouring fields of research as metaphors to cast on to new understandings, I apply terms borrowed from critical sociological theories of

modernity to analyse structural elements in the life narratives, which I would not have been able to do without the support of these theories.

Some of the applied metaphors in this study might, to some readers, come forth as overly dramatic, such as the use of 'being towards death, against death' and 'care' (Ricoeur), the 'Messianic Hour' or '*Stillstellung*' (Benjamin), and 'the mental state of the metropolitan' (Simmel). These metaphors are used to enlarge small, but significant nuances in the Life Stories that might have been overlooked and possibly underrated without such a magnifying glass.

In the study, I will lean on Ricoeur's reflections and view the instances of Benjamin's 'messianic hour' or '*Stillstellung*' to represent a 'jamming of the breaks' with a current course of action, or a turning point that necessitates a full revision of a person's direction and meaning in life. In this study, the concepts have thus been used as metaphors to mark and conceptualise radical turning points in a storyline. Similarly, Ricoeur's concept of 'death' will be used as a metaphor of irrevocable changes anticipated to take place in the future (conceptions of fate/nemesis), while 'care' represents remembering, preserving and guarding narratives of the past (history and culture). Simmel's concept adds the layer of perception of 'rhythm and pace' in peoples' responses to change. In a narrative perspective, one could say that Benjamin's metaphors represent the 'climaxes' in the story line, Ricoeur's concepts the emplotted direction of the story, while Simmel represent the subjective state (mode) of the storyteller.

#### **4.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

THE DIALECTIC POSITIONING BETWEEN A UNIVERSALIST AND SITUATIONAL RELATIVIST PERSPECTIVE.

As a researcher, I am obligated to follow certain ethical principles or ground rules set by ethical committees (etikkom. no. 2014). These guidelines are often linked to informed consent, voluntariness, participant risk, confidentiality, and equitable participant selections (Plummer, 2001). Ethical dilemmas are often discussed either from a universalist or a situational relativist perspective. While the universalist seeks to hold specific and absolute codes of conduct, the situational relativist claims that

questions of ethics are contextually bound and thus have to be resolved as such. Instead of placing myself as a researcher within one of these camps, I will try to encompass positive elements from both. As an alternative to conducting my research according to a set of rules and rights, I will try to guide my research by the set of moral concepts suggested by Plummer (2001, p. 228), or what he refers to as the five great ethical principles:

- The principle of respect, recognition, and tolerance for persons and their differences.
- The principle of promoting the caring of others, what has been called, following many feminists, 'an ethic of care'.
- The principle of expanding equalities, fairness, and justice.
- The principle of enlarging spheres of autonomy, freedoms, and choice.
- The principle of minimising harm.

To meet these ethical guidelines, I believe there is a need to be as open as possible about the intent of my project, and at the same time try to keep my vow of silence so that the teller's story can emerge as much as possible without me interfering in the process.

#### CONSENT, ANONYMITY AND TRUST.

In my research, an ethical dilemma already occurred when seeking consent from 'Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste' (NSD)<sup>21</sup> (see Appendix 4) to record my interviews. The design of the application form forced me to describe my research questions and agendas as a part of the informed-consent. Although one is encouraged to be as open as possible about the intent and procedure in a Life History study, this information might have influenced the communication of the life stories—making the teller focus on what I am looking for, instead of constructing their own plots and agencies in their stories. Another dilemma concerned cultural codes in the community, which could influence what is appropriate to share in a given situation. If the respondent fears leaks of information that might be connected to him or her in a

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<sup>21</sup> *Norwegian Social Science Data Services*



negative manner, or if there is a lack of 'chemistry' or trust between the respondent and me, the stories can be biased to such a degree that one might question the validity of my research findings and analysis. In my interviews, the aspect of confidentiality and anonymity was strongly emphasised from my side, due to a lack of distance in locality and profession. Since every life story is unique, it also stands more in risk of being recognised than empirical data derived from other research methods. I found the possibility which Ricoeur (1976) points to of translation of discourse into another language as helpful in order to ensure anonymity of the participants, by removing the 'personal signature' of the participants' social dialect.

#### THE OUTSIDE-PERSPECTIVE OF WRITTEN LIFE STORIES.

The interpretation of links between social structure and the Life Story that I, as a researcher, will present as 'findings' might leave the participant with a feeling of powerlessness instead of being in control of his or her life, especially if systemic power structures are interpreted and portrayed as restraining the person's capacity to act. I, as a researcher, must therefore approach the Life Stories with great humbleness, keeping the Løgstrup's (2010) ethical demand in mind—the awareness that in an encounter with another human being, a part of his or her life is given to my trust. The way in which I deal with these dilemmas will be a balancing act that I need to manage if I am to justify both the authenticity and the interpretation of the life histories.

The possibility of alienation will always be present when someone is presented with a written 'biography' of their own life, since it represents an outside and not an inside perspective on their life course. The close relationship between the teachers' character and their social dialect is removed in this particular study due to the translation from Norwegian to English. This could lead to a form of alienation, in the sense that a part of the teachers' personality traits (the social dialect) is missing. On the other hand, this distance between the text and the teacher's dialects could also contribute to making the translated and written Life Story appear less as a 'mirror' of oneself and more as a fictional edition of oneself (like an actor taking the role of you in a movie). The main character in the narrative appears in some sense 'like' the

participant teacher, when telling the story in the interview, but at the same time not 'like' him or her.

Drawing on Ricoeurs 'problem of writing', one could argue that the voice of the teacher who told the story, addressed to me as a researcher, at a particular given time, ceases to *exist* in a semantic sense when translated and structured into textual narratives. If this actually is the case, then the distance provided by translation could contribute to ease the gap between the 'insider' perspective of the participants, and the 'outsider' perspective of the analytical abstraction. The 'otherness' represented by the reconstructed narrative teachers, opens the possibility for the living teachers to get a decentralised (alter-centred) perspective on their life stories—preventing the possible feeling of alienation when they are confronted with the 'findings' or final conclusions of the study. This distance to the initial spoken life story, created by writing and translation, is in this sense not only granted to me as a researcher, but to the participants as well. In the narration process, the element of 'otherness' is also offered through both the teller and the biographical author's anticipations of possible future listeners and readers. Intended listeners/readers are thus present in all narratives, all the way down to the choice of particular words—representing both to whom the words belong and to whom they are addressed (Goodson, 2011). As a researcher, I should therefore not only imagine how my representation of the life histories might come forth to those to whom I intend to communicate, but constantly reflect on a wider audience. Also, as Ricoeur would argue, 'a text might be addressed to someone, but as a text, it can be read by anyone' (Simms, 2003 p. 41). To keep the 'unintended readers' in mind makes one place an additional emphasis on the efforts to express one's intentions and interpretations clearly. In this study, this would imply that I strive to make my argument as accessible and transparent as possible, so that possible misunderstanding or misuse of the life histories might be reduced, that is, making it clear that I tend to approach 'explanation' as semantic references of tensive relations in a text (dialectical analysis of discourse), and not as evidence of some natural given, causal mechanisms.

#### 4.6 'EXPLANATION' AND ISSUES OF VALIDITY

Jon Elster (2007, pp. 21-31) emphasises that explanations in social sciences have to be distinguished from seven other types of statements: True causal statements, correlations, necessitation, storytelling, statistical statements, answers to 'why' questions and predictions. According to Elster (2007, p 21-31), none of these types of statements provides a causal mechanism. Following Elster's argument, it would be wrong to claim that my narrative and metaphorical truth claims are explanations in the sense of 'causal' answers to my research questions. The findings and conclusions of this study may not be regarded as explanations according to Elster's definitions. The Ricoeurian 'explanations' are *metaphorical* in essence, and only serve to provide what Ricoeur would call 'tensive truths'. Although refusing to place storytelling into the category of explanation, Elster do acknowledge, however hesitantly, that narrative could serve as a transformative link between philosophy and empirical data:

'By telling a story about how rational self-interest might generate altruistic and emotional behaviour, one can transform an issue from a philosophical one into one that is amenable to empirical research. A just-so story can be the first step in the construction of a successful explanation'.

(Elster, 2015, p. 17)

Just as an event, as Elster also emphasise, can be accounted for in numerous different ways, the possible interpretations of the empirical material in this study is plentiful. That does not imply that I would consider every possible interpretation to be equally valid. However, like 'explanation', my use of the term 'validity' in this study, is not equal to how the term is traditionally used within natural science, in that it is dialectical and hermeneutically based. 'Validity' in this context refers to the abductive movement between guess and validation, seeking plausible explanations in order to comprehend the matter at hand. In the dialectic use of the term any interpretation would require justification of its plausibility and relevance. In this study, a justification of my interpretation rest on the transparency of my interpretations, i.e., my use of narrative data (includes Norwegian history of education and the Life Stories of the three teachers. The narratives have to be accessible to the reader, to make the levels of abstractions sensible and 'testable' (See Appendix 1). A precondition of such transparency is that the historical timelines (individual, local,

and national) are presented in full, rich in information and contextualisation, opening the possibility for readers to contest or refine my analysis and conclusions (See Appendix 2).

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## PART III—ANALYSIS



### INTERPRETATION OF THREE LIFE STORIES

In this chapter, I shall present the first two levels of abstraction of the analysis of the teachers' Life Stories, representing the Naïve and Structural phases of interpretations. In the structuring of the thesis I have decided to present the narrative data (Life Stories and historical narratives) in the Appendix section and not as an integral part of the Thesis structure. This is done mainly to increase the readability of the Thesis, but also because no research questions are directly related to these sections. However, getting to know the teacher and historical narratives might be useful for the reader as a backdrop and reference material to the analyses presented in Part III.

#### 5.1 NAÏVE PHASE—THE FIRST LEVEL OF ABSTRACTION

According to the hermeneutical arch, the categorisation and selection of cases (9 interviews/8 transcriptions) belongs to the Naïve phase of interpretation. However, due to issues of readability and structural outline of the dissertation, this part is treated under the presentation of the methodological design in Chapter 4.4. Under the current section, I shall continue the presentation of the Naïve phase with unvalidated impressions from the three cases selected for Life Story reconstruction.

#### UNVALIDATED IMPRESSIONS FROM THE LIFE STORY RECONSTRUCTIONS.

Working with the transcriptions of the three selected teachers, evident differences appeared in the use of language. This was particularly observed in their narrative style, choice of wording, and in the pace of narration (all interviews lasted about one and half hours each).

An early impression from working with the transcriptions was the differences in the quantities of themes, actors, and 'sceneries' presented in the different texts. The greatest differences in the storylines in this respect were found in Heidi's and Kristian's stories. While Heidi focuses on family and her pupils, Kristian elaborates on

his teacher heritage, his own teachers and educators, his girlfriends and mates, his employers and colleagues, and on interests associated with his professional work. His story was nearly double in length, and very dense with detailed information in comparison to Heidi's story. The 'pace' differences between two stories gave associations of a centre-periphery issue—which in turn led me to look up research on this issue. Among the literature addressing the centre-periphery theme and aspects of pace and speed, the works of Baumann, Benjamin, Rosa, and Simmel provided me with new perspectives on neoliberal education and GERM. Their theories, in turn, enabled me to add the dimensions of modernity and societal acceleration to my conceptual framework of analysis.

## **5.2 STRUCTURAL PHASE—THE SECOND LEVEL OF ABSTRACTION—LIFE STORIES**

Based on Ricoeur's discussion on 'the problem of writing', there is no direct route to comprehension of a text. To find out what a text is 'about' (the plot), one first has to make a detour around this question, and rather follow the track of 'what' the text says and 'how' it is said. Answers to these two questions will reveal the 'inner logic' (sensible explanation) of what the text means (understanding). This 'logic' represents the discourse of meaning in the text, regulating the structure of 'what' and 'how' language is used. This discourse is structured by a dialectic tension generated by textual relations that makes sense, and those that do not make sense. According to Ricoeur, an interpretation which follows such textual predicatives (relations that make sense), or what may be termed 'signifiers' of meaning, will at some point shed light on a structural core (discursive plot). The tensions embedded in this core, signified by a hierarchy of actors (what) and actions (how) inherent in the discourse, reflects back to a context where the meaning of the text is situated.

In the following, I will present a structural interpretation of the three teachers' Life Stories, starting with Heidi, followed by Karen, and ending with Kristian. (See Appendix 1 for full length stories). Each analysis concludes in narrative plots expressed as condensed metaphorical vignettes, seen through the lens of critical sketches of modernity. The narrative plots are further elaborated into a hierarchy of actors and actions (listed at the end of each analysis). The narrative plots and



hierarchies will finally be placed into a Life Story matrix (Table I), followed by a summarised comparison of the three analyses.

### 5.3 HEIDI

Heidi is a 49-year-old teacher who works at a primary school in a small municipality located in the rural countryside in the south of Norway. The municipality may be described as a traditional industrialised area emerging in the mid-war period. The municipality shares a relatively typical working-class culture found in several small rural communities alongside the railway track. Today, the population is close to 15,000 inhabitants. The community is characterised by a below-average education level coupled with a comparatively high rate of unemployment, mental disorders, and substance abuse. The number of young mothers (teenagers) is unusually high, both compared to Kristiansand and the country in general. Unemployed young mothers also represent the largest recipient-group of social security provisions in the area.

Entering her adult life as an unemployed young mother, Heidi's story signifies a social, economic, and cultural background that resembles the general tendencies and history of the municipality. However, Heidi re-enters school and higher education as an adult. Her decision to return to a school and career life represents an unanticipated choice within the special cultural setting of this community.

#### NARRATIVE STYLE.

Heidi's narration is characterised by long-winded, slow-paced movements from the general to the particular, where the relevance of the lengthy elaborations is withheld until the end, often signifying a break with or contrast to the former course of events. The relative short length of her story (compared to the other teachers), reflects a calm and relaxed approach to the story telling—not aimed at giving account for every aspect and detail of her life, but rather to slowly synthesise her life into general tendencies.

## DISCLOSING THE NARRATIVE PLOT.

After several readings of Heidi's Life Story, I managed to locate one statement which could function as a 'semiotic' map to the narrative plot of her story. It was a highly abstracted and generalised statement (referred to as 'the Statement' from here on), and thus 'symbolic' in character. The Statement functions as a summary of the Life Story as a whole, signifying both a personal and professional perspective on her life:

'I believe that my life as a teacher characterises my way in life in general'.

The comparative analogy which constitutes the sentence can be expressed by the logical statement:

'A' (life as teacher) is like 'B' (life in general)

Following the inherent logic of the Statement, the signified meaning is likely to rest in an abstract or metaphoric similarity between 'A' and 'B', where 'A' is directed towards characteristics of Heidi's life as a teacher, and 'B' addressed to characteristics of Heidi's life 'in general'.

The first reference-point of 'A', is located in the subsequent text passage of the Statement. The passage entails a short summary of characteristic traits of Heidi's development as a teacher, starting with moving from past to the present and on to her anticipations of the future. In this sense, since 'A' encompassed an enclosed narrative structure, 'A' functions as a 'micro-narrative' carrying resemblance of 'B' ('A' is *like* 'B'). The underlying 'plot' in Heidi's Life Story ('B') should thus be present in this narrative passage of 'A':

'The first couple of years I did things by the book. I don't suppose I carried out a single thought of my own. I just did as told and followed the protocols as careful as I could. And you know, there has been a lot of reforms coming and going. I think I've followed M87 [286] and then L97 [293]<sup>22</sup>, and today we follow the new curriculum, 'the Knowledge Promotion'[302]. (Laughing) So, I have. Despite all those aims and targets in the different curriculums [of the Knowledge Promotion], and, and despite my sincere hope that we'll be able to keep the current curriculum for a long time, I believe that the most important thing is to settle, given time to contemplate on one's situation. How one think[s] about the pupils and what you can provide

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<sup>22</sup> The square brackets '[']' point to contextual signifiers in Appendix 1 and 2 (local context descriptions or historical periodisation of grand narratives).

for them. And over all the big and important questions. Because I feel that we haven't really been given space and time to do that'.

The location of 'B' was harder to discern than 'A' due to the term 'in general'. Nevertheless, I discovered several passages where characteristic examples of her life were given, located prior to the Statement. Three passages were selected as examples for further analysis.

#### Example:

- 1.1. 'I was a quiet pupil. I guess I spoke. I don't think I spoke a word during all of primary and lower secondary school. I didn't continue any further at that time; I kind of took a break from school life. Yes. But I think you reach a point in life where you kind of get fed up of being quiet all the time. I don't know. I just... I had been silent all through my years at school, but at the same time I was a skilled pupil who managed well. It was just this... I was quite social with my friends. I remember how often we used to visit one another after school. We were a huge class. Thirty pupils, and a lot of girls, spending time in each other's place because we all lived nearby. My school was just a couple of blocks away. So, we were. I had plenty of friends, but in class, I only spoke if the teacher asked me directly. Except from that, I didn't make a sound. So, that was how thing was all through primary and lower secondary school, and I believe that it at some point just didn't feel all that meaningful, being that quiet. You can't... But I was just very, very, very shy. Awfully shy. If I was spoken to by adults, I got all... Really got this immense sensation of heating up inside. Easily intimidated I would say. Extremely. Yes...'.
- 1.2. 'After finishing ninth grade [the last year of compulsory school at that time], I kind of found myself lost regarding what to do. And then.. eh.. Then, at the age of 16, I got pregnant and gave birth to a child. So, my whole existence revolved around her, and everything else was kind of put on hold for a period. I have to think.. My oldest daughter.. What was her age when I returned to school again? Well, I got children. One when I was 16, and another girl at the age of 18. And at that point I married my husband, and we. It was really an awful marriage. I shall not go into the details here, because this story revolves around something else, but at the age of 22, I left the marriage. And, I recall only having one thought in my head, eh.. To resc [inc]...That if I was to become a person, a mother to my children, then I had to leave'.
- 1.3. 'So, we became this tiny little family, the three of us. And I'd kind of recognised, during my marriage... This growing aspiration of going back to school, kind of reawoke inside of me. Because it had really always been there in the background. So, I thought.. I kind of returned to school during the last year of our marriage, and... I

loved it. I just.. I entered an upper secondary business school [322], because I didn't know whether I would be able to complete three years in a row. At that time you could finish one year at a time and receive your graduation diploma when completed. In those days, the upper secondary school was a bit different... I believe I graduated in 86 maybe? 86, 87? I believe my oldest daughter was four when I started. Maybe 87, I believe it was 87. But I remember concentrating on one year at the time, thinking that time would show whether I would complete or not. And take the steps from there, I guess. And that was in a way... It was in all of this that I got divorced, because my husband couldn't deal with it. That I.. I think he just watched me getting sucked into this school life, which I found so exhilarating. So, it ended in this breakup, but I continued to go to school. So, I completed upper secondary school, eh, while at the same time raising these small children of mine'.

- 1.4. 'After graduating from upper secondary, I didn't quite picture what to do next, because I really enjoyed working with numbers, but at the same time I was truly fond of kids. I remember, all the way back when I was a little girl, having my little brother with me.. He was always with me. He was clinging more to me than my mother really. It just was how it was. Was really just like, very, very fond of children. Babysitting. Watching kids. Was just fascinated by it, and just felt this immense love for being with children. But then, yes, I thought about it, but didn't quite know what to do. So, I entered this pre-course in mathematics? It was at ADH, I think that was what it was called then. It was in springtime. But I.. Having followed the course for some time, I gradually realised that this wasn't quite the thing for me. At the same time, I had applied for a study in home economics, a part of the teacher-education program [322], because I love cooking and that sort of thing. And I thought I'd just try a whole other subject and see how I'd like it. And so [I] entered the teacher education programme to take a one-year study course in home economics. And I thrived. I really enjoyed it. Liked the people there and all. Because I felt, and really, if I think back on my childhood and youth, and especially as [I] became a mother at the age of 16, I got very lonely. It became only me and my kids. I had to work and I had to go to school, and I didn't really have like... The others at my age were in a totally different place in life. I was really, or it wasn't like I sat at home thinking of how lonely I was. I was rather more in a state of determination, wanting to prove that I could manage the lot really. A bit like that. Eh, but then I found going to the course in home economics really fulfilling; so, I decided to apply for the teacher-education programme. So, I entered teacher education. It was a three-year-programme at that time [319]. So, I studied there for three years, completed my studies, and started working here actually'.

These four text passages are examples that convey characteristic aspects of Heidi's life. Besides Heidi's nervousness about speaking in school, she remembers managing the other aspects of school well. She describes happy childhood memories, characterised by low restriction of mobility, allowed to play around in the neighbourhood together with friends. The passages also point to how this changed when she ended up as a mother at only 16 years of age. They tell of how she tries to stay on top of all her responsibility, but how she needed a life beyond her role as a housewife. In essence, the passages tell of how a girl tried to cope with the responsibilities of a woman, and how education represented a way to social mobilisation and transition—where she could reclaim control and renew her future prospects. Based on the text passages above, 'B' can be interpreted as instances of elaboration, where Heidi has 'jammed the breaks' in her present 'life narrative' to enter a new—more self-fulfilling—story.

Comparing the general traits in Heidi's life descriptions with her 'teacher narrative' ('A'), one can see that they both share a change of course, signifying turns from submissive roles to deliberate positions in life. The micro-narrative of 'A' signifies a need for a break with the rapid shifts and movement in educational reforms. Like in her general Life Story, this elaboration from following the 'book to establishing her own voice as a teacher appears rooted in a critical response, not just a 'reactive' response. In Heidi's private Life Story, the breaks represent her personal fight for social mobility and 'class' transition, and where education represented her road 'from rags to riches'. In both her general and teacher storylines, Heidi's efforts of elaboration from former roles and identities appears to have strained much of her energy, leaving her longing to stay in the present moment of stability and focus. In the text-passages of her private life ('B'), this is present in Heidi's efforts to cling to her studies despite her husband's disapproval, representing a feeling of freedom and meaningfulness. In storylines of her teacher development ('A'), a similar aim to hold on to the moment of peace and content is present in the following statement:

- 2.1. 'So, I have.. Despite all those aims and targets in the different curriculums [of the Knowledge Promotion], and despite my sincere hope that we'll be able to keep the current curriculum for a long time, I believe that the most important thing is to settle, given time to contemplate on one's situation. How one think[s] about the pupils and what you can provide for them.

And over all the big and important questions. Because I feel that we haven't really been given space and time to do that'.

- 2.2. 'I was in doubt of whether I should have another go at seventh grade, but then the management asked me: 'What would you really like to do?' So, I thought to myself that I haven't tried teaching on the lower levels, with the younger ones, and it would be fun trying, just to see how it was like. And it was just wonderful. But I had never really considered that before, and that is kind of odd since I really loved being around kids, all since I was a little girl. It's just fun. So much fun.. Now, I just enjoy my job to the fullest, all the time. There is always something to do. They say and do all these things, which we can build our teaching upon and just.. And even though we have to teach by 'the Knowledge Promotion', we have this space and autonomy.. We're not so restricted in a way. We do, of course, have to make sure to note down all the targets for each pupil, in each subject, on a weekly schedule, but one just has to make it into this kind of 'contest' and try to have fun with it, like: 'Let's find out how to reach these goals'. Just do it, in a way. That's just a way that I feel it's possible to go about, but that might have to do with the fact that I'm teaching at the lower levels. Here [at these levels], 'the Knowledge Promotion' is manageable. It doesn't occupy.. It doesn't shape me as a teacher in a way. I feel I can be the teacher I want to be for my pupils. And I really enjoy it, I really do. It's so much fun.. It's so amusing.. But still, I do feel the pressure of always having to defend our profession, having to.. It's this distrust, and sometimes that can overwhelm you a bit. But on day-to-day basis I thrive in class, at school, and in my whole work situation. There are good days, and I believe the children experience good days as well. And, in my heart, I know that's the most important thing. They have a long road ahead of them, so it's about giving them a head start in school, enable them to stand tall in their life journey. It's vital today. And I'm confident that I've been giving my very best in class, to my pupils, and. to my judgment. it's worked out alright'.

Similar to the text passages of 'B' that show Heidi's conflict in marriage, the text-passages of 'A' reveal a conflict of interest—signified in Heidi's use of language as a regressive attitude, keep status quo and despite her reluctance towards certain aspects of the curriculum. Where 'B' signifies a regressive break with a private situation, 'A' addresses a professional resistance towards the rapid shifts in policy reforms. 'B' expresses the turning points in Heidi's life, when and where she realised that to settle her mind and become herself as a 'person and as a mother', while 'A' points to a need for professional space to contemplate one's work after finally have come into accord with the present reform regulations and curriculums.

A semiotic perspective on 'A' and 'B' could suggest, in a metaphorical sense, that Heidi's Life Story is constituted by the dialectic counter-positions:

- 'Progression'/'Regression'

- 'Change'/'Stability'
- 'Compliant behaviour'/'Critical agency'
- 'Submissive'/'Self-confident'
- 'Harmony'/'Distress'.

According to Ricoeur's theory of interpretation, one should be able to locate the discourse, or the meaning of the text as a whole, in the basic language units of the text (statements or text passages). To support the interpretation above, a similar expression of the discourse should thus also be apparent in other textual passages in the Life Story.

*SEARCHING FOR REOCCURRENCES AND REWORDINGS OF THE DISCOURSE.*

In further analysis, I found similar discursive emplotments and dialectic tensions in Heidi's Life Story. It seems as if the discourse just keeps repeating itself over and over, but every time with different wordings, nuancing the core emplotment. The first rewording of the discourse appears in the immediate text passage after reference point 'A':

'It's been: 'OK, a new. M87' and 'OK, L97, yes'. And they [the curriculums] have really been quite different. I just picture this bunch of seminars, trying to make it work, making new plans that barely are implemented before the next one arrives. But that has changed somewhat the last couple of years. At least now I have, or we have, been teaching by 'the Knowledge Promotion' for quite some time now. And that is why I feel that it [the current curriculum] is. Yes. There is something about coping with the adoption of something new at the same time as you're supposed to be teaching. To be who you are as a teacher and doing what you find important, important to the children. Yes. So, I actually find the current situation to be somewhat peaceful, even though we continuously have to adjust two new policies. It's all sorts of things. They just come pouring down on us. It seems like we're in this constant fight with the municipality, whether it's about our working hours or just a lot of issues like that. And it can really make one sad, that they need to question these things in the first place. Yes, I feel these things bother me sometimes. But I also feel that it's kind of been my way of... Like being very insecure... I remember how I, for several years as a teacher, because it was always something that you didn't get time to integrate properly, and for me I believed it came down to never getting on top of things and to make the new fit with whom I was as a person in a manner of speaking. It was all a rush, coping with one demand after another. And more and more things have evolved into this documentation mania. Everything is to be documented. And that can be quite tiring as well. But at least I find things more settled now than it was before. But in a way, I believe that has more to do with my personality and my personal journey. Because I felt, after being through this rather turbulent life, and facing all that really

was required of me then, and that I kind of required of myself.. To manage to be a mother, become educated, become something.. And the feeling you had to.. I guess I always had this feeling of being inferior in a way. Before. Never feeling good enough, always having to fight one's way through and up, if you know what I mean? It drained every power left in me I think. Yes. While now I am, kind of.. And it was the same thing in my teacher career. Because when you're feeling insecure, you'll never be fully satisfied with your accomplishments. I worked and worked and worked, and thought and tried and aimed to do things as correct and well as possible. And then it is just.. It is a tremendous task? It's an impossible task, and you'll never reach the end of it, if that is a goal.. But, that is just something one has to.. If that is one's goal, then one can't be a.. No.. One just can't...'

In this passage, the predicative function of the word 'Before' points to a temporary elaborated self-image or identity which is different from the past, in line with the tensions of distress/harmony, submissive/self-confident, and progression/regression. In addition, this passage shows the need to draw the line somewhere, to accept being 'good enough' but never perfect.

Another rewording of the discourse is present in a passage where Heidi expresses her anticipations of the future, where her opposition towards the direction of present policies is more accentuated:

'One has to be very critical of things these days. Because, if we find that what we do is working, then we must not let it go. And by that I don't mean that we should put an end to all educational development. That's not what I'm saying. But there are some good things that one feels are important. When we have a lot of good things going for us, which is good for the children, we can't just abide by everything placed at our table. But I kind of feel that up until now, we've had a tendency to do what we've been told. We gave away everything we've been working for, regarding reducing administrative hours in favour of enhancing the quality of our teaching lessons. All of a sudden, something happened there, leaving us with one more hour of administrative work, instead of less. So, we're in this constant fight against the municipality over working hours. So, I guess it can go both ways. I'm a little bit.. I've been thinking: 'What if someone suddenly figures that there is time for a new curriculum?' Because there's been a while since the last one arrived. But it depends'.

The discursive tensions between change/stability, progression/regressions, and compliant behaviour/critical agency are here expressed through Heidi's signification of a professional capacity or restriction to act. She articulates an urge for the future to stand up against policies teachers cannot vouch for. This expression can be read as an anticipation (or Heidi's hope) of being 'loyal' to her beliefs as a teacher—having been through hardships and restraints to be where she is today. At the same time, it



also expresses anticipations of the opposite to occur, anchored in Heidi's experience of how teachers can be forced, by means of policy regulations, to comply with the system (read: Ricoeur's 'being-in-face-of-death, against death').

The discursive tensions are also reworded in a more 'ironic' statement, where Heidi points to the apparent paradoxes in policymakers' eager pursuit of change:

'We do have the habit of looking to Finland, at least that is what we have been doing the last couple of years. And I don't believe they have changed their curriculum all that often. So it's no use looking at schools over there when.. But that is what people do these days, or at least have done up until now.... Travelled to have a look over there'.

This added nuance of tradition versus foreign influence is also seen in Heidi's endorsement of the research innovations in the municipality that resonate with the local 'spirit', for example, inclusive education or formative assessment initiatives. In this sense, her reluctance to change is not directed against all sortd of renewal of school practices; it is rather an averseness towards policy—and research initiatives which fail to tune in to the local and professional culture and beliefs.

Even though Heidi is critical toward and uneasy about reform acceleration, she does not seem to surrender into a decapacitated mode of being. This is evident in a reworded passage of the discourse, which also encompasses a meta-perspective on societal progress:

'There are a lot of things that cross my mind when thinking about how things will be in the years to come. But I feel at peace. I feel that the things we've established here over the years, teaching the same curriculum which encompasses a space for professional autonomy, to make it our own, to make something good out of it. We've just had this round, and we're all quite exhausted, of making new plans for everything. We had to because the previous ones weren't too good. We kind of needed more of an overview, and that takes time, and it isn't a whole lot of fun. It isn't a kind of work that I fancy using a whole lot of time on, but we had to and now it's done. And then, if they [the plans] are allowed to be, to be left where they are, and we could work... It's kind of sad to think about, that we have been led to this state where we can't find the power to shout or speak up. It is the only... I'm filled with hope, but if a new curriculum arrives then I feel I will become discouraged. I really do. (Laughter). Because if one has managed to work through all the administrative curriculum work, one really gets the opportunity to implement it of course, but also work with the things that really occupy your time as a teacher. As a good teacher, one has to focus both on the teaching content and at the social relations in class. Making sure everyone is included [275, 285, 289, 297]. And that is a humongous thing. So, if you're stuck doing administrative work and just barely get to plan the

upcoming teaching lessons, something is wrong in my opinion. All wrong. And then we'll not be very enthusiastic down there, in the classrooms, and neither will the others. And I don't believe in that. One has to keep one's shoulders low in face of the pupils. There is no room for thinking that: 'I didn't get to finish that work last night and'. If something is obvious these days, it's that. This stress, I can feel it, and it sort of characterises our entire society as a whole, and we need to watch out for that. It's the big bad wolf really. One simply has to calm down. And that is in fact possible to do. But now I refer to teaching in lower primary education, and I might have perceived things very different if I taught at the upper primary levels. I might have felt it then. I don't think so, but I might have. The number of targets and stuff are just growing. I have a son in eighth grade and one in his first year at upper secondary school, and they are doing OK. I don't feel that they are stressed. So, I believe we can remove the stress and make them feel that they'll manage. It's the thing about stress. I feel there is a lot one can do about it'.

In spite of state of near exhaustion, she manages to stay calm and focused in front of her pupils. In a following rewording, it is obvious that she is shielding and protecting not only herself but also the pupils from the disturbing intrusions of the new Quality Assurance Systems:

'There are so many screening tests right now, and I do know that in some schools pupils that don't do well on the test are removed, so that they.. Yes, they kind of place the focus on results [300]. And I don't believe we fully can escape that. And I to find.. We just ran this screening test, and I was really anxious on behalf of my pupils. How would they do, what have they understood, and have they like.. Because eh.. But eh.. I just feel that's a terrible focus to have. And the thought of being paid by results is just awful in my eyes. Really. It's been times when we have, that I've sometimes have excused some of the pupils from taking the screening tests. But then it is about how I consider the whole thing to be too much for the pupil to handle. It would be a painful experience for the pupil. It's just that focus [on results]. And then I don't see the point in.. Some find it a lot of fun to see how many points they can get [on a test]. And if you don't score that well, but still find it fun, that that's OK I guess. But If you're just stranded looking at all the things you're failing at, then.. I feel that when I get to know the pupils, then we have rather come to the conclusion that 'OK, then we can use it as something we do together. Can we do it together and see how far we'll come?' And then we sit and talk about it, and it doesn't become [inc].. That's where the focus should be I think. On the pupils, and what they're exposed to. Yes. If it's alright to let them go through it or not. And there are a lot of them. Screening tests. And we have to face them one way or another. But the thought of being paid for getting good test results... I just find it completely.... It's like, we're busy doing our thing here, and then these screening tests arrive and we have to make them work one way or another. We're obliged to see them through. But, in a way, it doesn't resonate with the spirit around here. I feel there is this good sense here, and the work put in inclusion right now. I don't know whether it is just [the municipalities in the area], or a project related to the southern parts of Norway, because it

seems to be on a voluntary basis. And they've chosen to focus on inclusion. And that just fits. I find that to be very wise. It fits with the spirit' [266, 268, 275, 285, 289, 297].

In this passage, it is evident that the National Quality Assurance System fails to match the local culture—provoking noncompliant actions which would be perceived as downright sabotage in the eyes of the policymakers if exposed. On the other hand, the passage points at the exact opposite behaviour in cases where policy initiatives meet the local spirit. Searching for discursive rewordings pointing to policies which have resonated with the local educational heritage, I found two passages addressing projects initiated by the municipality and government. Unlike the Quality Assurance System, these policy programmes were portrayed as highly welcome by Heidi. The first passage speaks of the value of the Assessment for Learning project, while the second passage illustrates Heidi's surprise when she found herself inspired by the new Inclusion project introduced by the municipality.

1. 'The thing is, in this municipality. I don't know how they practice things elsewhere, but there is always an innovation project going on. And recently we've been part of this amazing thing, called: 'Assessment for Learning' [303]. And I do find the way their way of approaching assessment close to my own beliefs on learning and assessment. So, that's exciting. It's really good. We've been practicing this in our school for about five years now, and have become better at placing clear targets of each session, to make it easier for the pupils to follow in class: 'What is nice handwriting, and what are your thoughts on the matter?' Just guiding them through it. And it actually seems like it's easier for them to catch on when the targets and information given is concrete. 'This is what we are going to try to get a grip on in this session. Oh my! How can we go about this?' It's kind of about letting them in, collaborating on reaching the targets together'.
2. 'Inclusive learning environment, that's what it's called. And I kind of feel that what we are doing right now, and it sort of fit with the AFL , so I just kind of feel like.. Like it all sort of matches a little better, more than I've often felt before in my teacher career. Because the thought has most often been: 'How on earth am I to make these things work together? How am I supposed to translate these aims into something that I'll be able to teach in class?' And it can be really draining you know, when you just feel that: 'Oh yes it was that, and that, I haven't got to plan the ICT training yet.' Right? How am I supposed to encompass it, and create it into something that I will vouch for as a teacher? But that's why.. When we got this letter from the municipality, regarding the inclusion program, we kind of got a bit like.. A bit like: 'Well, well, now there's another paper from the municipality. Oh dear!' (Laughing) 'Okay, we'll have to listen to this

then...’ And they had this promotion of the program in a local church just down the hill from here, and I just found myself thinking ‘Hey, this is exactly what we already are doing, this is what I believe in and what we are doing!’ I actually felt quite inspired after going to that promotion meeting. (Laughing) And that doesn’t happen every time does it?’

In the second passage, Heidi uses the word ‘translate’ when referring to new policies which fail to match her beliefs as teacher. This signifies that Heidi never would allow such policies to pass through in class without altering them into something that she could vouch for and make viable in everyday teaching practice. The fact that the municipality uses the local church as the stage for introducing new policy programs signifies the great gap between the local rural culture and the central governmental decision makers. The textual exposition of this cultural gap may help to comprehend the enormous task of ‘translation’ meeting Heidi in the classroom.

#### *THE IMMERSED CORE STRUCTURE.*

Based on the structural analysis of Heidi’s Life Story, I find that the narrative plot is springing from tensions of progress/regression, societal acceleration/deacceleration, and external/internal orientation in Heidi’s personal and professional space. The Life Story carries, in this sense, the characteristics features of a ‘regress narrative’: ‘being-in-the-face-of-change, against-change’. In light of Benjamin’s sketch of ‘the messianic hour’ and ‘*Stillstellung*’, the Life Story of Heidi could be synthesised into the following vignette:

*Heidi’s Life Story tells of a woman’s journey from ‘rags to riches’, where education has represented her road to emancipation in life. In moments of ‘Stillstellung’, we can see how she ‘jams the breaks’ and escapes the story she is in and enters a new course of action. It is a story of how a Norwegian teacher tries to cope with the disturbing intrusion of new policies by locating her focus on the place where she and her pupils are, wish, and need to be. It also speaks of how policies, which resonates with the local context and culture, might uplift a teacher’s spirit and renew her interest in professional and pedagogical development. Most of all, the story tells of a teacher’s utopian dream of maintaining stability in times of fluidity. Determined to maintain her elaborate course of action she faces the fact that she might relapse into scriptedness (compliance) if a new reform should ‘show up’. In the end, the story speaks of teachers’ futile fight for their teaching hours and professional autonomy in face of the careless acts of ignorance demonstrated by the local and central policymakers.*

## HIERARCHY OF PRIORITIES.

At the front of Heidi's priorities are the needs of her pupils, colleagues, and the local community. She focuses on creating an environment which is:

- Inclusive, egalitarian, and collaborative
- Emphasising Formative Assessment
- Child-centred
- Playful and harmonic
- Entails a space for professional and local autonomy

Heidi is open to change as long as policy or research initiatives are in tune with the cultural heritage and local 'spirit'

The actors to who Heidi gives the least attention is policymakers (government and municipality), when they stand as promoters of:

- High-paced reform initiatives
- Target management
- Test-orientation
- Cost-efficient policies and administrative time thieves (NPM)
- Decontextualised and centralised policies
- De-professionalisation

## 5.4 KAREN

Karen is a 40-year-old teacher who works at a primary school in Kristiansand city and municipality, located on the southern coastline of Norway. The city of Kristiansand (historically: Christiansand) is the fifth largest city in Norway, with a population close to 90,000 inhabitants. Its strategic location on the Skagerrak Sea has made the city and its surrounding region a cornerstone militarily, politically, and economically as a fortress and garrison town, as well as a shipping and railway city. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the establishment there of a nickel refinery, the city became a centre of development in the nation's hydropower industry. The city has also been characterised by a strong labour movement, its left-wing intellectual pioneers such as

Marcus Thrane, Henrik Wergeland, Jørgen Løvland, Jens Bjørneboe, and also by attracting international figures such as Leon Trotsky and modernist architect Thilo Schoder (among whose many famous works was Kristiansand's Flekkerøy Comprehensive School after World War II).

As a gateway to Denmark, the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Pietistic movement under the rule of King Kristian VI of Denmark-Norway also strongly influenced the city. As a pedagogical consequence of Christianity and the city's communicative position to Copenhagen, Kristiansand also emerged as a pioneer and progressive city in modern educational development—a trait which has characterised the educational policy in the municipality until today. Besides the labour movement, a strong cultural position of the religious community both in education and business has also coloured the political governance. Politically, the region has been more liberal-conservative in its orientation and values than the nation in general—especially visible in issues of gender and religion.

The communities in the western part of Kristiansand have traditionally been the most heterogenous in the municipality in terms of socio-economic status. The eastern areas have generally been considered to be more prominent and homogenous in character and also more conservative than the industrialised suburbs of the western part. Karen lives in the east side of the city but has worked in both parts of the municipality during her teaching career. At the time of the interview, she had been practicing as a teacher for several years, both in higher and lower primary school.

#### NARRATIVE STYLE.

Karen's narrative composition appears fragmented in character, moving from and between different periods, places, and settings of her teaching career. As in Heidi's case, several citations had to be based on long passages of the interview transcription to grasp the essence of what was told. However, unlike Heidi's 'statement', Karen's Life Story does not entail general characteristics of her personal or professional life. Rather, she contextualises the traits of her teaching and life by referring to specific phases, environments, or circumstances. Because of this, it made more sense to approach Karen's story as episodes or a series of narratives composed, to some

extent, as a fluid and impressionistic whole—when moving from ‘how’ and ‘what’ the text says, to what it tells about Karen’s responses to GERM in her daily life and work.

#### DISCLOSING THE NARRATIVE PLOT.

I found that verbal predicates pointing towards Karen’s identity and character as a teacher story were scarce, especially if one, by example, compares the emplotments in Karen’s story to those in Heidi’s story. Karen’s tendency of contextualising the events and portrayals might explain the lack of more generalised emplotments in her narration (e.g., ‘my life has always been...’). Such generalisations did, however, occasionally occur. An example of this is seen in Statement 1 at the beginning of her Life Story:

Statement 1: ‘I didn’t plan to become a teacher in the outset. That wasn’t what I was supposed to become’.

This statement points to a break with whom, as a child and young adult, she had pictured herself becoming in the future, identifying strongly with the role of an aiding ‘helper’, either of animals (veterinary) or nurse (‘rescuing children in Africa’). The choice of becoming a teacher might thus be seen as an episode of discordance in Karen’s life narrative, where ‘whom’ and ‘what’ she had recognised herself to be up to a certain point in time required a re-narration in order to restore some sort of narrative concordance. The narrative coherence between the former and new identity seems to be grounded in a generalised attitude in Karen’s Life Story, revolved around various aspects of emancipation. Karen’s choices and perspectives appear to be based in an ideal course of action—to support those in need and vulnerable positions, whether this refers to animals, starving and unfortunate children, or pupils with learning or behavioural challenges. This attitude is signified in the reflections Karen makes when looking back at her teacher career:

- 1.1. I recognise, in myself, that during all these years I’ve worked, I’ve had a few.. those with learning difficulties, but also several who faced problems in their social relations. And I feel that it is with these children that I have made a difference.
- 1.2. There are those who say: ‘What about the skilled ones? They’re bored’, and stuff like that. And my thought to this is that, yes, that might be accurate, but anyway, I don’t believe that these are the pupils that mostly drop out of lower or upper secondary school. They’ll manage.

- 1.3. Things can become very black and white. Like one reads in the newspapers: This is the bully and this is the bullied. Right?... But when you know the source of the conflict, and the individual challenges a pupil might have, it becomes complicated. One cannot just say: 'Don't do that', if they're not quite capable of controlling it on their own. It may originate from something they have experienced, their situation at home. Things one really can't change and so one just has to try to make the school days as good as possible. Because, in a way, there they can come and be safe.
- 1.4. I really would like to work in traditional classrooms again. And I'm not just talking on my own behalf. Well that's a strange thing to say, of course it is mostly on my behalf. But, on the other hand, I do believe that if I stay, then maybe I could be of help to those who find it difficult. That find it hard to make it work. Because they would have to go to this school nevertheless.
- 1.5. We have decided, together with the headmaster, that there's only going to be two contact-teacher positions at our level next year, each following one specific group. That might make it easier to monitor. Eh. No I think. No, I don't know. I like to believe that. Or, I believe that for the pupils it is. No. Most of them will manage OK anyway I believe. But for those who.. Who find it harder, I do believe that meeting the same adult every day, doing the same every day. I believe in that, for them. Some say that: 'Yes, but what of the risk of getting a bad teacher?'. There are those who say that here.. But I kind of think: 'Well, well, if that happens, that should be treated as individual cases for the management to solve'.

Based on the listed text passages, there is reason to assume that Karen's life plotment of being someone who 'care's for others' serves as a continuing plotment in her teacher narrative.

#### *SEARCHING FOR REOCCURRENCES AND REWORDINGS OF THE DISCOURSE.*

To locate rewordings of the narrative plot in the text, which could provide more nuanced descriptions of the discursive plotment in Karen's Life Story, I found the following statement to be of use:

Statement 2: "So, that was probably the year I felt I worked stuff out a bit, how I was and how I wanted to be.

The sentence points to information which needs to be retrieved elsewhere to gain meaning. It also points towards a holistic portrayal of Karen's teacher identity, signifying a recognition of a teacher identity which she plans to hold on to or fulfil in the future. I found the signified meaning of Statement 2 present in a text-passage:



Got on top of some things. And probably had something to ..eh.. I think I read an article in some newspaper that year, about some school in the Oslo area that had profited from letting a mobile counselling team into the school, to help them with behaviour and issues like that [304]. And the headmaster at school let me experiment and create room dividers, and yes. And this was really the year when the parents came, at the end of the school year, letting me know that I had done well: 'Wow, did he answer like that? We have never heard him answering like that before'. Just some kind of positive feedback on my efforts. And I thought that 'I must have accomplished something. So, that was rewarding. I recall. It's like. Things you haven't thought of before. Like having regular routines and ensuring that there is a correspondence between what you say and do. We managed to create a system we could follow.

This passage of text seems to be working as compressed 'cookies' of teacher beliefs, which gives hints but still requires further extraction to be read properly. To locate the meaning inherent within each of the cookies, I searched through the rest of Karen's Life Story to locate passages of text based on similar emplotments that might illuminate and extract that meaning or plot within each cookie. In addition to the compressed information, the text passage seems to obtain information of the internal coherence between the different beliefs. One could say that the 'cookies' also gave direction to or expressed different 'layers' of beliefs, so to speak. Unpacking these layers could help determine the hierarchical relations between the beliefs and thus point to the main emplotment of Karen's narrative identity as a teacher.

#### *Extraction of beliefs.*

I found the following beliefs to be compressed ('cookies') in the text-passage:

- A: Profit of professional guidance by researchers or experienced teachers
- B: Management allowing teachers professional autonomy is a key to success
- C: Educational systems based on professional judgement and pupils' needs is desirable and sustainable

#### **Belief 'A':**

I found Belief 'A' compressed in the following expression of the text-passage:

'I think I read an article in some newspaper that year, about some school in the Oslo area that had profited from letting a mobile counselling team into the school, to help them with behaviour and issues like that. And the headmaster at school let me experiment'... 'It's like. Things you haven't thought of before'.

Resembling emplotments are repeated all through the Life Story. It is present in Karen's portrayals of the guidance given by their teacher in the teaching practice periods, how she observed experienced teachers in action as an assistant teacher and the benefits of being in a team of experienced teachers. It is also present in her description of the value of external counselling. The following three text passages serve as examples of such reflections, pointing to how external or experienced guidance had contributed to shaping Karen's beliefs and course of action as a teacher:

- a. 'I was on this seminar once, at a time when I had a pupil who struggled with dyslexia and other difficulties. The female teacher who had taught this pupil from first to fourth grade in primary school held this seminar for us before he [the pupil] was to enrol in fifth grade at our school. The thing I remember the best was when she stated that: 'The skilled pupils. They must receive extra and so on, certainly. But they will get by. The question is how we can support those that struggle, to manage and complete their education? How can their everyday life in school be eased?'. So, it's probably safe to say that this has been my entrance point'.
- b. 'We had a visit. A child psychologist from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Ward at the local hospital told us a bit about how the brain functions. And I thought, 'Simple things like that. That is what they should have taught us in teacher education'. Right? Why they react in a certain manner? When the stress level arises and the child is in a state of affect, practically anything can happen. She told us that the remedy for the particular child in question was to avoid letting the child being overwhelmed with emotions during the school day. To reduce the level of stress so that the child manages to relate to others and have others around him. But that, of course, is not easy to accomplish in real life without it affecting the other pupils'.
- c. 'I can say a lot about FLIK [327], but this project was an eye-opener when it started. Because it is so easy to.. I remember how it was, returning from break time, being met with: 'Argh, those pupils of yours again'. They had done this and that, you know? So, it was just about changing the perspective a bit. Instead of only looking at the pupil or what they struggled with. Taking a look at oneself. 'How are my own actions maintaining this, or could we go about it some other way?'. I think it must have been when I started reflecting on these issues'.

**Belief: 'B':**

Moving on to the next cookie of beliefs, referring to the need to be granted professional autonomy by the management, I found Belief 'B' to be present in the following text passages:

And the headmaster at school let me experiment and create room dividers... We managed to create a system we could follow.

Professional space and autonomy, granted by the management, can also be found in other parts of the Life Story. To be given professional autonomy does, of course, point to a recognition and support from the management, but it also implies being left alone to a certain degree. This is very much present in Karen's description of how she went on 'gritting her teeth', instead of running to the headmaster when things got tough in the classroom in her first years as a teacher. Whether caused by insecurity or stubbornness, Karen portrays this frustration, of being alone, as a way to mature professionally through the means of personal experience, overcoming professional defeat by facing challenges on her own. The most representative examples of Belief 'B' are seen in Karen's portrayal of how the management let her take a 'regressive turn' when facing severe challenges in class as a side effect of the 'trendy' open-landscape solutions and whole level teaching:

- a. 'We've had to leave many of the management ideas of how to teach and educate. They want us to teach at whole levels, doing stationary work. And for some reason, I can't really understand why, one strives to keep the whole group of pupils, fifty children, together at all times. That's what they want. But we have come to the conclusion that we can't. We certainly couldn't last year. And when we got permission to split the group in two, right before Christmas, we clearly announced that 'We can't go back to teaching the whole group after Christmas either. We have to make some changes after Christmas''.
- a. 'After presenting our solution to the management, we were allowed to split the level into two groups'... 'I do believe the younger ones think it's nice to be in a smaller group like that. So, we often use, like the school kitchen. Just now, after the pupils had taken the screening test from the Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training [300], I used the kitchen as a classroom for my group the rest of the day, while the other group went on an excursion outside. That way, they kind of got the opportunity to sit close and help one another, instead of sitting separately at their desks. That kind of day is just luxurious (Laughing). It's just wonderful'.

- b. 'The school is great in its own way, but for children that struggle in one way or another, I believe this kinds of open landscapes become totally wrong. In that sense, I kind of miss the way I had it before [in the previous job]. Even if it can be tough to be on your own and abide with the sole responsibility for the many children with special needs, the pupils know who you are and are well acquainted with what's going to happen each and every day. They know where they belong, space-wise. And to some extent, that is what we have tried to accomplish here as well. When entering the open landscapes [286, 321], we have tried to separate and divide the spaces with shelves and things like that. Splitting the sessions into two, instead of having all the children crowded together, like the common practice in this school'.
- c. 'Both groups got a classroom of their own. One room was possible to divide into two rooms, provided with closable door for each of the rooms. The children actually needed shielding. Too much stimulus and impressions. Imagine being stressed at the outset, and then expected to interrelate with fifty other kids and four or five other adults. That must be.. It is probably..'

### **Belief 'C':**

I found Belief 'C' to be present in the following sentence of the text-passage:

'I think I read an article in some newspaper that year, about some school in the Oslo area that had profited from letting a mobile counselling team into the school, to help them with behaviour and issues like that. And the headmaster at school let me experiment and create room dividers, and yes. And this was really the year when the parents came, at the end of the school year, letting me know that I had done well: 'Wow, did he answer like that? We have never heard him answering like that before. Just some kind of positive feedback on my efforts. And I thought that 'I must have accomplished something. So, that was rewarding. I recall. It's like. Things you haven't thought of before. Like having regular routines and ensuring that there is a correspondence between what you say and do. We managed to create a system we could follow'.

The belief that educational systems based on professional judgement of pupil needs is sustainable is more apparent in expressions of the opposite, like in the following text passages:

- 1.1. 'We're not directly obliged to carry out test every weekend, but the thing is. Every step, bits and pieces, is supposed to be monitored and documented. I can't understand why. If it is in case of a future lawsuit. Why do you need all this testing all the time, on what grounds?'

- 1.2. 'But if this is what to expect in the future, I don't believe I can use it for anything. It will just be a lot of wasted time of carrying it out, and being obliged to do so. It's. How to put it. They are time thieves. The test in literacy and numeracy from the directorate [300]'.
- 1.3. 'There seems to be no end to it. I believe it's about the processional status. You can observe it everywhere, new regulations of teachers' working hours, the whole new austerity emphasis in educational policy? Actually, I believe the whole open-landscape thing.. I can't see any other reason for it, than saving money [286, 321]'.
- 1.4. 'But I do feel they seek to tighten the purse strings, you know? Just thinking of the current union strikes, fighting to keep our working hours the way they are [307]. I bet we're going to lose that battle in the end'.

### *Layers of beliefs.*

What seems to be a similar trait in the examples of extractions of Belief 'A', is how external perspectives and expertise allowed Karen to alter her perspectives on her own teaching and her pupils. She does not seem to follow experienced guidance in a naïve or scripted way. Rather, it seems like external guidance gives Karen an opportunity to evaluate her teaching from an outside perspective, and in return, from such a meta-position or perspective, she also manages to validate the advices given. She might buy into parts of an advice, but not necessarily 'the whole package'. Following Ricoeur, one could say that Karen's meta-reflectivity represents what he pictures as 'a course of recognition'. Recognition, in this sense, involves a willingness or opportunity to listen with 'care'. Here, 'care' points towards Karen's acknowledgement of experienced points of view. At the same time, it represents a careful (suspicious) validation of both how the promoted perspectives and advices resonates with Karen's own professional experience of teaching realities, and the possible 'fallacies' inherent in her own prejudices and beliefs.

While Belief 'A' signifies the characteristics that she identifies with as a teacher, Belief 'B' signifies Karen's overall attitude or agency in her work. It revolves around Karen's constant fight for the less fortunate, and how she, in order to do so, is dependent on being surrounded by a 'listening' (caring) management—giving her the professional space required to overcome emerging challenges of new educational reform and policy agendas.

While Beliefs ‘A’ and ‘B’ might represent different sides of Karen’s narrative identity (discursive plot), Belief ‘C’ rather seems to function as a synthesis of the prior sets of beliefs (‘A’ and ‘B’)—signifying her narrative character and agency as a whole.

*THE IMMERSED CORE STRUCTURE.*

On a surface level, Karen’s beliefs and agency as a teacher seem to revolve around desirable and sustainable education, where Karen provides several examples of how the economic perspectives and emphasis in education today come forth as more or less ignorant of pupil needs and the teaching profession and thus not desirable or sustainable in the long run. When telling of these policy trends in education (GERM characteristics), like the political emphasis on austerity and cost-effectiveness in teacher hours and pay, or the growing application of test and accountability mechanisms in education, one can notice a pessimistic tone in Karen’s portrayals, as someone trying to resist unwanted influences while realising that the odds of success are low.

Even though the narrative emplotment come forth as somewhat fragmented at the outset of the analysis, there actually seems to be a stable element or fundamental plot guiding the Life Story. After discerning the different layers of teacher beliefs, Karen’s teacher identity and character appears to be grounded in her general identity as a person—pointing to her on-going fight for emancipation of those in vulnerable and marginalised positions. Her narrative presents an *elaborate course of action*, driven and guided by dialectical counterforces of:

- ‘progression’/‘regression’
- ‘exposure’/‘shelter’
- ‘exclusion’/‘inclusion’
- ‘care’/‘ignorance’

As with Heidi, Ricoeur’s metaphor: ‘being-in-face-of-death, against death’, could serve as a visualisation of Karen’s overall attitude. In Karen’s case, ‘death’ could image the open-landscapes pedagogy’s ‘fluid’ intrusion of stable, sheltering learning environments. Karen does not conform to practices or trends that might disturb or harm her pupils in any way (‘death’). Instead, she shelters her pupils for as long as she can from an outside world that eventually will hit them no matter her efforts

(care/ignorance). The use of 'life/death' as a metaphor can also be justified in Karen's 'melancholic' images of the occurring changes in her profession. This 'mode of being' becomes most present at the end of Karen's story, when she imagines what it will be like to be a teacher in the future. Here one can observe what I interpret as some sort of resignation, communicated in a repeated 'sigh' at the end of her reflections, strangling whatever conviction contained in her statements by continuously adding the comment: 'I don't know'. In light of Benjamin's sketch of 'The Angel of History', the narrative plot in Karen's story could be synthesised into the following vignette:

*Karen's Life Story tells of how a Norwegian teacher is trapped in the middle of the storm of progress. Imaging an environment characterised by the belief in open-landscape solutions, flexibility, and cost-effectiveness, the story follows a teacher who recognises her pupils' need for structure and shielding from external disturbance and noise. It is a story of regression, telling of how a teacher builds a «magic cave» for her and her pupils; a temporary shelter from the storm, that provides her with a professional space. Inside the shelter, she is able to return to traditional teaching, adapted to the needs of her pupils and the preconditions of an inclusive environment. It is a story about the shifting movement—between the melancholic state of a 'deadlock' and the infusion of energy to push back for the sake of the marginalised—that the experience of standing in face of an inevitable future defeat and loss provokes.*

#### HIERARCHY OF PRIORITIES.

At the front of Karen's priorities are the needs of her pupils, especially the vulnerable and marginalised pupils, something that is seen in her emphasis on:

- Adapted Education
- Inclusive and egalitarian education
- Literacy skills
- Traditional classrooms as inclusive classrooms

Karen also emphasises the value of professional guidance and council of professionals, as seen in her appreciation of:

- Mobile Counselling Team
- FLIK (a collaborative, research-based, intervention in Kristiansand)

At the bottom of her priorities is the result and accountability orientation of policymakers and school managers and their emphasis on:

- Open-landscape pedagogy (progressive mantra of flexibility)
- Cost-efficient policies
- Test-orientation (time thieves)
- Policy initiatives rooted in a political and not a professional agenda.

## 5.5 KRISTIAN

Kristian is a 34-year-old teacher who was born in Kristiansand, Norway. At the time of the interview, he was working at a secondary school in Oslo where he reports to have lived and worked for the last 10 years. Oslo's political position in Norway is unique in that it serves several administrative levels, both as a county, municipality, and a capital city. The metropolitan area of Oslo holds a population of more than 1.7 million inhabitants, among them more than 70,000 are registered as students on a tertiary level. The central city population is above 600,000. Among those with a higher academic degree in Norway, close to half live and work in the capital region. It is ranked as one of the most expensive cities in the world in which to live, but is also a city known for a high standard of living compared to other global cities.

Historically, Oslo has served an important role in the international trading and shipping industries. Under the rule of the Danish king Christian IV, Oslo (Christiania) slowly emerged as a modern trading metropolis from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, after being ruined by several city fires. Followed by Norway's liberation from Denmark in 1814, a new national constitution and personal union with Sweden was established, and Oslo was declared the capital of Norway. The city has been the home of prominent figures such as Edvard Munch, Fritjof Nansen, Gro Harlem Brundtland, and Trygve Lie and serves as a pilot city in the Council of Europe and the European Commission's Intercultural cities programme. It is also a prominent city renowned for its work with global peace agreements and as a host for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Oslo is the most secularised city in Norway. It also has the largest population of people with immigrant backgrounds in the country. The areas mostly characterised by immigrants are located in the eastern part of the city. In some suburbs, people with immigrant backgrounds represent half the population. The number of bilinguals



or pupils with a mother tongue other than Norwegian is high; in some schools more than 90% of the pupils have an immigrant background. Compared to the schools at the western side of the city, which is highly homogenous in terms of ethnicity and socio-economic status, the eastern side is characterised by a greater percentage of low-income households (Hansen, 2005). The gap between the eastern and western parts of the city, especially when it comes to education and future prospects, has gradually increased since the initiation of the curricular reform, the Knowledge Promotion, in 2006 (Bakken & Elstad, 2012). The schools in the most prosperous areas of Oslo have been ranked on top on national tests the last years. Since the initiation of the new reform, the educational policy of the municipality has been characterised by a high test and target orientation coupled with an accountability mechanism and emphasis on evidence-based practices and standards.

As a teacher, Kristian has been working in the western, most prosperous areas of the city, in schools characterised by high prestige and national rankings. The policy of a low emphasis on grades and marks places the school somewhat at odds with mainstream educational policy in the municipality. At the time of the interview, the city council had been represented by a right-wing majority for nearly two decades. Since 2015, the left-wing parties have gained a majority.

#### NARRATIVE STYLE.

Kristian spoke for 70 minutes without any major pauses or interruptions, giving detailed accounts of his childhood and adult education, life as a teacher, and his future prospects. Although he talked at a relative high pace, his choice of words and sentences nevertheless appeared to be quite deliberate—eloquently expressing thoughtful lines of arguments and justifications for his perceptions and points of view related to the sequences of events presented. The mode of the narration was thus characterised by an analytical and evaluative style, more than a descriptive style, constantly contemplating on experiences or topics presented. Even though he presented the storyline chronologically, his analytic mode of resonating seems to spring from a deeper, structural emplotment—expressing a fundamental attitude towards life and teaching.

## DISCLOSING THE NARRATIVE PLOT.

Despite a high degree of narrative coherence in Kristian's narrative accounts, his Life Story comes forth as episodic in style. Every statement seems to enclose its own narrative, so to speak, and, like in the case of Karen, it would make most sense to follow signifiers of meaning (predicatives) within each micro-narrative, and further search for transcendent aspects across these when trying to address the immersed core structures and professional priorities in Kristian's Life Story as a whole. A generalised statement, pointing to parts of the Life Story addressing Kristian's beliefs and agency as a teacher, is found in the following sentence:

'I have never thought of myself as particularly brainy. I'm no specialist; I'm a generalist, but this was'.

The sentence is not self-explanatory and needs additional information to make sense. It is possible to locate three different signifiers of meaning in the statement (the Statement from here on):

A: 'I have never thought of myself as particularly brainy'.

B: 'I'm no specialist, I'm a generalist'.

C: 'but this was'.

I found 'A' to be represented in the following passages:

- 1.1. Despite his experience of living in a turbulent school environment, he still emphasises that he liked school. He pictures himself as an ordinary, average intelligent pupil, who coped with school affairs in a straightforward manner. He stated that he somehow had been privileged, in the sense that he did not have to strive too much to achieve in school. Not until upper secondary school, which he describes as 'a reality bite', did work efforts to uphold an acceptable level become an issue (Passage retrieved from the story of Kristian's life and work, Appendix 1).
- 1.2. 'I probably liked being at school. I don't remember much of it. I really don't. It is amazing. I remember very little, eh, other than it being OK. My grades were probably mediocre'.

- 1.3. 'My grade wasn't all that great. In other words. Mathematics was my poorest subject in school. Ehh. I kind of got a 'G'<sup>23</sup> in lower secondary school, and with the solid help from my friends, I barely achieved a '3'<sup>24</sup> in upper secondary'.
- 1.4. 'I kind of took the pre-courses in science and philosophy, barely passing. And entering the Nordic study in wintertime. Eh. I just wasn't mature. I sucked. I remember being in a class of about 25 students. It was kind of... I felt as if they all were either aspiring writers with an extreme passion for the profession. And clever. Or they were teachers, taking the Nordic study as a continuation of their teacher education or something like that. And then some were... I thought they all were really bright. I just made a wrong choice. I did. I found the language part interesting. But the topics on literature just went straight over my head. The aspect of art. I just couldn't see the art in it. I had never really thought of literature as art. So I think eh. I worked as a sound engineer, and the studies went down the drain. Or I continued to study, but my exams went down the drain'
- 1.5. 'I kind of felt like the lucky guy, who benefited from being in the friendly crowd of these people, taken along since I was one of them'

The passages of 'A' shows various ways that Kristian negotiates with his identity as not 'particularly brainy', so that he does not get 'hamstrung' by academic defeat. Even though he has a clear tendency of external attribution of academic successes (passage 1.3 and 1.5), his internal attributions of failures are somewhat modified by the 'safety-net' of his self-confidence and passion in art or more vocational skills (passage 1.4). Passage 1.1, however, points in a different direction, where 'mediocre' negotiates a position between trying to get good results or avoiding hard work by settling for average result—a choice made possible by a generally high academic capacity, not mediocre. Passage 1.2 supports this notion, pointing to a lack of attention (forgetting) to school affairs, other than it 'probably being OK'. If Kristian had not been 'particular brainy', it is likely that these years would be more reflected in his memory as years characterised either by success by hardship or failure due to

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<sup>23</sup> The previous norm based scale in the Norwegian secondary school, where 'G' was the short term of 'Good'. The scale contained the following five normative categories: 'Lg' (Flunk, Not good), 'Ng' (Partly good), 'G' (Good), 'M' (Very good), 'S' (Excellent). In this scale, 'G' equalled 'D/C' in the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)

<sup>24</sup> The previous numeric scale in the Norwegian high school, which ranged from 1 (flunk) to 6 (excellent). The grade '3' equalled 'D/C' in ECTS.

lack of skill's in school. His consideration of not being 'particularly brainy' could thus point to a politeness or humble modesty in expressing his virtues. The passages of 'A' additionally signify a way of 'going with the flow', where Kristian follows the impulses of where life leads him, lacking a major plan for life. Examples of this could be supported by the passages:

- 2.1. 'And then I believe that it was pretty coincidental that I applied for the study of Nordic language and literature at the University of Bergen. And, that went really down the drain. I have. I always have. Parallel to my studies, even in high school, I've been working as a sound engineer. And when I got to Bergen, and got to know the student fellowship at Kvarteret, I started working as a sound engineer there. Everything else went out of focus. It was not much to talk of'.
- 2.2. 'And at that point I just jumped off the bus and went home, packing everything. And the next day, with my whole life on my shoulders, I was on my way back to Kristiansand. But the year was not wasted. Eh. Because I discovered literature as art. As an art form. And in a way, that was valuable in itself, whether I had gained credit points or not. It has always been of value'.
- 2.3. 'It might sound funny, but that was when my life really began. Eh. I went to the Folk High School in Gjøvik. And, like so many others who spend a year in a folk high school, I had an amazing time [269, 270, 270, 245]. I couldn't picture what I should do with my life after that. Eh. I really couldn't'.
- 2.4. 'Some of the teachers at our school, including one of the teachers from my team, they went. Along with other teachers from the Oslo schools, they went to Canada and returned with tons of new ideas. And at that point, I realised the energy placed in development projects around in schools. It felt good to be part of the drive that characterised that period. Eh. And learning about Assessment for Learning [303], which I'm still very into, but, which since then has come to entail much more than it originally did. Today it is really... I really find it odd that they call it 'Assessment for Learning', because it all really boils down to learning'.

Besides illustrating the act 'of going with the flow', passages 2.1-2.3 support the interpretation of the 'safety net', which his authentic and primary identity represents. While 2.1 and 2.3 refer to his occupational interests, passage 2.2 illustrates how his childhood hometown, Kristiansand, still represented a safe base—from which he could leave to explore the world, but return to in times of 'defeat'. His failures thus never represented a real threat to his self-image or mobility in the world.

The need to go 'with the heart' and not what is most rational in a long-term perspective is even more apparent in cases where other authority has 'intervened' with Kristian's wishes—returning to potential lives that he could have experienced if

he had decided for himself. This is apparent in the text passage where he tells how his school counsellor at his secondary school convinced him to attend general grammar school, recognising his excellent academic skills:

‘I still remember this, because I regret that I didn’t get to study for an electrician. Eh, or regret? I can’t say that I regret, but I could have studied for an electrician. I could have been an electrician’.

This passage signifies, based on the school counsellor’s advice, that Kristian’s expression ‘not particularly brainy’ does not speak for his academic capacity in general. It also nuances the picture somewhat, signifying that his characterisation of himself does not necessarily have to be an expression of modesty or fear of being seen as boastful. It could also be an expression of a more ‘manual labour’ or ‘folk’ identity, or a ‘creative artist’ image. All of these identities could possibly be in slight conflict with a ‘middle-class’ and ‘academic’ identity at some level, making the habit of distancing oneself from being a high achiever more understandable—if preferring to be associated with something else than being ‘brainy’. If such identities express a habituated disposition—springing from, for example, his grandfather’s engagement in arts and craft and his experience of being among ‘fellows’ at the folk high school—it might make the rationale behind his choice of teacher education more understandable. If pointing to an embodied self-conception, the teaching profession might have represented a negotiated ‘middle’ position to Kristian, where he does not have to ‘waste’ his academic potential, and his ‘teacher heritage’, as well as not having to give up on his vocational identities (grandfather, identity at folk high school, and the student fellowship at ‘Kvarteret’ in Bergen).

Passage 2.4 is different from the former three, in that it points to a shift or an epiphany of how the teacher occupation could come to represent something that would engage him personally, as well as a renewed respect for the teaching profession and the value of pedagogical development initiatives in schools. Before this point, he appeared to have been practicing as a teacher, as a bystander, somehow not quite belonging to the community of teachers (e.g., ‘I kind of felt like the lucky guy, who benefited from being in the friendly crowd of these people’). What is also noticeable when following this lead in the text is that his previous habit

of ‘underachieving’ is left behind at that point in the story. After this, the ‘effort’ to improve and excel becomes an issue.

- 3.1. ‘It was a whole lot of work and a lot of fun. We [his team] were conscious of the fact that we had to, everything we did had to be thoroughly justified at all times. I followed the class through primary school, and it became my class. It is no doubt about it. Eh. Despite the high-flying neighbourhood, many things came to pass behind closed doors. A lot of things. I still meet up with some of my pupils. Eh. Childcare issues, violence, alcoholism, and everything one comes across as a teacher. There is one student that I still keep in touch with on a regular basis, and two others that I see two or three times each semester. Eh. It was some class, but I learned a great deal’.
- 3.2. ‘I was terrified. I was studying with a colleague from work [306], and we were just clueless. Totally lost [loud voice]. We were given an assignment for the upcoming session, and we did not stand a chance. We just couldn’t solve it, so we started visualizing or, we explored: Was there any escape from this? Was it possible to bail out? Go back to full positions as teachers? What would it cost us? Yes. OK. A hundred thousand kroner. That’s nothing right? (laughter). It was quite bizarre, but we made it to the end. It just required a hell of an effort’.
- 3.3. ‘If you’re going to be a teacher, you sure as hell must strive to be a good one. You cannot rest, putting your feet on the table. That wasn’t an option at all. So it was. It was a kick-start working with the two ladies. Amazing people to work with’.

The examples point to the virtue of overcoming challenges (e.g., mathematic skills, professional responsibility, and accountability, high paced and non-laidback attitudes). The last example, 3.3, also returns to the element of being inspired or dragged into a professionalised mode of being when in the presence of highly skilled and enthusiastic role models who express high expectations of those around them. If I return to the Statement, I find that the meaning signified in ‘C’—‘but this was’—points to the experience of working with ‘the two ladies’. Representing the same teachers whom he followed to Canada in the Assessment for Learning Project, there are reasons to assume that this project represented a turning point in Kristian’s life as a teacher. Being part of something big and meaningful ignites an interest in and feeling of belonging in a progressive educational movement; it appears also to have given him a professional agenda and belief, pointing to the attitude of teaching as hard, high-paced work, which required a high level of skill and knowledge. It also points to an establishment of a pedagogical identity, where some practices and policies are valued before others—like ‘Assessment for Learning’. I find examples of the first renewed identity, pointing to work effort and will power, closely associated with admiration and identification with professional and family role models in passages 4.1-4.9 These passages also point to the tendency to give credit to others,

and to put others in a favourable light, often downplaying his own importance in the same breath (4.6). Kristian repeatedly returns to this theme of identification and admiration of high performers in his story:

4.1. 'I know this is important since both of my grandfathers and my father were teachers. And then there are my uncles and aunts. So, it is fair to say that I'm following in the steps of a whole line of teachers in my family'.

4.1.1. He points to the fact that his grandfather also had been a renowned teacher, and like his son, he also had embraced the teacher profession: 'My grandfather retired just before I started secondary school. He was a teacher in arts and crafts'. At the time of the interview, his grandfather was 92 years old and well known in the community. Kristian portrays him as a man of many travels—Travels mostly connected to preaching stories of the Bible. He talks of him as being a conservative Christian, although the rest of his family had been quite liberal in their religious beliefs. Like Kristian's father, his grandfather also seemed to have a particular interest in teaching boys labelled as troublemakers in school. They had shared this enthusiasm for being teachers, an enthusiasm that Kristian think might have rubbed off on him, even though he originally had his mind set on the electro-business. (Passage retrieved from the story of Kristian's life and work, Appendix 1).

4.2. 'I entered the school where my father worked. And Dad. Dad was sort of a legend. He was. He's crazy you know. I was confronted with loads of strange stories about him, over and over again, concerning all who had been my father's pupils through the years'.

4.2.1. Kristian dwells with the memories of his father for a while. Telling stories about how he, besides being a dedicated teacher, was an engaged politician in the local community. He portrays his father as someone not afraid to make a fool out of himself or to speak his mind about things that mattered to him. Kristian was occasionally embarrassed by this, but overall his father's reputation did not bother him too much, quite the contrary. He seems to cherish some of the unorthodox traits of his father's teacher character. He tells of how his pupils often visited their homes, and how his father liked facing challenges at work, especially those that involved working with youth in opposition to and in struggle with their environments. Kristian remembers developing close relationships to several of his father's pupils, recognising that his father expanded his responsibility towards their general welfare way beyond what was expected of him as a teacher. The appreciation his father expressed for the

teaching profession had, to some extent, inspired Kristian to become a teacher, even though he never really intended to enter the profession in the first place. Kristian said, 'I imagine that very few, in their early years, have a strategic plan of entering the teaching profession.' (Passage retrieved from the story of Kristian's life and work, appendix 1)

- 4.3. 'At that time, I was finally in a class where everyone was genuinely interested in the subject. I really learned a lot that year. The science professors at the University College in Oslo were excellent. Eh. The professor in chemistry was engaged in his teaching, letting the student work quite freely. Stating that: 'Here's the key to the chemistry lab. Do whatever interest you'. Eh'.
  - 4.3.1. 'It was like. Did we need liquid nitrogen? 'Yes yes'. She [the biology professor] took care of it. Ten litres were immediately delivered to the school, making the whole thing into a great party. So that was a really amusing time'.
- 4.4. 'The biology professor was a strict elderly French woman who fitted perfectly into the role of a biology teacher. She placed us in study groups where we were supposed to memorise like about three-four hundred different species and families of flowers, stones, birds, and animals. It was like brilliantly planned and organised. And the science didactics was fantastic. It couldn't be more closely related to real life practice than that'.
- 4.5. 'So many were annoyed with him. I couldn't see why. He is the best math teacher I've ever had. (Laughter). Eh. But he was kind of abrupt in his teaching, moving forward at high speed. I barely kept up'.
- 4.6. 'I did not realise it at first, but in retrospect, I think it was the elderly ladies. The elderly ladies that worked there, they were brilliant. Words cannot describe how fabulously skilled they were. They were amazingly sharp. Their capacities were just astonishing. Eh. Bright people. And I have never thought of myself as particularly brainy. I'm no specialist, I'm a generalist, but this was. This was. Being with them, I pictured that they must have been the best candidates ever leaving upper secondary school to become teachers'.
- 4.7. 'She. Eh. When developing plans for the following week, she [the eldest] would wait and listen to all our suggestions. Always embracing our ideas. She had her own opinions for sure: 'Maybe we could do this and that.' She was chock full of experience. When we found ourselves stuck, she just reached for her files up on the shelf, suggesting: 'Should we. What about this?'—leaving us nodding: (Laughter) 'Yes we should'. Eh. So yes, my first year was incredible'.



- 4.8. 'What replaced the former [headmaster] was a lame story. It was just an administrator. And then the whole pedagogical development project went dead. Totally dead. Eh. And I remember missing. I missed it. Eh. I had been involved with it for several years, and then it just vanished'.
- 4.9. 'The management was quite clear that the 'Core Curriculum' was our Bible [291, 302]. I had, of course, read it before, back in teacher education when we still used the earlier curriculum L97 [293]. Eh. And I think L97 was the national curriculum during my first year as a teacher, and then the new reform 'The Knowledge Promotion' was implemented [302]. Eh. But I hadn't been particularly engaged with the core curriculum, besides what we had learned about it in teacher education. But they [the leaders] were, they were really into it: 'We shall see the people and human beings before us. We shall regard the pupils in a more eh more holistic way than is common in many schools'. And they stated. It is two very prominent leaders by the way. One of them stayed for only one year. Now she has become the area director for one of the districts in town, eh and that was not surprising. She's got sharper elbows than anyone. But is very clever at what she does. And brilliant at designing our team back then. And the other leader has a long history in the Oslo-schools. Eh. Has written a lot of textbooks. She previously had a position in the school authorities responsible for pedagogical development issues. She also worked as a consultant and lecturer. And well, to sum it up. They are renowned in the political landscape in Oslo, and they also expressed quite vividly that: 'We don't give a damn. We do what we find best. The area directors and others amongst them can say whatever they please'. I do believe they were authorised to create a path they were willing to vouch for. And then, finally, I once again got to engage in professional and pedagogical development projects. It was truly a gift to be a part of'.

Passages 4.1 and 4.2 point to Kristian's family heritage of teacher role models, where his grandfather and father appear to have been of influence. Kristian's characterisation of his grandfather pointed to traditional Christian values in teaching—apparent in his grandfathers 'heart' for troublemakers (representing the priorities of Jesus). It also points to craftsmanship and manual labour. Kristian's description of his father signifies the virtues of not being afraid of critique or representing something different. Similar to the story of Kristian's grandfather, his father also tended to those who struggled to adapt in school—expanding his responsibility for the pupils beyond what is formally expected and required of him as

a teacher. This appears to be something Kristian has carried with him in his job as a teacher, present in his following statements:

- 5.1. It was a whole lot of work and a lot of fun. We [his team] were conscious of the fact that we had to, everything we did had to be thoroughly justified at all times. I followed the class through primary school, and it became my class. It is no doubt about it. Eh. Despite the high-flying neighbourhood, many things came to pass behind closed doors. A lot of things. I still meet up with some of my pupils. Eh. Childcare issues, violence, alcoholism, and everything one comes across as a teacher. There is one student that I still keep in touch with on a regular basis, and two others that I see two or three times each semester. Eh. It was some class, but I learned a great deal.
- 5.2. There are a lot of pupils in our school that perform well in writing. And then there is a large group of pupils that just can't cope well with that situation and that need [loud voice] to show us what they're capable of, some way or another [300, 305, 289, 311]. If they can't, then we have failed as teachers. We would be letting a whole bunch of talented pupils pass through school undiscovered [pausing]. It is the most important thing I've learned working here. In essence, it's about a professionalisation of the teacher occupation, and I appreciate that.

Both passages point to Kristian's appreciation of the teacher's work as a 'holistic' practice, where the teachers' primary responsibility rests in the acknowledgment of the needs of the pupils, and to find ways to support their education in a way that focuses not only on their academic skills, but also on their emotional well-being, security, and self-image. Passage 5.2 also points to the importance of professionalism, implying a personal responsibility to become a best possible teacher. This element is even more strongly represented in his comment on the unfortunate practice of making 'unfitted' teaching staff responsible for pupils with special needs:

'I actually think it is a quite common practice. There was this lady, obviously ill, that was, that wanted to work. She had been working as a school inspector, and still benefitted from the income as an inspector. But eh, she wasn't capable of classroom teaching. She wasn't capable of being around pupils at all. So she was placed with a group of children with special needs. It is totally unheard of. Was I furious? You see? It's a disaster. But I believe it occurs in many schools. Maybe not as extreme as in this case, but when there are people unfitted for the teaching job, saying that: 'No. I can't teach a class'. If you're unable to teach in a classroom, what are you doing there? You need to get the hell out of there. Find another job. But that is easier said than done, bearing the legal employment protection and rights in mind. And thank heavens that we've got these rights. But sometimes they appear too rigid. Bottom line'.

The ambivalence which teacher union's represent in the professionalisation of teacher's and educational staffs again points to a mixed positioning ('professional excellence discourse' and 'labour rights discourse')—one oriented towards high professional standards and the other towards the importance of protecting the employment rights of workers.

Returning to passages 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5, it is the inspiration and respect of his teacher educators that is issued. Pointing at Kristian's endorsement of three, highly different, didactical approaches, I find 4.3 to represent a way of teaching in which a teacher is to be a facilitator and supporter of students' learning and engagement—with a high emphasis on an active and self-regulated approach to learning (learning by doing). I found this element present in Kristian's teaching, representing a path to mature as a teacher (trial and error), as well as a way to teach (learning by doing):

- 'Chairs and tables were flying through the classroom. Not a day went by without a crazy fist fight. They showed no respect for anything. Tons of work. Tons of cooperation with the childcare services. Eh. I had to call several parents every day, giving them the daily report. Plenty of meeting with different agencies: The Educational Psychological Counselling Services [277, 281, 282, 285, 289, 304] in the municipality, and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Ward at the local hospital and God knows who. But the great thing about this class was that I discovered a whole lot. About how to deal with such circumstances. I experienced being a teacher in two entirely different classroom realities. I, and this is a good comparison, this awful list from Haugerud School that leaked to the media<sup>25</sup>. Poor people, it's quite devastating. But, I thought of my class when reading that list. Because, when dealing with the insanity in this classroom, I had to systematise everything. Eh. I had routines. I did not write them, but I had protocols for my every step. I created protocols of 'How do you enter the hallway? How do we place ourselves in the hallway? How do we enter the classroom?' To get a sense of order in the classroom, there had to be a protocol for everything. Many of them needed it. Needed to know that: 'When you're walking in

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<sup>25</sup> Norwegian newspapers printed a protocol from Haugerud School in Oslo on May 4, 2015, consisting of 52 pages of rules of conducts for the teaching staff. The list gained a lot of media coverage, but several teachers from Haugerud School went public, defending their headmasters' implementation of the protocol, considering the contextual conditions under which the protocol had been implemented, describing it as a joint effort by the school staff to enhance the professional collaboration and work climate (Bjerkebro, 2015).

the classroom to gather your books, this is your route. Because this person sits over there and that one over there. And either you're going to slap them on their heads, or they are going to elbow you when passing'. Eh so I had to create a strict regime in the classroom. And it worked. Really. It took a few months, but it turned out all right in the end. All right, considering the circumstances, it wasn't all bright. Eh. I didn't get as far as I had hoped for, but I got it under control. And then I think of Haugerud School because that has been a chaotic school. A lost case. And then this headmaster has taken this firm grip on things, and done a fantastic job. Eh. And unfortunately, it [the rules of conduct] has all been recorded in writing and leaked to the media. And yes, he certainly has crossed some lines that, eh. But I can understand that if you're the head of a school that is falling to pieces, with a staff that's running in all directions, and where learning processes is becoming more and more absent, you have to do something for sure. But oh my, it must have been embarrassing. It has to be'.

- 'We have this philosophy of, we practice, right? We shall. The teacher is only to wear the judge's robe one single time, and that is at the end of 10th grade. Until then, we [the teachers] shall take the role as coaches [287]. You know I'm dreadful at remembering names, but eh we watched a video lecture by someone that vouched for the removal of all grades of course. He said. He said a few things that really got to me. That: When you wander around in the classroom. If then, you see pupils that somehow try to hide what they are doing, and that are hesitant to let the teacher view their work, then something is wrong. Then you're on the wrong track as a teacher. Eh because it must be, or should be, the other way around. That pupils rather shout, 'Hey Kristian, come over here. Show me how I can do this better'. Right? And it was like I suddenly realised the connection between this work and reducing the use of grades. The teachers were. They were quite opposed to his suggestions, noticeably, when he first presented his thoughts. But now we have tried to follow up on some of it by removing all grades and marks in the eighth grade, giving them solely at the end of the year. And our experience of that is exclusively positive'.

The last passage shows how Kristian, through experiencing it on his own (not just by being told), learns the value of formative approaches to learning as contrasted with summative assessment practices.. In his first job as a teacher, he learned to value this through the project 'Assessment for Learning', while in his present job his leaders' development project, which aims at removing all use of grading and marks (not just in primary education, but in lower secondary), makes him realise the connection between learning and assessment practice once more, this time on a more 'grounded' and experienced level than was the case in his first epiphany.

Looking back at passage 4.4, it is a completely different style of teaching that is presented, more concerned with subject knowledge, discipline, and practice-oriented didactics. Passage 4.5 shares the two first orientations, but is directed at abstract knowledge in contrast to practice-oriented didactics. Looking at the three passages together one could say that the different didactic approaches bear some similarities to Kristian's character in general—concerning his high academic capacity and thriving in a high-pace movement (4.5), his orientation towards manual activities (4.4), and the need to be free to 'go with the flow' and be creative (e.g., music).

Moving forward to passages 4.6-4.9, the focus moves to how Kristian has been uplifted and motivated in his teaching job when surrounded by experienced, knowledgeable and inspired colleagues. It also points to the crucial difference that a pedagogical approach to school management has made to Kristian's engagement in his work—compared to a more administrative and 'façade-oriented' management.

#### SEARCHING FOR REOCCURRENCES AND REWORDINGS OF THE DISCOURSE.

When following the meaning signified in 'B' in the Statement (I'm no specialist, I'm a generalist), it becomes clearer that this functions as a 'bridge' between the meaning signified in 'A' and 'C'—pointing both to where he came from ('A'), what changed him ('C') to become who he is today ('B'). It is reason to conclude that the Statement<sup>26</sup> functions as a signifier of Kristian's professional Life Story as a whole. Based on the structural interpretation, I find Kristian's Life Story to be signifying the following discursive tensions:

Realising the internal connection between the signified passages of 'A', 'B'. and 'C' in the Statement, the discourse of Kristian's Life Story appeared to already reword itself in the signified passages of the Statement, looping and pointing to the core emplotments of the story from different angles and viewpoints. What seems to be the most repeating aspect, was the 'holistic' emphasis in text passages of 'B' (I'm no specialist, I'm a generalist). Rewording of this is present in:

6.1. 'I certainly had never imagined myself as a primary teacher. (Laughter). And that is.

None of the boys I met during my teaching studies had any plans of becoming primary

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<sup>26</sup> *'I have never thought of myself as particularly brainy. I'm no specialist, I'm a generalist, but this was'.*

teachers. None. I didn't know anyone that considered that as an option. And when I think of the new Teacher Education , I don't know the numbers yet, but I am quite curious about the number of applicants for the different courses. I would never have applied for the primary teacher education if I had to choose. And that is. That is a shame. Eh...'

6.2. 'They [the parents] keep a close eye on what's going on at school, and our students seem to have the highest shoulders in town because of that. Everyone is planning to enter the town's most prominent upper secondary school. They are all becoming doctors, economists, lawyers, or whatever. So, we have a very high incidence of such problems in our school. Panic attacks during a math test and stuff like that. It's devastating to watch'.

6.3. 'One must. As a teacher, nothing is more important than building relationships. It is no question about it. If you don't establish a good relationship with your pupils, it does not matter what you do in class. But eh. One can learn to build good relationships with the students. So. So, in our school, that is where our focus is today. It makes me feel, not because I have this glorified picture of myself as a teacher, but at least I feel I'm striving to become a better teacher. Eh. I've never been that conscious of these issues before, about pedagogy and engaging in the broader picture, as I am today'.

6.4. 'Using my father's words, I have never had such a tremendous time as a teacher as I have today (Laughing)'.

6.5. 'I find it very peculiar and it kind of provokes me. When you enter at Udir.no [the directorate's web pages] to view the curriculum pages, you press 'Find curriculum', then it appears. The first thing you see is shortcut tabs to the main subjects, among them mathematics. And if you press on the mathematic tab, you're sent to. Yes. At first, you get the targets for the first and second grade. Then second to fourth grade. And so on right? And then I press the tab for eighth to tenth grade and am directly sent to the subject targets [In the Subject Curriculum]. Then you are kind of left scrolling your way back through every page in the curriculum [To find the Core Curriculum]. It's quite odd. But I must admit that I too have done that when making semester plans [not scrolled back to the Core Curriculum]. And when making the yearly reports. Because the main page didn't provide it [a tab to the Core Curriculum]. One is consistently manoeuvred straight to the subject targets. Few scroll back to search for the principal aims of the subject, so that is what we have been working on lately. We have been working on finding the core intentions of each subject. What is the purpose of teaching this subject, and what does that imply for our daily teaching? And then something has taken me by surprise. Things I've never thought of before. For instance, in mathematics, it is stated in the principal aims that one shall make sure to adapt the teaching

in a gender inclusive way. It further states that you shall [emphasised] ensure that the teaching engaged both girls and boys. It probably has something to do with the cultural heritage. Eh. In old textbooks, one seldom reads about what Kari [female name] does. The central character in the textbook examples is most often Ole [male name]...[Pauses] And you find the same thing in science. The awareness of this [the principal aims] have thus consequence for how one work[s] as a teacher, for how one teaches. Working like this [with the core intentions], gives me the feeling of being professional in my teaching. Working towards being an expert in my field and discipline’.

The rewordings add societal meta-perspectives to the emplotment, directed towards gender roles and structures in society, and the narrow orientation towards subject targets in educational policy practically hinders teachers and schools in addressing the core purposes of education. A similar critique towards trends in education is present in a statement where he expands the perspective even further, to the strong belief in ‘evidence-based practice’. He shows how finding and practicing ‘what works’ does not necessarily have to mean following simplified ‘research-recipes’:

‘You don’t need Hattie to tell you what works or doesn’t work. Your experience in the classroom will show you. What I did just now. Was it fruitful or not? I can’t recall how many times I have found myself doing something that’s not working as I planned. I then... go on, doing it all over again? That makes me. Then I get quite pissed off with myself. One needs to be professional at what one does. It has to be based on knowledge of what works. If it means discussing Hattie, that’s fine. I just wish people would read more than the summary of his research. He provides a long list of reservations of how to interpret his research findings, which no one seems to be aware of, including me. But being a science teacher, with an interest in science and science philosophy, might have led me to be more preoccupied with the question of whether I’m doing things the right way. You need to make sure that it works. If not, you surely need to find something else to do with your time. Fair and square. It’s all about being a professional teacher’.

Returning once again to the aspect of professionalism, Kristian’s expressed beliefs carry elements of the ‘quality-discourse’ in educational policy today, although from a more input-oriented perspective. This way of endorsing elements of the new policies is particularly present in the following text passage addressing the value of the national tests:

- ‘One can actually gain a lot of useful information from the national tests (Laughter). Eh it so easy to spot where. Like information about a pupil. You get tons of information

about each pupil. Eh, and then you're also informed of the status on a class level. What things? We have a different teacher in science. What am I saying? I mean mathematics. I've been looking at the results of the tests in mathematics, since I am a math teacher. Eh stuff like that. What are this teacher's strengths? What can this teacher do differently? Is it a topic that has been taught that now shows to be in need of improvement? How can we solve it? And then talking only about my own experience, I have found the test to be constructive in my work with the class and the pupils. But that is because they [the tests] actually have improved. I think they're good. And then there are these other tests that come from the local authorities in Oslo that eh. Doesn't really work that well. We have this math test. Before Christmas, every ninth-grader participates in this local math test in Oslo. All of the schools in Oslo. A whole day. And this test is related to. You see the authorities in the Oslo school have constructed these additional guiding targets to the curriculum. They have operationalised the main targets into more specific ones. But not every school is. Or quite the contrary. Not many schools adopt these targets in their teaching. So, our pupils end up taking this narrow test that doesn't include the range of topics and areas that they have been taught. And because some topics are placed in a different order than suggested in the additional guide, our pupils are required to answer questions that they haven't been prepared for. All because we have chosen not to follow the additional guide'.

- 'This is mostly a problem in mathematics where the textbook is followed quite closely. We don't use textbooks in science, social science, or religion. But in all the subjects, we have chosen to follow the order we find best, but then this doesn't match the additional guidelines'.

Kristian's way of responding to the national test signifies a high level of trust in the work environment, in terms of using the test as feedback (formative assessment) on parts of the teaching that appear to be fruitful and others that need to be strengthened. The way the national test has been used to monitor and hold teachers accountable for pupils' results (summative assessment) does not appear to be an issue in Kristian's school. What the text passage does problematise are the local guidelines and operationalisation of the curriculum and the obligatory local test, initiated by the municipality of Oslo. Here, it is evident that the pedagogical ideals and approaches in Kristian's school represent a sharp contrast to the educational policies and pedagogical discourse in the capital city. In the end, it appears that it is the societal position or authoritativeness ('by the law in hand') of his school leaders that enables the school to represent such a contrastive alternative to the hegemonic discourse in the centre of politics. Using the 'Core Curriculum' as a shield of narrow



performance—and target orientation, his leaders manage to protect the teachers and pupils from accountability monitoring and achievement pressures at the same time as they allow the teachers to adopt the terminology and pursuit of educational quality (representing holistic rather than performance-oriented standards). This powerful approach to leadership, where school managers signal an alliance with their staff and pupils in a joint effort to push back unwelcome policies, is highly present where Kristian state's that:

'They say [his leaders], 'The Core Curriculum is our Bible'. And...yes.. They have pointed it clear for us. 'You should not be afraid of any of this [test-regime and accountability]. It is us [the leaders] that shall take the brunt''.

#### *THE IMMERSED CORE STRUCTURE.*

The narrative plot of Kristian's Life Story shows that he approach changes, challenges and responsibilities in an open-minded manner, such as his appreciation of his futile attempt to study Nordic language and literature in Bergen or his usage of the national test results. To 'take a sad song and make it better' (McCartney) summarises quite well what I interpret to be part of the core structure in Kristian's narration, together with an intense drive for enlightenment and professional growth as a teacher. An important aspect of this emplotment is that they appear to be inherited, as a 'way of life' passed on from fathers to sons, or educational beliefs transmitted to him by inspiring teachers, colleagues, and leaders—gradually incorporated as part of his identity and course of action. Based on the structural analysis, the following discursive tensions are discerned in Kristian's Life Story:

- High pace/low pace
- Excellence/imperfection
- Heart /reason
- Flow/discipline
- Learning by doing/learning by modeling
- Practical knowledge/abstract knowledge
- Following/own course of action
- Holistic approach/specialised approach

- Pedagogical/administrative management

Unlike the two other teachers, Kristian does not position himself on one side of the discourse, but rather—except in the case of school management—negotiates between the different positions. The presence of conflicting tensions is thus low in his narration—both in practical matters and issues of identity. In light of Simmel’s sketches of *The Metropolis and Mental Life*, the narrative plot of Kristian might be synthesised into the following vignette:

The Life Story of Kristian tells of a Norwegian teacher who thrives in the high-paced and urban lifestyle of the capital—floating along wherever his life and heart takes him. It tells of how a teacher approaches changes and challenges in life with great optimism and a negotiating spirit, and how such light-minded attitudes enable him to respond to new demands and policies in a unburdened, constructive manner—translating them into a perspective and practice he can abide. The story pictures how a teacher’s egalitarian ‘folk’ attitude characterises his ways and choices in life—and most particularly his approach to knowledge and teaching. It shows a capacitated teacher, eager to learn and be inspired by experienced professionals—embracing every chance to develop as a professional. Most of all, the Kristian Life Story tells of powerful pedagogical leadership and the ability of the leaders to stand tall and create a pocket of resistance in the heart of a neoliberal metropolis.

#### HIERARCHY OF PRIORITIES.

Kristian’s priorities are most apparent in aspects of professional judgement, practice, and beliefs. The importance of maintaining a holistic approach to learning and education (‘Bildung’), and uplifting teachers’ professional’s expertise, status, and autonomy seems to be highly emphasised in Kristian’s accounts of what good education and being a good teacher implies. His highly negotiative attitude, shown in his reluctance to take strong pro/contra positions (except for the use of grades and marks in learning processes), makes it hard to disclose a distinct hierarchy of actors and actions in his narrative. However, it is possible to find issues where Kristian takes a professional stance towards education policy and practice:

- The Core Curriculum as guiding premise for teaching practice
- A holistic, egalitarian, and inclusive approach to learning
- Formative assessment

- Pedagogical development projects

At the bottom of Kristian’s hierarchy, I find:

- Summative assessment practices
- Administrative output-oriented teachings

What is special about Kristian’s hierarchy of priorities is that he primarily communicates a *collective* discourse, that is, a professional ‘class-habitus’ and fewer *personal* beliefs or agencies.

## 5.6 LIFE STORY MATRIX OF NARRATIVE PLOTS AND HIERARCHIES

Table I systematises the three Life Stories into a Life Story matrix. This matrix represents a summary of all the findings in the structural analyses, where the metaphorical ‘vignettes’ of the narrative plots form the points of departure from the hermeneutical-phenomenological analysis to a critical theorist interpretation (see Chapter 3).

**Table I. The Life Story matrix**

Life Story	Vignettes of the narrative plot, in light of critical sketches of modernity	Hierarchy of actions and actors
<b>Heidi</b>	<p>In light of Benjamin’s sketch of ‘the messianic hour’ or ‘<i>Stillstellung</i>’, the Life Story of Heidi could be synthesised into the following vignette:</p> <p>Heidi’s Life Story tells of a woman’s journey from ‘rags to riches’, where education has represented her road to emancipation in life. In moments of ‘<i>Stillstellung</i>’, we can see how she ‘jams the breaks’ and escapes the story she is in and enters a new course of action. It is a story of how a Norwegian teacher tries to cope with the disturbing intrusion of new policies by locating her focus on the place where she and her pupils are, wish, and need to be. It also speaks of how policies, which resonate with the local context and culture, might uplift a teacher’s spirit and</p>	<p>At the front of Heidi’s priorities are the needs of her pupils, colleagues, and the local community. She focuses on creating an environment which is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusive, egalitarian, and collaborative</li> <li>• Emphasising Formative Assessment</li> <li>• Child-centred</li> <li>• Playful and harmonic</li> <li>• Entails a space for professional autonomy</li> </ul> <p>Heidi is open to change as long as policy or research initiatives are in tune with the cultural heritage and local ‘spirit’. The actors which Heidi’s lends her least</p>

	<p>renew her interest in professional and pedagogical development. Most of all, the story tells of a teacher's utopian dream of maintaining stability in times of fluidity. Determined to maintain her elaborate course of action, she faces the fact that she might relapse into scriptedness (compliance) if a new Reform should 'show up'. In the end, the story speaks of teachers' futile fight for their teaching hours and professional autonomy in face of the careless acts of ignorance demonstrated by the local and central policymakers.</p>	<p>attention to are policymakers (government and municipality), when they stand as promoters of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High paced reform initiatives</li> <li>• Target management</li> <li>• Test-orientation</li> <li>• Cost-efficient policies and administrative time thieves (NPM)</li> <li>• Decontextualised and centralised policies</li> <li>• De-professionalisation</li> </ul>
<p><b>Karen</b></p>	<p>In light of Benjamin's sketch of 'The Angel of History', the narrative plot in Karen's story could be synthesised into the following vignette:</p> <p>Karen's Life Story tells of how a Norwegian teacher is trapped in the middle of the storm of progress. Imaging an environment characterised by the belief in open-landscape solutions, flexibility, and cost-effectiveness, the story follows a teacher who recognises her pupils need for structure and shielding from external disturbance and noise. It is a story of regression, telling of how a teacher builds a «magic cave» for her and her pupils; A temporary shelter from the storm, that provides her with a professional space. Inside the shelter, she is able to return to traditional teaching, adapted to the needs of her pupils and the preconditions of an inclusive environment. It is a story about the shifting movement—between the melancholic state of a 'deadlock' and the infusion of energy to push back for the sake of the marginalised—that the experience of standing in face of an inevitable future defeat and loss provokes.</p>	<p>At the front of Karen's priorities is the needs of her pupils, especially the vulnerable and marginalised pupils, seen in her emphasis on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adapted Education</li> <li>• Inclusive and egalitarian education</li> <li>• Literacy skills</li> <li>• Traditional classrooms as inclusive classrooms</li> </ul> <p>Karen also emphasises the value of professional guidance and council of professionals, seen in her appreciation of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mobile Counselling team</li> <li>• FLIK (a collaborative, research-based, intervention in Kristiansand)</li> </ul> <p>At the bottom of her priorities is the result- and accountability orientation of policymakers and school managers, and their emphasis on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open-landscape pedagogy (progressive mantra of flexibility)</li> <li>• Test-orientation</li> <li>• Cost-efficient policies</li> <li>• NPM time thieves</li> <li>• Policy initiatives rooted in a political and not professional agenda</li> </ul>

<p><b>Kristian</b></p>	<p>In light of Simmel’s sketches of <i>The Metropolis and Mental Life</i>, the narrative plot of Kristian might be synthesised into the following vignette:</p> <p>The Life Story of Kristian tells of a Norwegian teacher who thrives in the high-paced and urban lifestyle of the capital—floating along wherever his life and heart takes him. It tells of how a teacher approaches changes and challenges in life with great optimism and a negotiating spirit, and how such light-minded attitudes enable him to respond to new demands and policies in a unburdened, constructive manner—translating them into a perspective and practice he can stand for. The story pictures how a teacher’s egalitarian ‘folk’ attitude characterises his ways and choices in life—and most particularly his approach to knowledge and teaching. It shows a capacitated teacher, eager to learn and be inspired by experienced professionals—embracing every chance to develop as a professional. Most of all, the Kristian Life Story tells of powerful pedagogical leadership, and the ability of the leaders to stand tall and create a pocket of resistance in the heart of a neoliberal metropolis.</p>	<p>Kristian’s negotiative attitude, shown in his reluctance to take strong pro/contra positions (except for the use of grades and marks in learning processes), makes it hard to disclose a distinct hierarchy of actors and actions in his narrative. However, it is possible to find issues where Kristian take a professional stance to education policy and practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Core Curriculum as guiding premise for teaching practice</li> <li>• A holistic, egalitarian, and inclusive approach to learning</li> <li>• Formative assessment</li> <li>• Pedagogical development projects</li> </ul> <p>At the bottom of Kristian’s hierarchy, I find:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summative assessment practices</li> <li>• Administrative output-oriented management and teachings</li> </ul>
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In accordance with Ricoeur, the Structural phase of analysis disclosed a narrative plot and an associated hierarchy of actors and actions. Based on the Life Story matrix, I find that all three Life Stories depict elements of a regress-narrative in Goodson’s terms (in contrast to a progress-narrative or the modernity narrative):

- All three teachers prioritised the needs of their pupils, colleagues, the learning environment, and local community above the aims and demands of centralised policy initiatives.
- Test and output orientations were placed at the lowest priority, while inclusion, adapted education, and formative assessment practices were placed on top.

The hierarchical positioning represents a greater challenge in the case of Kristian, than in Heidi and Karen's case, in that he seldom completely 'take sides' in policy matters. Due to strong and shielding pedagogical management, Kristian seems little restrained by current, hegemonic, policy discourses and agendas. Furthermore, I find Kristian to be more preoccupied with questions of professionalisation—focusing on expanding his competence as a teacher and the task of developing research-based teaching practices. This difference is also apparent in how Kristian is more attentive to curricular aims and regulations than the other two. In contrast to them, he clearly legitimises the mandate and justification of his teaching practices in present policy documents and legislation, rather than in personal conviction and beliefs. Nevertheless, like the two other teachers, there is no question that Kristian places his pupils in front of his attention, and is attentive not only to educational matter and skill, but also the pupils need for social and relational support.

In the next chapter, the findings of the second level of abstraction shall be further elaborated in a critical and contextual (cultural/historical) analysis of the narrative emplotments.

### THIRD LEVEL OF ABSTRACTION—DEEP PHASE OF INTERPRETATION

By following contextual signifiers to a cultural background, a cultural heritage (habitus) may be reconstructed. Aspects of personal agency might also become more evident, especially in cases where individual teachers' responses contrast local culture and 'habitual' practices. When the grand and small narratives are placed side by side (juxtaposed), it may also be possible to locate historical periods when policies have been in tune with the local practices of the teaching profession and educational grass-root movements. Such periods could further work as 'windows of opportunities' in future curriculum 'bottom-up' designs—pointing to policy initiatives and approaches that have survived through history (judged by the Life Story emplotments), and still continue to summon broad local and professional support.

Sketches of modernity and narrative identity are used as a framework for the reconstruction the teachers' cultural heritage, with an emphasis on dimensions found to be most relevant in the understanding of idiosyncratic responses to Global Educational Reform Movements today. Inferred from the Naïve phase of interpretation and the structural analysis of the three Life Stories, the most relevant dimension in the further analysis are 'centre-periphery', religion-secularisation, folk-culture, and gender.

The Deep phase analysis ends with inferences of the tensive truth claims deduced from juxtaposing the grand narratives and Life Stories.

#### 6.1 MATRIX OF HISTORICAL SIGNIFIERS IN THE LIFE STORIES

Through a structural analysis of the narrative emplotments and possible historical contexts of the Life Stories, I have tried to generate a Life History framework (life in context of history). The following Life History matrix (Table II) is a result of a guess and validation procedure where discursive characteristics in the Life Stories are found

to share similar (metaphorical) ideals and beliefs seen in the grand narratives of historical periods of modern education. The Life History matrix is indexed<sup>27</sup> with reference to the grand narratives of Norwegian history of education on national and local levels, portrayed in greater detail in Appendix 2. The term ‘local’ is not to be understood as mere geographical regions or administrative levels, but as cultural communities (discourses) illuminated through the Life Stories.

**Table II. Life History Matrix**

<b>Life History</b>	<b>Resonance with national responses</b>	<b>Resonance with local responses</b>
<b>Heidi</b>	<p>Child-friendly/centredness.</p> <p>Formative and holistic pedagogy, reluctance towards testing and performance orientation and an emphasis on local autonomy resonates with the reform pedagogy in the 1930s and 1970s-80s [276,276, 286], as well as the visions and global engagement of Åse Gruda Skard for children’s rights [283].</p> <p>Resistance/disapproval of centralised or urban initiatives and reform policies that do not tune in on local life culture and realities. Resonate with periphery communities’ responses to the School Acts in the 1860s [269].</p>	<p>Resistance/disapproval of centralised or urban initiatives and reform policies (e.g., the effort to enlighten rural communities in the vicinity Kristiansand by Bishop Hansen [309] or Labour Union initiatives [314].</p> <p>More ‘scripted’ lifestyles than in urban areas, e.g., young mothers, low education or unemployment, and gender issues in Heidi’s municipality [101].</p> <p>Slow societal acceleration compared to urban areas. Resonate with ‘late modernity’, e.g., seen in Heidi’s expression of societal pace, her family values, and her stability in preoccupation and working place, all of which could connote to childhood and family discourses in Kristiansand during the 1950s-70s [321].</p> <p>The local ‘spirit’ in Heidi’s story, also points to an inclusive and trusting community, which is in tune with the mentioned</p>

<sup>27</sup> The square brackets ‘[]’ point to contextual signifiers in Appendix 1 and 2 (local context descriptions or historical periodisation of grand narratives).



		discourses of the 1950s and 1960s. Her use of education as a road from rags to riches also resonates with the egalitarian ambitions and ideals seen in the Labour Union efforts in Kristiansand during the late 19 <sup>th</sup> and early 20 <sup>th</sup> centuries [315, 315].
<b>Karen</b>	<p>Karen’s literacy and psychological orientation to education, in combination with her egalitarian efforts to include and prioritise teaching adapted to the marginalised in the system, resonates with the folk movement of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the reform pedagogical ideals of the 1930s and 1960s-1980s [276, 276, 286], and the visions and work of the politician, union leader, and pedagogue Anna Sethne [290], the pedagogical-psychological researcher Johannes Sandven, as well as Åse Gruda Skard [283, 283], sociologist Gudmund Hernes, and philosopher Jon Hellesnes [287, 290, 291].</p> <p>Karen’s reluctance to testing and performance orientation in school, and preference of formative and holistic pedagogies resonates with the Unified School policies 1930-2000 [276, 279, 289, 290, 291], and the reform pedagogy of the 1930s to 1990s [276, 276, 286].</p> <p>An emphasis on spending, rather than austerity measures in education (visible in Karen’s disregard for austerity initiatives in schools) is found in the political initiatives of the Unified School model during the Depression in the 1930s, during the war, and 1950s-60s</p>	<p>The open-landscape solutions (Trump design [286, 321]) resonates with Kristiansand’s tendency to follow the modern narratives of central policies and hegemonic ‘trends’ in education, and ‘liberal-conservative’ orientation towards the global knowledge industry since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century [309, 313, 313, 325] (i.e., education as a business investment) and perhaps also to the city’s architectural ambitions, e.g., the legacy of the modernistic functionalist architecture of Thilo Schoder [113].</p> <p>Karen’s disapproval of and scepticism towards test-orientation and what she figures to be policies of austerity (open-landscape pedagogy) is in tune with the professional voice in the local media debate, e.g., Alsaker, Uleberg, Letnes, Kvamsdal, and Sandsdalen on the national test and austerity measures [324, 324, 325, 325, 326].</p>

	[318, 318, 281].	
<b>Kristian</b>	<p>Kristian's emphasis on professionalisation and holistic education carries connotation to the Bildung ideals of Tønnes Sirevåg [283] and the educational ambitions of the ministers of education in the 1960s, Helge Sivertsen [282], and the 1990s, Gudmund Hernes [290, 291]. The emphasis on teaching practices with low presence of summative assessment, and weight on holistic, formative learning processes resonates with the reform-pedagogical ideals of the 1960s-80s [286], the new radical thinkers in the 1960s-1970s [287], as well as the curriculum reforms and the egalitarian visions of education promoted by Gudmund Hernes in the 1990s [290, 291].</p> <p>Kristian's expansion of his teacher responsibilities, beyond what is formally requested of him (e.g., his continuing contact with former pupils who struggle), seems to be in line with the actions and ideals of his father and grandfather, but also the ideals of the egalitarian folk-movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the visions of Ole Vig [270], and also the ambitions of integration and inclusion that increasingly characterised the Unified School model of the 1930s-90s [276, 279, 289, 290, 291].</p>	<p>Kristian's modest way of expressing his professional status and successes could also resonate with the position of the modern narratives (being in the lead, being a pioneer or a competitive sportsman) combined with cultural (religious) virtues found particularly in Kristiansand, where being in front and part of progress and pioneer work is highly appraised on the one hand. On the other hand, any allusion to one's own achievements or assets should be avoided or understated, never openly or directly stated as personal success or greatness at something. Success should be attributed to others, and flattery of others is a vital, almost mandatory element in conversation. This ritual of modesty (Norwegian: 'Sørlandsk beskjedenhets')<sup>28</sup> is very similar to politeness rituals found in religious cultures, e.g., the ritual of 'taarof' in Iran (not accepting a courtesy or praise before several rounds of humble and grateful protesting are acted out).</p>

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<sup>28</sup> See Johnsen (2010), Fantoft (2012) and Hunstad (2015) for more detailed portraits of the 'modern' Southern Norwegian' or 'Sørrending'.

#### SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN THE THREE NARRATIVES.

The core beliefs and professional agency signified in Heidi's narrative, like her translations of undesired policies, appears rooted in the local cultural heritage, as well as the values and ideals that historically have characterised the Norwegian Unified School model. At the same time, her teacher agency seems characterised by an 'elaborate' course of action, exemplified by her choices of breaking with the past, social position, and expectations. This is an aspect of Heidi's narrative that contrasts her professional 'regression' narrative, and which is more in tune with the 'modernity narrative', where education offers a viable road from 'rags to riches'.

Like Heidi, Karen turns to the traditional ideals seen in the Norwegian Unified School model. They also share the appreciation of innovation and professional counselling grounded in local culture and educational heritage. Karen is, however, more in tune with the literacy-orientation in policy discourse than Heidi—though she clearly distances herself from the output-management and accountability. Her emphasis is also more on her pupils' well-being than her own needs as a person and teacher—staying strong for the sake of her pupils. Unlike Heidi, Karen also expresses more discontent with the current state of affairs. Her regression turns to former teaching practices, not a conservation of the present policies.

In contrast to Heidi and Karen, Kristian's way of responding to changes and demands through negotiation opens an opportunity to translate, in a publicly transparent way, the political discourse of 'Quality education' into pedagogy and didactics that resonate more with the heritage of the Norwegian Unified School model.

In the following section, theoretical concepts derived from narrative and critical theories of modernity will be used in a metaphorical sense to generate new ways of comprehending the dialectical dynamics between the teachers as actors, and their historical, cultural, and social context.

## 6.2 CONTEXTUAL AND HISTORICAL DIMENSIONS DISCLOSED IN THE LIFE HISTORIES

Based on the former levels of abstraction, I find shared contextual reference points (metaphorical resonance) in the teachers' beliefs and agencies (narrative plots) to signify pedagogical ideals and discursive tensions present in the following historical periods:

- The Social Democratic agenda of the 'Unified School' (Hartvig Nissen, Anna Sethne & Bernhof Ribsskog, Helge Sivertsen, Gudmund Hernes)
- The reform-pedagogical skill orientation in the 1930s
- The new reform-pedagogical 'child-friendliness' and reluctance to summative assessment in the 1960s-80s.
- Gudmund Hernes visions of the capacitated human being, adapted and inclusive education, represented in the educational reforms of the 1990s

This might indicate that the Unified School model (1930—1990s) have functioned as a historical 'window of opportunity' (i.e., Goodson, 2015) for the teachers (and school leaders)—representing a historical reference point (signified 'care') for the examples of regressive courses of action portrayed in the Life Stories.

### METROPOLIS: CENTRE—PERIPHERY DIMENSIONS.

The teachers' responses seem to divide in terms of where they are positioned, both geographically and culturally—with Kristiansand (Karen), representing a middle position between the metropolis (Kristian) and the periphery (Heidi). In the following, I will discuss how time, pace, and agency might determinate the gravity of power—depending on the distance from the metropolis of politics and power.

The systemic storylines of educational development in Norway illuminated a lack of compliance or reluctance to engage in centralised educational agendas among stakeholders positioned in a geographical or ideological periphery. Since early modernity, rural communities have repeatedly been recipients of urban prejudice—like assumptions of a 'bleak situation' in farming communities, concerning their level of knowledge and morals (e.g., the 'adapted' education in the Rasp house, or rural

localisation of Christiansand teacher seminars at Holt), or romanticised images of rural life realities, capacities, and needs (e.g., Wergeland and Kristiansand Labour Union). This is not so much present in the Life Stories of the three teachers as it is in the promotion of the ‘Nordic Model’<sup>29</sup> in the aid and development initiatives by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), for example, ‘Save the Children’, UNICEF, and Cap-EFA (see Stray & Voreland, 2017; Meffe, 24.08.2015). However, this does not imply that the urban/rural divide appears as less of an issue in the teacher narratives than in the systemic narratives. It rather represents a more ‘abstract’ division, concerning how societal acceleration and modern time perspectives appears somewhat ‘out of sync’.

#### *DIVERGENCE IN PACE AND TIME.*

Similar to Rosa’s division between ‘classic’ and ‘late’ modernity—and connoting Simmel’s concept of sensory overload, and ‘blasé attitude’ of those close to the metropolis—there seems to be a ‘slower’ notion of time, followed by a stronger registration of societal acceleration and hesitance towards the pace of change, in periphery location of the metropolis. A divergent perspective of time and pace is discernible in Heidi’s and Kristian’s accounts of how they experience change and progress—representing two entirely different ways to act and sense the world around them. While Heidi seeks stability and conserves personal and professional beliefs that resonate with the ‘harmonic’ lifestyle and child-centred pedagogies of the 1960s and 1970s, Kristian does not seem to be stressed by new policies—rather encouraged. In contrast to Heidi, who dwells with thoughts and reflections before encircling her beliefs and positions, Kristian’s narration is far more intense, punctual, and dense with information of school activities and progress—leaving an impression of a high speed of action, acceleration of development, and fluctuant courses of action. His environment and work occupation is portrayed as a place where there is no room to slow down the pace (‘You cannot rest, putting your feet on the table. That wasn’t an option at all’). Heidi addresses such a ‘high alert activity level’ as

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<sup>29</sup> *‘The Nordic model’ represents the ‘School for all’ tradition in the Nordic countries, a tradition closely related to the welfare system of these countries, with its emphasis on inclusion, equity, and equal possibilities.*

unsustainable in the long run—embracing stable rhythm and continuity as more important than the search for constant improvement:

‘I worked and worked and worked, and thought and tried to do things as correct and well as possible. And then it is just.. It is a tremendous task? It’s an impossible task, and you’ll never reach the end of it, if that is a goal.. But, that is just something one has to.. If that is one’s goal, then one can’t be a.. No.. One just can’t.’

The difference in perspectives does not necessarily have to originate in urban–rural positions (‘pace and time’). It might also touch other centre-periphery-related dimensions such as age, gender, life perspectives, and experiences. Kristian’s high pace might, for instance, be related to being an ambitious, young man (male) working in a professionally demanding city environment. Nevertheless, I find it likely that Kristian would have acted differently had he been working in a rural district, or far from the capital city.

In a historical perspective, rural and working-class communities have not allowed education to be an all-compassing endeavour. School had to adapt to the seasons and farming routines, alongside other tasks and preoccupations of rural life. Life was about the things happening outside of school, at home or in the communities, while school was an external agenda imposed by those in central power (church officials or policymakers). Juxtaposed opposite such systemic narrative, Heidi’s ‘nonchalant’ responses to centralised monitoring and demands might be expressions of an ‘inherited’ scepticism to ‘top-down’ policies when these are not in tune with local (rural) culture and context. Through a delegitimisation of current policies, Heidi also appears to be relieved from aspects of accountability ‘blame games’—opening a space of professional negotiation that allows her to appreciate and settle with the current curriculum, *The Knowledge Promotion (K06, 2006)*.

*‘In between’ the metropolis and its periphery.*

Being closer to the metropolis than in the case of Heidi, while at the same time having it more at a distance than Kristian, Karen seems better positioned than the other two to discern the direction and form that contemporary policies are taking. If one juxtaposes Karen’s Life Story to the systemic narratives of educational development in Kristiansand, Karen’s professional position could be interpreted as

somewhat deadlocked by the city's cultural heritage of reform-loyalty—carrying a connotation to Benjamin's contemplations on 'the angel of history'. Being 'caught in the middle of the storm of progress', Karen respond by acts of regression—reinstating traditional classroom teachings within the open-landscape solutions, justified within the legislation of adapted education and inclusion. Her regressive practice signifies a turn to cultural heritage and position. Her emphasis on reading and writing skills seems to be in tune with the pragmatic skill orientation of the social democratic and reform-pedagogical policies of the 1930-1960s, while opposed to a profit-oriented utilisation of global standards for skill attainment (today represented by, e.g., P21's corporative agenda: '21<sup>st</sup>-century skills'). Her response is also much in line with how other educational specialists, teachers, and stakeholders in Kristiansand have expressed resistance towards a Neoliberal influence (teaching to the test) on the one hand, and embrace of collaborative and practice-based research interventions or support, such as the FLIK project or Mobile Team counselling (Kristiansand Municipality, 2015a; 2015b).

Karen's appreciation of professional guidance and the pedagogical development project is shared with the other two teachers—representing a contrast to accountability-based management and school monitoring.

#### *Gender and religion.*

Discerned remainders of scripted gender-roles and religious heritage in education, especially in Kristiansand and the rural areas of the city, seem to support the argument of a divergence in time and pace of change between the metropolis and its periphery.

Heidi's Life Story points towards a break from a scripted 'home-wife' role, where education represented the path to elaboration. Despite this, traces of a traditional gender role resonate with the ideals of the 1950s continuities to be present in Heidi's story after her change of course. Examples of this include her choice of entering the home economics school in Kristiansand—which has represented a conservation of gender disparities in the area, closely connected to Christianity's strong hold on the city. The 1950s embrace of childhood and mothering care might also be discernible in

Heidi's use of language, referring to pupils as 'the children' when addressing pupils with whom she has a close relationship, and 'pupils' when referring to those taught by others, or pupils with whom she has a more distant relation. Together with her efforts at creating a harmonic, stable, and loving environment, the ideals of the 'home wife-era' are highly represented in Heidi's narration. One can also observe the remainders of church-school relations in Heidi's community, in that the local church is still used by the municipality to inform teachers and school leaders of upcoming research-innovations—something which would be unnatural in Karen's case, even though the school policy in Kristiansand is characterised by strong ties to Christianity. To use a church for formal meetings between the municipality, researchers and schools would not only be unnatural but unthinkable in Kristian's context—in terms of how aspects of exclusion (of professionals belonging to other belief systems) and secularisation would be much more evident in the cultural heterogeneity that characterises the city of Oslo. Kristian also addresses issues of gender-role conservation within current educational policies to a stronger degree than the two other teachers—expressing concerns that the new divide between primary and secondary teacher education would lead to a skewing of representation of female teachers in primary education. He bases this argument on how he, and 'his pals', never would have applied for primary teacher education in the outset if they were forced to choose. He also comments on the great 'shame' that this represents for the profession, having himself experienced working in a primary school before grasping how inspiring and challenging a primary teacher position could be. His experience left him with an enormous respect for the 'brilliantly' and 'skilled' female teachers he came to know during his time as a primary teacher—emphasised by: 'Being with them, I pictured that they must have been the best candidates ever leaving upper secondary school to become teachers'. In Karen's case, gender issues are less apparent than in Heidi and Kristian's Life Stories. Her struggle with screening tests and open-landscape solutions might, however, echo with the deep religious currents in the region, represented by the municipality's (historic) strong efforts to meet and follow policy standards and reform demands.



## IDIOSYNCRATIC CULTURAL RESPONSES TO GERM.

According to Ricoeur, a structural analysis of the discursive emplotment will lead to the correspondence between a hierarchy of actions and a hierarchy of actors. When discerning the idiosyncratic cultural response to GERM by juxtaposing the professional life stories with systemic storylines of educational development, certain patterns of policy enactments emerged. The result of the structural analysis supported the possibility that teachers' negations of GERM might be rooted in deep cultural currents of educational belief and values. The ambiguity in current educational policies, where 'lags' of former educational reforms and ideologies (e.g., Core Curriculum) are entangled with the marketised ideology of GERM, seems to have provided teachers and schools with a space for negotiation—mediating GERM by hierarchal ranking of the educational acts and regulations, and the responsibility/accountability they have to different actors in education—leaving the results as follows:

**Hierarchy of actions:** The Life Stories illuminate a ranking and prioritising of the educational acts and regulations based on the teachers and school's professional judgement (values, knowledge, and experience). By embracing educational legislation and local practices, which resonate with their cultural heritage (i.e., habitus), the teachers posit neoliberal policies 'down the ladder' to the 'bottom' of their priorities. All three teachers appeared to have preserved ideals and practices that resonate with the Norwegian Unified School model developed in the period from the 1930s to the 1990s, and its emphasis on egalitarian, democratic, inclusive, formative, and folk-oriented education.

**Hierarchy of actors:** Through discursive positioning, or hierarchal ranking of priorities, all three teachers appeared to have opened a professional and autonomous space in their teaching practices. This space also seems to have provided them with an opportunity to place the needs of pupils, parents, and colleagues among their top priorities, *above* the demands and aims of central policymakers and governance.

### 6.3 TENSIVE TRUTH CLAIMS

The patterns of idiosyncratic responses to GERM, in the three Life Stories seem to illuminate creative ways of moderating undesired influences of policies that fail to match the cultural heritage. In different ways, all of the teachers express reluctance

to engage in utilitarian and performance-oriented teachings. This reluctance points to teachers' personal agencies, but also to what comes forth as a professional 'class-habitus'. A justification for such a claim is that the Life Stories signified a great discrepancy among the teachers in terms of perceptions of time and pace of progress, as well as their main motive for becoming teachers and characteristics of a 'good' teacher. Despite these differences, all of the teachers expressed hesitancy and concerns about developments pointing towards more competitive school policies with an emphasis on summative assessment and test orientation (i.e., characteristics of GERM). When juxtaposed to the grand narratives of the Norwegian history of education, the teachers' shared values all resembled educational ideals present in the 'Unified Comprehensive School' policies of the 1960s to 1990s, or the Norwegian Unified School model—emphasising a holistic approach to teaching and learning, where formative feedback is valued over summative assessment practices. In both Heidi and Karen's stories, an open resentment can be seen in their portrayal of policymakers' 'deafness' to the teacher unions' critique of current management and monitoring of the teaching profession—signifying that policies addressed towards the teaching profession come forth as deliberate ignorance of teachers' autonomy, professional judgement, and legitimacy, as well as a careless handling of traditional values and educational ideals. Kristian's remarks and sighs on how there is a complete absence of offers and advertising for continuing-study courses for teachers in arts and music, while there is a growing surplus of courses offered in mathematics, signifies some of the same concerns, that something appears to be off-track or not all in tune with the core-curriculum's aims of cultivation. Kristian's hopes and expectations for the new NOU of the school of the future also shows that his concerns might not stick as deep as the worries expressed by Karen and Heidi, signifying an optimistic belief in a change for the better in future politics.

Based on the structural analysis, the interpretations of the first and second level of abstraction might be synthesised in a tensive claim by appropriating Ricoeur's metaphor of 'care' and Simmel's metaphor of 'sensory overload'.

If it is assumed that it is possible to:

1. Recognise the combined meaning of the metaphors 'care' and 'sensory overload' to be covered in the sentence: 'responsible acts towards the present and future well-being of oneself, one's community, and the memory of one's heritage',
2. Recognise the act of political 'perjury' or 'abuse of forgetting' to be covered in the sentence: 'deliberate ignorance or careless acts of policymakers towards the present and future well-being of themselves, their communities, and the memory of the local heritage'

Then, sentences 1 and 2 could be synthesised into a tensive truth claim:

*The three teacher 'Life Histories' portray active and 'habitual' efforts to transform deliberate ignorance or careless acts of policymakers towards the present and future well-being of themselves, their communities, and the memory of the local heritage, into responsible acts towards the present and future well-being of oneself, one's community, and the memory of one's heritage (remembered and embodied beliefs).*



### FOURTH LEVEL OF ABSTRACTION—THEORETICAL SYNTHESIS

#### 7.1 KEYSTONE METAPHORS: REFRACTION, DIFFRACTION, AND REFLECTION (RDR)

When discerning the responses to GERM in the Life Histories, I discovered that the concept of refraction<sup>30</sup> made more sense when contrasted to other metaphors of wave behaviour, such as *diffractive* or *reflective* movements.<sup>31</sup>

*Diffraction* in a metaphorical sense, points to the bending of reform policies, which seems to occur when institutional or professional autonomy is reduced by external monitoring and control—pushing schools and teachers into shadow-practices and/or ‘pockets of resistance’ to resolve a balance of forces.

*Reflection* points to superficial reform ‘outputs’, where measured results and activities only communicate *illusions* of progress—not school-life realities as experienced by the professionals working within the school setting.

If the different responses to GERM are viewed through the Keystone Metaphors, *Refraction, Diffraction, and Reflection* (RDR), the divergences in life perspectives and attitudes of these professionals can be used to illuminate the significance of deep cultural currents in teachers’ enactments of educational policy.

In my analysis of the Norwegian teachers’ Life Histories, I find that aspects of refractive, diffractive, and reflective responses to GERM are present in every narrative, just in different proportions and facets, depending on the resonance between the external policies, the local cultural context, and the teachers’ professional autonomy and beliefs. To investigate the RDR-patterns of GERM—it has been necessary also to include the dynamics between surface *reflections* of policy

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<sup>30</sup> See Chapter 2 for a thorough outline of the metaphorical use of the concept within social sciences.

<sup>31</sup> See Chapter 2 for a presentation of these concepts as applied in natural sciences.

implementations and its dialectic counterpart of 'deep shadow movements' of policy *diffraction* found in the teacher narratives.

To narrow the scope of analysis exclusively to the concept of *refraction* would have made it difficult to portray a differentiated and dynamic picture of the reform movements. Even though I use wave behaviour models in a metaphorical sense, not scientific, I have found that the three concepts derived from natural science bring heuristically useful nuances to Rudd and Goodson's concept of refraction.

### Refraction, Diffraction, Reflection Model (RDR-Model)

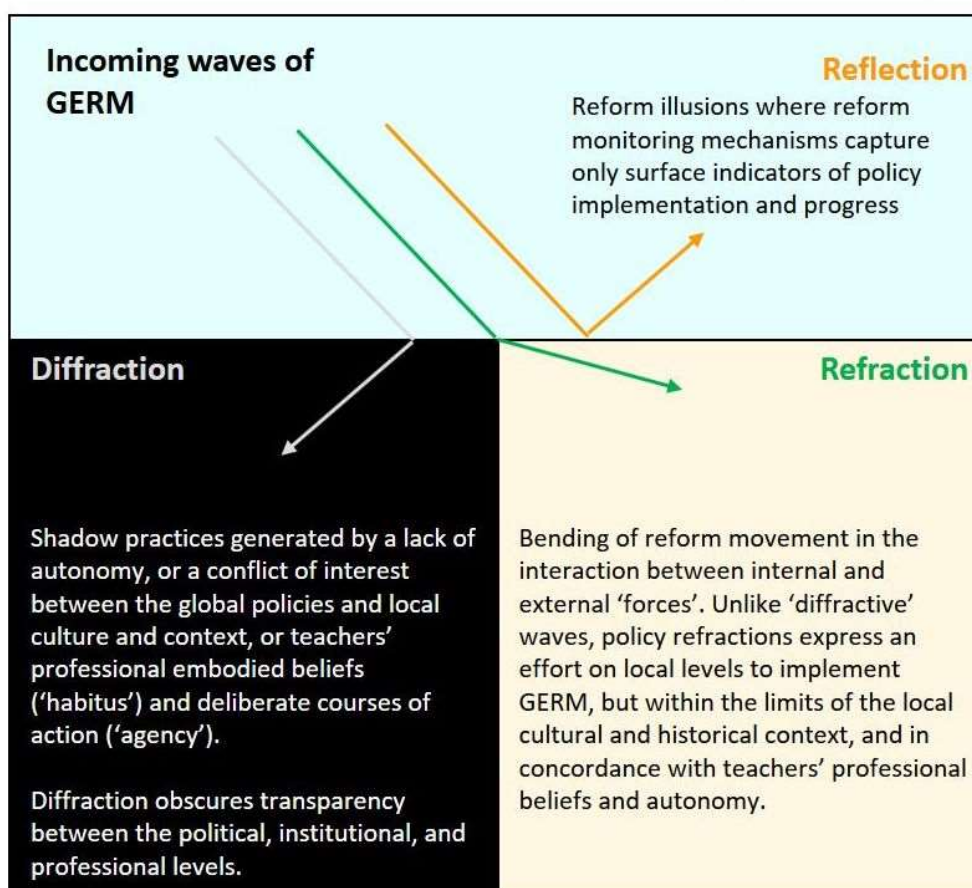


Figure 3. The model illustrates different forms of 'bending' of reform trajectories (GERM). The orange arrow symbolises *reflective*, the green arrow *refractive*, and the grey arrow *diffractive* responses to GERM.

#### DIFFRACTIVE/REFLECTIVE VS. REFRACTIVE POLICY ENACTMENTS.

Heidi's Life Story highlights responses to GERM that are characterised by *diffraction* of policies, created by '*Stillstellung*' of current progress of development by the means of shadow practices, for example, 'curriculum in the closet after planning days', translation of achievement-orientation to play-orientation, or assisting pupils on screening tests. Kristian's story, on the other hand, depicts a more *refractive* response, where counter-movements to GERM are transparent to the outside community. It is highly probable that the powerful position of Kristian's school leaders, in terms of their esteemed and acknowledged careers and success as policymakers in the capital, has allowed the school's pedagogical platform to function as 'pockets of resistance'. The school policies represent an odd refraction of the mainstream school policies in Oslo by translating the 'Oslo school's' emphasis on educational output and QAS into a holistic and input-orientated approach to learning, teaching, and education—legitimised by the aims and visions of the Core Curriculum. Delivering top score-rankings on the national tests, a policymaker would have a hard time criticising the pedagogical platform of the school, considering the top score-rankings on the national tests—even if it might represent a regressive practice in their eyes, resonating highly with the abandoned educational heritage of the Norwegian Unified School model, as well as Herne's visions of the capacitated human being.

Even if the school policy and practice may be considered as transparent, according to Kristian's accounts, there are elements of diffractive responses to GERM in his narration. However, these seem more coupled with 'two-faced' family realities in the upper-class areas in Oslo than to the educational policy of the school, where high pressure and stress is covered by facades of prominent lifestyles and success. In Kristian's portrait of the cultural atmosphere of this school district, it is easy to find descriptions that resonate strongly with Simmel's (1950 [1904]) concepts of the detachment to real life experiences in the metropole, generating a 'pseudo reality' and 'lifeless schematism, proud of its own lifelessness'.

Juxtaposing Heidi and Kristian's Life Stories to systemic storylines of Norwegian educational history, an increased fragmentation of political control and influence, from the centre of governance to the periphery, is expressed through the narrative accounts of pseudo-compliance within schools, classrooms, or teacher-student interactions (diffraction based on non-compliance/reflection of compliance). It also points to the apparent differences in perspectives of time and pace of change. The historical asymmetric power-relations between the centralised and peripheral communities might serve as a cultural framework to comprehend why *diffraction* of policies is preferred over *refraction* in Heidi's account which is staged in a rural setting. From a rural point of view, shadow practices might have shown to be preferable, since a transparent opposition could generate more external interference and centralised control on local affairs, beliefs, and traditions, for instance, historical examples of how policymakers have perceived rural resistance to school policies as problem rooted in an inability among rural people to grasp their own best interest and a lack of a 'right' kind of sentiment for children's educational needs (see Appendix 2, Evaluation of School Act of 1860, or the Labour Unions initiatives in Kristiansand in the 19<sup>th</sup> century).

The contrast between Heidi's and Kristian's narratives clearly depicts a rural/central dialectics which seem to refract GERM policies differently in the two arenas. Heidi signals an open resistance to the GERM policies, not openly in the sense of actively protesting or speaking out, but in making a 'bomb shelter' to protect the pupils from what she sees as undefendable educational practices. Frequent allusions to her own personal history and life outside the school point to a cultural heritage that is highly supportive of the child-centred values of the Norwegian Unified School model and the Norwegian social democratic legacy. Kristian, on the other hand, seems happy with the fast pace of the city and has developed an opportunist 'bumble-bee' approach to policy changes and demands, obviously protecting him from the emotional and personal strains and drainage that Heidi is expressing. To Kristian, the GERM policies are perceived as challenges to be solved, often by bypassing them and by adapting to them in a flexible way, keeping a sense of freedom and dignity. Still, the two stories tell of teachers who in different ways are



deeply engaged with their pupils, and who both are supportive of the Norwegian Unified School model and its child-centred values. While Heidi might be seen to have responded in a regressive resistant way, and Kristian in seemingly more adaptive manners, they both point to ways of responding to GERM that might be termed at odds with the hegemonic discourse of GERM. However, in contrast to Kristian's *refraction* of educational policy that is visible to external observers of his school, Heidi's responses *diffract* GERM-policies in ways that is not transparent to the outside world. The lack of local resonance in GERM appears to have generated a need for 'shadow-practices' (e.g., in Heidi's case, to protect the pupils from unnecessary disturbance and harm). In this sense, her effort of protecting her pupils might backfire, since her actions are too camouflaged to alert policymakers that something is actually 'off track'. From an outside perspective, her actions rather *reflect* compliance with the new policies and a successful implementation of GERM. In Heidi's case, it also appears that her pupils are 'happily oblivious' of her professional barricade against the policy-warfare unravelling outside their classroom doors. By 'slowing down', instead of 'speeding up' (as expected by policymakers), Heidi has discovered a way to avoid being overwhelmed by the stressful demands of the National Quality Assurance System.

Bauman's concept of liquid modernity and identities could, together with Simmel's descriptions of the 'blasé attitude in the metropolis, offer a means to understand the difference in response between Kristian and Heidi. According to Baumann (2008), the post-modern, high-paced life results in the use of 'recycled' and manipulating identities to avoid the pain and effort required to be true to deeply rooted self-images and values. Compared to Heidi's more or less existential fight against GERM, rooted in a cultural heritage and professional agency, Kristian's beliefs as a teacher point more in the direction of a preferred 'image' than a deep-rooted identity. However, provided with a professional space to dwell and learn in, Kristian's fluctuant identities appear to have been given time to settle and become more incorporated in his professional practice and ideals—as a class habitus. From Heidi's point of view, situated in a rural setting, with a slower pace and historically anchored scepticism of

central governance, the restless mode and superficial values of liquid policies might be easier to spot and guard against—from her periphery perspective.

Moving to Karen's Life Story, and her position between the centre and periphery, the possibility to openly refract regressive positions appears even more limited than in Heidi's case. Karen's disapproval of result- and test-orientation, combined with her engagement in literacy development, refracts the neoliberal elements of the current curriculum into a more differentiated and learning-oriented pedagogy. To free herself from the 'deadlock in the middle', she fights for her beliefs in traditional teaching provisions (class-room) as a way to meet pupils' needs for shelter and peace. She does this in spite of her school's progressive policies. Her return to traditional classroom practice is here interpreted as instances of *diffraction*. Karen's situation appears perhaps even more severe than Heidi's, considering that Karen's pupils already are caught by the 'storm', and struggle to find their way. In contrast to Heidi, Karen does not camouflage her opposition to the school policies. Although provided with a professional autonomy *inside* the school walls by her leaders, Karen's actions nevertheless seem to be silenced, as the school management adheres to their progressive and modern path dependency (open-landscape solutions and whole level teachings).

In all the Life Histories, I find a presence of 'regression', referring to the hesitant attitude signified in the narratives to the growing influence of neoliberal ideology and NPM in education. They all embrace values similar to the progressive pedagogical ideal of the 1970s and early 1980s, concerning aspects of child-friendliness/-centredness and adapted education. However, their 'regress-narratives' could also be interpreted as an act of 'remembering' or 'care', in the sense of standing up for one's educational heritage and its former 'battles'. In this, I refer to the way in which Norwegian education emancipated itself from the hegemonic position of the 'Latin school' in the 1930s, that is, the legacy of Hartvig Nissen, Anna Sethne, and Bernhof Ribsskog—and the Norwegian Unified School model, 1930-1990. This model put a heavy emphasis on equality, democracy, and community, opposed to aspects of competitiveness, output-orientation, and marketisation of education. In a sense, the Life Histories could provide the means for a 'reconceptualisation' of the global

educational agenda. All three teachers clearly share the cosmopolitan aims and visions of inclusion, emancipation, and equity (for example, represented in the 2015 and 2030 visions of the Millennium Developmental Goals (MDG) and Education for All (EFA) movement), but 'refract' (diffract/reflect) elements of GERM which come forth as alien or ignorant of the cultural context and heritage.

Even though the Life Histories mostly represent efforts of regression, elements of renewal can be found. The capacity for renewal, as I understand Goodson (2015), seems to rely on a distancing from a political centre. Like in the case of Heidi, such capacity could potentially be gained through the policy fragmentation between the governmental centre and the periphery—providing a local space of autonomy. Goodson also points to research showing that communities near a political power centre have been those least capable of renewal in the case of the UK and US. Based on these research findings, one would expect to find a higher capacity of renewal and adjustment to change in the narratives of Heidi and Karen than in the narrative of Kristian. However, this is not necessarily evident when looking at the findings of this study. The instances of refraction of the Global Educational Architecture in Kristian's Life Story might appear to be just as much at odds with the global movement, as the diffractions/reflections in Heidi and Karen's case. The main difference between them is that the particular mediation of policies at Kristian's school appears to be more transparent. There are, nevertheless, reasons to assume that this capacity of renewal is influenced by a 'distance' to the political centre. It is plausible that the influences of Kristian's school leaders on the political leadership might have facilitated an establishment of a 'pocket of resistance' within the metropolis centre of politics. In this sense, renewal would not only be affected by a geographical closeness to the metropolis, but also by pedagogical discourses at odds with the hegemonical modernity narrative.

Judged by Ricoeur's criteria of policy justification, the elements of GERM come forth as intrusive, transgressing the border of culture and professional autonomy by its lack of cultural 'recognition' and 'care'. The teachers' capacity for renewal often seems to be limited to 'enclosed', and often non-public settings (diffraction), which might prohibit a systemic reconceptualisation. If diffractive adjustment is found to be

preferable solutions to implementations of new educational policies, it is reasonable to infer that 'undesired' aspects of GERM never become publicly confronted by the teachers. The efforts of resistance might thus paradoxically serve to maintain the current hegemonic narrative in education since the teachers' shadow resistance is not likely to threaten openly the 'status quo'. The possibility of diffractive responses should nevertheless be taken seriously, both by policymakers, school managers, and the teaching profession, since they point to a barrier, or sickness in the system—where a lack of trust or autonomy makes the pedagogical practices go 'underground'. This could obviously represent a societal and democratic problem, if teachers totally detach themselves from their societal mandate given to them by the national curriculum. However, in the Life Histories represented in this study, it is the continuation of common, traditional pedagogical practices, still present in the Core Curriculum, that teachers have 'needed to hide' from the public eye. This points more in the direction of what Ricoeur would term careless and ignorant policy governance than irresponsible acts and attitudes among Norwegian teachers and school leaders.

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## PART IV—DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION



### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this study, I have explored and identified local and individual refractions of the Global Educational Reform Movements (GERM) by juxtaposing three teachers' Life Stories with grand narratives of the Norwegian history of education on a national and local level. The first premise of the study has been that the policy changes in Norwegian education during the last decades are met with local responses and 'translations', which are not necessarily in correspondence with the intentions of the policy initiatives or agreements. The second premise has been that GERM represents a continuation and transformation of the ideals of modernity, where efficient and accelerated accumulation of generic knowledge and skills are viewed as essential to societal growth and success. The third premise has been expressed through the metaphor of 'policy refraction', which is assumed to be present in the actions and expressions of people directly exposed to policy changes in education, in this case teachers. In order to 'read' these refractions in a most accurate and non-intrusive way, I have chosen Goodson's Life History approach, placed into the frame of Ricoeur's theory of narrative and interpretation. The study of Life Histories has provided results on different levels of abstractions. In this first section of the chapter, I shall briefly recapitulate the answers to the research questions adhering to each phase and level before discussing the limitations of the interpretations, as well as the theoretical and methodological frameworks. In the concluding part, I shall discuss the relevance and implications of my findings to the understanding of the contradictions, 'fluidity,' and ambiguities of the GERM agenda and the modernity narrative represented by neoliberalism. A short conclusion on the study's findings and their significance is given at the end of the chapter.

## 8.1 A DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE DIFFERENT LEVELS OF ABSTRACTION

### THE FIRST LEVEL OF ABSTRACTION—THE NAÏVE PHASE.

On the first level of abstraction, or the Naïve phase of interpretation according to Ricoeur, unvalidated impressions of professional settings and experiences have been assembled without further systematic evaluation. This is a purely phenomenological phase, where the narratives were categorised, selected, transcribed, and reconstructed into Life Stories. The ‘results’ of this phase are represented by the categorisation and the selection of cases as well as the reconstructed narratives presented in Appendix 1.

#### *LIFE STORIES—SELECTION AND RECONSTRUCTION.*

##### *Limitations in the selection of cases.*

The critical questions that might be asked concerning this phase deal with the possible effect my own prejudgements and critical agenda, both in the selection of cases, and in the rhetorical (verbal) design and translation of the transcribed life stories. The selection of cases was based on ‘hunches’ and guesses, rather than rationally validated criteria. An important reason for choosing the ‘skimming’ approach to selection of cases was to be open to unforeseen contamination from life stories embedded in other professional class-habitus than the teaching profession (e.g., journalism, religion, history, etc.). (See Chapter 4.4 for additional reasons). By applying a rationally validated scheme of selection, such subtle and unpredictable facets in the narrations would easily have been overlooked.

#### *NARRATIVE INDEPENDENCE VS. NARRATIVE-IN-INTERACTION.*

My efforts to avoid being a co-narrator in the interview setting might be viewed as overly compliant with the theoretical and methodological framework of Ricoeur and Goodson demanding a high level of narrative capacity and independence by the storyteller. This requirement of an ability to narrate a life story from each participant might have contributed to silencing important voices and refractions of GERM. (See



Georgapoulou, 2006 for a critique of conventional narrative research with respect to narrative-in-interaction). The case of Sissel (see p. 83) might exemplify such an excluded voice. Sissel was an experienced teacher, with a high ability to resonate and reflect on current educational issues. However, her expressed insecurity and need for assistance in the narrative construction made a validation of the narrative emplotment difficult. A stronger emphasis on narrative construction through ordinary interview might have contributed to create a cohesive life story in Sissel's case. The price of such an emphasis would be challenges in discerning and confronting my own prejudgments, biases, and normative position in the narrative interpretation (see Ricoeur: *The Course of Recognition*).

#### *LIMITATIONS OF THE PROCEDURES INVOLVED IN THE NARRATIVE RECONSTRUCTION.*

In the Naïve phase, efforts are made to present the teachers' subjective portraits of their lives. The phenomenological premises of the Naïve phase involve an attention to what is said and how it is said in the stories, without interpretations of what the text is about. In this study, the stress on preserving the authenticity of the narrative emplotments obviously reduces the readability of the text. For instance, the lack of headlines and theme-based presentations might leave the reader without external guidelines in the reading process ('endless amounts of text without directions'). However, this approach is a prerequisite for obtaining an explanatory distancing in the following level of abstraction.

Even though the ideal Life Story reconstruction would be characterised by the use of language and wordings of the participant (i.e., quotations) this leads to practical problems in that some narratives would require disproportionately large space in comparison to the others. To balance the length of the narratives, I tried to summarise passages of text with a low presence of implicit and indirect messages. An example of this is the reconstruction of Kristian's Life Story. His transcript was extensive compared to those of Karen and Heidi. On the other hand, his use of language was highly concise and semantically outlined in a way that simplified summarising of passages. Downsizing Kristian's own wordings might increase the risk of colouring the narration with my own use of language (discourses). My

interpretations of Kristian's narrative emplotments and 'liquid identity' could thus be criticised for being biased by my own preconceptions and assumptions. For instance, this might have led me to disclose stronger centre-periphery dynamics in Kristian's story than what might have been the case if more quotations had been preserved. A heavier emphasis on quotations would also have opened for more varied access to analytical perspectives, for example, a possible impact of gender and age on professional 'image'.

#### THE SECOND LEVEL OF ABSTRACTION—THE STRUCTURAL PHASE.

The questions raised at this level was: 1) What are the embedded core structures identified in the use of language in teachers' Life Stories? 2) What professional priorities can be discerned from the teachers' Life Stories? The answers to these questions are presented in the Life Story matrix and the preceding summary of findings in Chapter 5.6.

In this phase of interpretation, structural patterns in the use of language (discourse) in the Life Stories are disclosed. The analysis closely follows Ricoeur's directions of a 'semiotic' interpretation at this level of abstraction, ending in a hierarchy of actions and actors (see the Life Story matrix in Chapter 5). In this analysis, I have chosen a simple dichotomisation of what the teachers prioritised and what is not prioritised. While it would have been desirable with a more nuanced ranking of the hierarchical position of priorities, such a ranking was outside the scope of the Life Story analysis in this study. A ranking might perhaps have been possible according to Ricoeur's theories. However, his directives on semiotic analysis are addressed at written texts, not orally communicated life narratives. The plausibility of finding hierarchical levels or ranged priorities is presumably higher when analysing a written text constructed by an author, than a text reconstructed (reauthored) from an orally based storyline. To arrive at trustworthy and plausible rankings of priorities, the design of this study would have had to provide additional methods to disclose such nuances in priority-rankings, for example, Q-methodology.

The Structural phase of analysis also introduces critical sketches of modernity in order to metaphorically transgress the narrative plots of the Life Stories in the third

level of abstraction. These sketches enable a move from a hermeneutical-phenomenological analysis to a critical theorists or critical narrative interpretation.

The final selection of sketches were found to be in agreement with Ricoeur and Goodson's narrative theories and concepts. In addition, a high degree of theoretical complementation between the selected theories was found. Both Bauman's and Rosa's writings either refer to Simmel and Benjamin's writings or bear resemblances on certain matters (e.g., acceleration of society and fragmentation of identities and communities). This mutual corroboration may be seen as a strength in the theoretical framework. However, it could also lead to biased interpretations of the research material—making me 'walk in loops' by exclusively attending to information and understandings already assimilated. Furthermore, the representation of the narrative plots through metaphorical 'vignettes' (critical sketches) cannot be considered to be 'replicable' in the same sense and degree as the semiotic analysis, since it is a layer added to communicate the interpreted mood, or nonverbal 'tone' of the Life Stories. Still, through the 'abductive' procedure of 'guess and validation', I gradually arrived at sketches, which most consistently captured the discursive patterns disclosed in the semiotic analysis ('is not, but is like'). Other researchers might have arrived at different metaphorical sketches. But—due to the structural (discursive) elements of the Life Stories—I find it *plausible* that other researchers, if applying a critical theorist frame of reference, would have appropriated similar moods, modes of being, and courses of action (i.e. 'fusion of horizons) as in this study.

#### THE THIRD LEVEL OF ABSTRACTION—THE DEEP PHASE.

The questions raised at this level were: What cultural heritage and professional priorities can be identified if teachers' Life Stories are juxtaposed to grand narratives of the Norwegian history of education (question 3), and question 4: What inferences can be made from the tensive truth claims deduced from research question 3?

The embedded core structures of the teacher narratives appeared to be closely linked to cultural heritage, work environment, and the local context. The juxtaposition of the Life Story emplotments and the grand narratives indicated that all three Life Histories could represent regress narratives, which tells of efforts to

preserve status quo or traditional practices within schools. All the teachers appeared to preserve ideals and practices that resonated with the Norwegian Unified School model of the 1930s to 1990s, and its emphasis on egalitarian, democratic, inclusive, formative, and folk-oriented education. Deep cultural currents of religious, gender, and folk perspectives and practices, traceable back to the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, also seemed to be preserved in the negations of policy reforms at local levels. In line with the conclusions of the project 'Lærende Regioner' (Langfeldt, 2015) that cultural practices cannot be transported like merchandise, the narrative analysis did not find the preservation of the ideals of the Norwegian Unified School to have a general or essential character, it rather signified something quite specific, historically and culturally, in the different and particular contexts studied. Based on the tensive truth claims deduced from question 3, my conclusions (inferences) were that the Life Histories express various ways of resistance against or negotiation of policies that fail to match the local school culture and communal heritage (care vs. carelessness or ignorance). In addition, all teachers seem to embrace a child-centred perspective resembling the ideals of the reform-pedagogical policies and curriculum of the 1930s and the 1960s to 1980s.

#### LIMITATIONS AND POSSIBLE BIASES AT THE THIRD LEVEL OF ABSTRACTION.

At this level of abstraction, the individual Life Stories are metaphorically linked to phases of modernity in the Norwegian history of education on a national and a local level. The links of 'resonance' drawn between the narrative emplotment and hierarchy of priorities could be criticised for being selective or random in character when it comes to:

- The construction of the grand narratives (Appendix 2)—representing a 'mixed bag' of source material and historical perspectives (e.g. the combination of biographic and institutional or societal perspectives within educational literature, newsletters, homepages, etc.).
- The construction of the Life History matrix, where certain historical events, ideals, or pioneers are metaphorically linked with the Life Stories emplotments and hierarchies.
- The choice and use of metaphors in the analytical abstraction

Like the selection of cases for the Life Story reconstruction, this level of interpretation has also followed what Ricoeur describes as a movement between 'guess and validation' (much similar to the concept of 'abduction'). In the analytic process, I have not been preoccupied discerning a causal link between historical development and teachers' embodied beliefs and agency (in a scientific sense), but rather have been looking for expressional (metaphorical) similarities between educational ideals and discourses of the past and the beliefs and actions presented in the teachers' narrative accounts. My literature and media searches have thus been characterised by moving back and forth between the Life Story accounts and the historical literature, constructing a grand narrative outline that is relevant to the narrative emplotments, but also broader contexts connected to a historical (calendar) timeline. This way, the historical literature and media sources would serve to identify different cultural and historical facets of educational discourses, policies, and practices, thus widening the scope of interpretation of the Life Stories. It might be argued that the process of guess and validation introduces a risk of biased interpretations coloured by my personal and normative projections and selectivity. In this regard, I find that Ricoeur and Goodson's approaches have provided me with a proper distance from my own prejudgements and understandings (i.e., Ricoeur's notion of a 'fusion of horizons' between the interpreter and the text—or what he terms 'appropriation'). The observable changes and discrepancy in my understanding of the narratives at the Naïve and Deep phases of interpretation serves as an example of a dialectic and hermeneutic transformation in comprehension (what Ricoeur would term 'the course of recognition').

The course of recognition starts at the very first encounter with the participants. The distanciation involved in the interpretive process represents a mandatory guiding principle in Ricoeur's hermeneutic and ethical approach. In the interview settings, I explicitly communicated that my intentions with the study were to get an inside perspective on the Norwegian teachers' life and work. I put a strong emphasis on conveying that my intentions were not to evaluate or uncover teaching practices in need of improvement. Recognising the teacher's 'outlook' did however not imply

consenting or endorsing their practices and beliefs. It rather implied efforts on my side to understand the subjective and discursive rationale, as well as the context on which the practices and beliefs rested. It required efforts of open-mindedness and a listening attitude both in the interview settings and in the interpretations of the teacher-narratives. In this 'course of recognition', my own prejudgements and suspicions were subject to critical inspection, particularly in the review of the historical material. This is most evident in the case of Heidi, where I in the Naïve Phase of interpretation 'placed' her in the category of teachers who perceived teaching to be just a job among many possible jobs that might give meaning and joy to their daily lives. During the Structural phase of interpretation, and even more in the Deep phase, my understanding of her position, beliefs and priorities drastically changed. An initial picture of a woman who was preoccupied with harmony and self-fulfilment changed into an image of a teacher 'in combat', shielding her pupils from external intrusion and damage.

Another objection to the analytic approach at the third level of abstraction might refer to the comprehensive use of resources and time invested in historical reviews and construction of historical periodisation and grand narratives. The pressure on time and funding might prohibit a researcher from engaging in such in-depth analyses. It could also be considered an 'overkill' to produce a detailed accounts of a historical event containing information that might not be of direct relevance to the Life Story interpretations. I consider all the mentioned objections to my choice of analytical approach to be relevant. However, in my experience, the broad historical outlines were of great value and relevance in the process of preparing the ground for the fourth level of abstraction—locating elements of refraction at a local, national, and institutional level, not just the individual level. Working with historical literature and sources made me realise how much of my historical knowledge was based on false assumptions or ideological prejudices. An example of this was my assumption that the left-wing policies, historically, had been free from the emphasis on cost-effectiveness and economic growth perspectives. Another was how I had perceived the teachers' professional status to have been high in pre- and early phases of modernity—finding the opposite to be the case. I also assumed that female teachers

historically were lower socially ranked than men. However, their professional status was revealed to be more complex, depending on the geographical localisation. As my historical knowledge increased, I also found that my interpretation of the Life Stories began to change, deepen, and broaden. Like in the case of Heidi, the historical and contextual knowledge invited me to see her narrative accounts as expressions of efforts to transgress the boundaries of her current and former class and gender positions. In the case of Karen, the historical insights into how Kristiansand traditionally had embraced the 'modernity narrative' made the schools' and municipality's strong belief in, for example, 'the Trump design' (open classrooms) more comprehensible. The city's historical strategic position, internationally and nationally, could also serve as a contextual background in the understanding of how global discourses and policy-flows have been 'anchored' in the local educational policy initiative and discourses. The religious roots could also serve as plausible explanations of the ambiguous character of education policies in Kristiansand.

Besides the issues of the selection of historical literature and the use of resources and time, my choice of metaphors might also be viewed as problematic. For instance, it could be argued that my interpretation that the teachers act on the basis of 'care' promotes a glorified image of the profession. As a former teacher and teacher educator, my identification with the teaching profession clearly presents a risk of romanticising the portrayal of the teachers' actions if I were inattentive to the possible and obvious elements of bias in my interpretations and analysis. In this respect, it is important to make clear that 'care' is not meant to represent a normative endorsement of a certain practice or heritage, only that certain cultures, histories, and practices appear to be preserved by the teachers (in their narratives)—some of which could represent restraining roles or undesirable practises, for example, oppressive gender roles, questionable teacher-pupil relations, or poor understanding, attention to or knowledge of the binding premises between educational legislation, research, and teachers' professional mandate. The positive connotation that follows the word 'care', clearly represent a challenge in terms of how my interpretations and conclusions might be read. Ricoeur's use of 'care' signifies the beliefs and heritage that a narrative tends to, and should not be seen as

a normative judgement that I, as a researcher, make of practices, traditions, or attitudes. 'Careless', in turn, does not represent irresponsible acts, but more a lack of historical regards or decontextualised perspectives. To add a notion of responsible or irresponsible in the analysis, I have thus added Simmel's concept of 'sensory overload', where the distance to a metropolis centre (ideologically or geographically) is assumed to influence the degree of responsiveness or blasé attitude to the pace of change or detachment to real life experiences (e.g. in schools). In the structural analysis of the use of language in narratives, the teacher's positions and responses pointed to the first (responsiveness or responsible acts) and central policymakers/policies to the latter (blasé attitude or irresponsible acts). This again, does not indicate that policymakers necessarily *have* a blasé attitude or act irresponsibly, only that the narrative emplotments appear to spring from such a tension. The tensive truths generated in the Deep phase of analysis are thus neither objective nor normative in character, but point to dialectic tensions in the narrative plot that do not represent 'external' realities, but nevertheless 'exist' as verbal meanings embedded (fixed) in the use of language (discourse) in the teacher's spoken life story. In the end, the evaluation of the *desirability* of the idiosyncratic responses to GERM (normative perspective) is beyond the task of this study to decide.

#### THE FOURTH LEVEL OF ABSTRACTION—METAPHOR AS A KEystone TO 'THINK MORE'.

The final research question (5), and answer to the main issue of the study is addressed at the fourth level of abstraction: How may a metaphor of policy refraction (based on the three former levels of abstractions) illustrate idiosyncratic cultural responses to the Global Educational Reform Movement (GERM)?

By differentiating the teachers' idiosyncratic responses to GERM by the use of the RDR-model (Refraction, Diffraction, and Reflection), the analysis indicated that the teachers had been negotiating, complying with, or resisting elements of GERM by different means and actions. The findings further indicated that the responses were linked to two sociocultural dimensions: on the one hand, the urban–rural (centre–periphery) orientation, on the other hand, professional/ideological preferences and



identities. These dimensions were particularly evident in parts of the narrative accounts where external actors and programmes were evaluated by the teachers. Examples of this were seen in the way professional advices or research-based interventions were far more welcomed by the teachers than politically initiated projects and reforms. When central policies were embraced, they also tended to resonate with local school culture or pedagogical ideals that historically have characterised the Norwegian Unified School model (care), such as emphasis on inclusive, egalitarian, and formative pedagogical practices (i.e., FLIK or AfL). In this sense, both sociocultural dimensions seem to be linked to a higher order dimension of time and heritage, where traditional ideals were placed higher in the hierarchy of priorities than the new decontextualised policies (GERM). An example of this is how diffractive/reflective negations of GERM were more apparent where the educational policy initiatives lacked local or professional anchoring, particularly in cases where the teacher found the external demands (e.g., central/local policymakers, school leaders, media, or parents) to have a disturbing influence on the learning environment, or the pupils' well-being.

The analysis also gave reason to ask how the managerial styles of school leaders, as well as their political and professional experience, might influence teachers' enactments of educational reform initiatives and discourses. While the methodological design of this study was inadequate in terms of uncovering such correlations or causes and effects, the Life Stories did provide phenomenological insights into how a culturally and professionally grounded (or research based) management may trigger engagement and involvement in pedagogical development projects, generate professional space of autonomy and trust, and heighten the transparency of daily teaching practices (tolerance, acceptance, or encouragement of policy refraction). A contrasting example would be how a decontextualised or accountability-oriented administration of school affairs may lead to professional discouragement and practices of policy diffraction and reflection.

## 8.2 NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES RELEVANT IN THE EVALUATION OF THE FINDINGS

Even though the present study cannot provide evidence of a general negation of GERM in the Norwegian teacher population, the plausibility of the analytic interpretations may be strengthened (or weakened) by the findings of related studies nationally and worldwide.

### *NATIONAL STUDIES.*

Despite the lack of corresponding Norwegian studies sharing my methodological and conceptual approach to education policy, there are studies with similar thematic perspectives, for example, Hermansen & Mausethagen, 2016; Langfeldt et al., 2015; Møller, Ottesen & Hertzberg, 2010).

### *Dislocated (generic) or rooted (traditional) knowledge?*

Hermansen and Mausethagen (cf. 2016, p. 92) address how Norwegian students' results on international and national tests have been used by policymakers to legitimise a turn to a generic knowledge perspective at the expense of the traditional perspectives on knowledge represented by the teaching profession (emphasis on content-matter didactics, experience, and context). Their findings and conclusions are based on two PhD studies in which the empirical material included qualitative data retrieved from school observations and teacher-group interviews in six Norwegian schools (three schools in each project), collected in the period 2009—2011 (Hermansen, 2015) and 2010—2011 (Mausethagen, 2013). Like this study, Hermansen and Mausethagen (2016) examined the professional work of 'translation' required by teachers in the implementations of and engagement with new policy initiatives, and tensions and dilemmas this might generate in terms of professional responsibility and autonomy. According to their findings, the teachers positioned the national test as an external, decontextualised initiative not grounded in the teaching profession.

### *Age or place?*

According to the findings of Hermansen & Mausethagen, the political aim of making the national tests an integrated part of the teachers' daily work was far from being realised. The youngest teachers differed in this respect, however. To a certain extent, they managed to bridge the gap between the political and professional perspectives, perceiving the national tests as useful feedback on their teaching practices (cf. Hermansen & Mausethagen, 2016, p. 98). These findings might lend support to an interpretation of Kristian's positive attitudes towards the national test as a question of age and teacher generation. However, the narrative approach of my study also gave insights into how Kristian's attitudes might reflect a collective response to new policies, as in 'we believe that, and we work to'. It is thus probable to find resembling attitudes to Kristian's in his work setting and environment across teacher generations—pointing more at a cultural or professional discourse than at age. Hermansen and Mausethagen (cf. 2016, p. 100) also registered preferences among teachers similar to those found in my study. Examples of such similarities are:

- Teachers favoured research-based knowledge and results above test results and quality monitoring,
- Teachers tended to perceive research-based knowledge to be representing a professional perspective, in contrast to the results that soft governance instruments generate, even though they both represent an external knowledge source,
- Teachers tended to favour formative approaches to teaching and learning, like AfL [303] initiatives, above policies that lacked a professional and 'internal' anchoring within the teaching profession's knowledge base,
- Teachers' responses were found to be closely related to their didactical knowledge, and perceptions of whether new policies served to improve pupils' learning and well-being or not.

### *Poor information or resistance?*

In a study of how reform aspects related to new policies of quality assessment and basic skills education have been realised and understood at school levels in Norway, Møller, Ottesen and Hertzberg (2010) found that the new principles of governance and school management were poorly communicated by policymakers to school leaders. Their study involved semi-structured interviews of school leaders and

teachers from 10 primary and secondary schools in Norway. Their findings pointed to a limited understanding among teachers of the professional space that the decontextualised management and centralised standards potentially open for at local levels. This made the teachers more constrained by quality-monitoring mechanisms than they needed to be. The researchers concluded that a more thorough introduction and preparation for the new forms of governance from the policymakers probably would have prevented this.

While these findings share similarities with the findings referred to in my study, there are important differences in ways of explaining and understanding the results. According to the narrative analysis in this study, the teachers were not unaware or ignorant of the new policies. Instead, they reacted to a perceived disregard of local school culture and heritage inherent in these policies. Where Møller et al. (2010) concludes that a lack of knowledge or adequate information might be a way to understand the low presence of change in the professional perspectives and understandings in schools in the aftermath of the new reform initiatives, my findings point in another direction. According to the analysis of the teachers' Life Stories, a preservation of traditional teaching practices in schools was plausibly rooted in an inherited professional identity, local context, and teaching practices—not in a lack of information or knowledge of political directives and regulations among teachers. Contrary to Møller et al. (2010), the analysis indicates a professional experience and acute awareness of dilemmas, tensions, and effects that the new assessment and skill orientations might generate, in all three stories. These effects applied to classroom settings, learning environment, and the interactions between school, parents, and pupils. The results of my study thus point more in the direction of both a deliberate and 'habitual' (implicit) negation of reform initiatives, rather than an uninformed attitude among teachers. However, I find indicators in my own study that support parts of Møller et al.'s (2010) interpretations. This particularly applies to their conclusion that potential quality improvements and educational development processes might have been stalled by a poorly established dialogue between political and professional actors and by a relational distance between the governing institution levels and the local school settings.

### *Transportation and dislocation of culture.*

The findings of the formerly mentioned national research project 'Lærende Regioner' (Langfeldt, 2015) also supports the interpretations in my study. This comprehensive and methodologically varied study found the differences in regional school results on national tests to be related to culturally and historically embedded teaching practices influenced by deep structural currents and individual agencies not suitable for transport across contexts. Arriving at similar conclusion as Langfeldt (2015), I find that my study also adds insights into how a political lack of sensitivity to local/professional history, culture, and context might lead to diffraction/reflection of policies, where educational output-data merely provide a pseudo-representation of implementation progress and results at school and classroom levels. In this sense, the problem of centralised or decontextualised policies are not just the issue of cultures' transportability, but just as much the unreflected presence of 'silent traditions' (habitus) or the subtle character and implicit influence of existing cultures and practices (see Bourdieu, 1977). An example of this is seen in Heidi's diffraction of the screening test policies, where her actions can be interpreted as unreflected and automatised prioritisation of the child's needs rooted in her individual and professional habitus—not as a deliberate act of disobedience. (i.e., 'it goes without saying because it comes without saying', Bourdieu, 1977, p. 167). Diffraction can thus be understood as expressions of what may be termed 'implicit practice' (acts of 'agape' and 'care'), not just deliberate or rational actions (acts of 'justice' and 'perjury').

### *INTERNATIONAL STUDIES.*

Looking at the study's findings in light of international studies of how global policies are responded to on national and local levels, it is obvious that the topic has come to be a growing field of interest, especially in studies of education policies.<sup>32</sup> The ideographic character of this study does, however, makes it hard to compare its findings with those of other countries, cultures, and communities, since contextual

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<sup>32</sup> See the findings of the cartographic mapping of research related to 'policy refraction' presented in Chapter 2 and Appendix 3.

responses are not 'comparable' or generalisable sizes and figures. This is also the case with national studies, but international studies additionally lack the common (back)ground that national laws, regulations, and national grand narratives provide. In this regard, it makes more sense to address studies that entail meta-perspectives or alternative analytic approaches to the present study that may help to nuance or correct my interpretation of how global educational movements interacts with culturally and historically grounded practices on local levels. Among the vast number of publications concerned with these issues, I have found the articles by Jason Beech (2009), Matthew Clarke (2012), Koyama & Karnia (2014), and Brown et al. (2008) to be of relevance in the discussion of the findings and assumptions made in this study.

*Marked-ideology or pragmatism?*

In the article 'Policy Spaces, Mobile Discourses, and the Definition of Educated Identities' Beech (2009) discusses how discourses change their meaning and their practical effects as they move from the global space to the state and the practice-based institutions. Beech confronts what he finds to be a widespread assumption in educational policy research that the global educational discourses are governed by a small global elite promoting a neoliberal ideology. He does not dismiss the influence of neoliberal discourses altogether, but rather nuances the picture somewhat—pointing to how an expansion of technological infrastructure has enabled dislocated interactions, which again transforms the educational discourses into diverse and contested spaces of what he terms 'global flows'. To neutralise and reconcile this range of conflicting educational ideals, Beech observes that the global educational discourses have established non-offending formulations to which most nations would agree. This, in turn, has rendered the discourses decontextualised and subsequently out of touch with local culture and alienated from historical experience. This observation could, as I see it, support and widen the understanding of the findings in this study, of how aspects of GERM have been perceived to be dislocated and 'out of place' with the local practices. Just as this study, Beech (2009) also comments on how such decontextualised discourses have been accompanied by a growing emphasis on education that respects diversity. According to him, the tendency to embrace diversity might be linked to the rise of Western postmodern philosophies:

This idea [‘respect diversity’] has gained much visibility in education policy discourses in recent decades. It is being promoted by institutions with different ideologies, such as the World Bank, OECD, UNESCO, UNICEF, and Education International, among many others. The idea has also been taken up, at the level of official rhetoric, by many (if not most) educational systems—even by many educational systems that historically had cultural homogeneity as one of their main goals (Gvirtz and Beech 2008). The origins of this idea can be associated with a change in western political philosophies in which the search for cultural homogeneity within the boundaries of a given nation state was displaced by the idea that cultural diversity is a positive value for society. This is linked to the emergence of post modernism and the weakening of the grand narratives that legitimate a reading of cultural space defined in terms of the geopolitical borders of nation states (Lyotard 1984). Social movements in different parts of the world have actively challenged established narratives, criticising them for being biased in terms of class, gender, ethnicity and culture, and have fought for the representation of alternative identities in their societies.

(Beech, 2009, p. 354)

Beech seems to arrive at a similar conclusion as this study, in that the dislocated normative/ideological relativism (non-offending) global discourses, paradoxically erodes this valued aspect of heterogeneity (in its lack of identity, or in its embracement of diversity through universal standards). Similar to the ambiguities present in the Norwegian Curriculum, ‘The Knowledge Promotion’ of 2006, Beech (2009) also shows how self-contradictive curricular policies emerge when the global discourses are refracted at national and local levels. He exemplifies this by the case of Brazil, where the encyclopaedic tradition was continued in practice, despite the new curriculums organisation around basic competencies and generic skills, and its rejection of the traditional emphasis on encyclopaedic and subject-disciplines. Beech’s example resembles how the teachers in my study preserve the traditional ideals and cultural practices of teaching (i.e., ‘care’).

Even though Beech (2009) is hesitant to endorse the claim of a global neoliberal order, he describes interactive dynamics within the spaces of global flows that I find to be quite parallel to market principles and logics (product promotion/marketing, cooperation, and competition):

Institutions that participate in the global policy space of education need to perform and make that performance visible in order to gain power and, in some cases, to survive. Their performance is evaluated in terms of the scope of their influence. Thus, if the principle of

performativity pervades and shapes politics in the global policy space of education, institutions and individuals who occupy this space will decide whether to collaborate and/or compete with other institutions or individuals depending on how much the network can help them improve their performance/influence.

(Beech, 2009, p. 353)

Beech might be accurate in his observations that the global networks primarily act out of pragmatic considerations, not ideological. Still, marked-ideological underpinnings in the governing mechanisms seems, nevertheless, discernible in the final enactments of global policy discourses, both according to Beech's statement on performativity, and the findings of the present study, of how teacher's experience and negate aspects of GERM that emphasise educational performance at the expense of pupils' learning, well-being or dignity. The presence of neoliberal ideology might thus not be visible in the global policy discourses, but is seen in the practical consequences of soft-governance mechanisms, e.g. in their use of 'New Public Management' (i.e., test- and output monitoring, educational standards and accountability mechanisms).

#### *An absence of politics in education policy?*

Studying the rhetorical use of language in the Australian federal government's recent educational policies, and particularly the notion of an 'education revolution', Clarke (2012) argues that educational policies are becoming absent of politics. In contrast to Beech's differentiation of the global educational flows and hesitance of announcing an existence of a 'neoliberal order' in education policy, Clarke argues that it actually might be the neoliberal foundation in new educational policies that generates the apparent global consensus on particular practices, such as educational standards, high-stake testing regimes, or the managerial discourses of 'quality' and 'effectiveness'. Leaning on the works of Mouffe, Laclau, and Rancière, he reflects on how neoliberal education policy may entail depoliticising qualities, by reducing political concerns in education to matters of technical efficiency (cf. Clarke, 2012, p. 297). Proclaiming that policy relates to 'the authoritative allocation of values', while politics represent the prioritisation of and between these values, Clarke reasons that:



The reduction of the political to the technical is not only anti-political but also anti-democratic, with violence often unrecognised behind appeals to consensus, commonsense and 'rationality'.

(Clarke, 2012, p. 297)

Clarke exemplifies this by pointing to how the new policies' increased constraint on professional trust and collaborative relationships is silenced by the fact-proclamation in educational policy documents that 'competition leads to improvement of performance for all'. Clarke's notion of the possible implications of such instrumental policy rhetoric resonates highly with findings in my study, where the teachers, especially Heidi and Karen, describes the 'ignorant' or 'careless' approach of Norwegian policymakers. This is especially apparent in Clarke's statement on how neoliberal education policies lead to individualisation or atomisation, where educational actors are perceived as entities isolated from their surrounding context, history, and societal structures:

This individualisation is evident in the frequent lack of recognition of the key role of context in understanding the work of individuals...This neo-liberal world of self-entrepreneurial individuals is also evident in the policy intention to offer 'rewards for great teachers' (Garret, 2011), which again assumes that individuals alone account for excellence and ignores material factors, such as resources, as well as less tangible factors, such as school ethos, all of which may play a significant role in individuals' performance. Such individualisation resonates with Wendy Brown's argument that 'no matter its particular form and mechanics, depolitization always eschews power and history in the representation of its subjects' (2006, p. 15).

(Clarke, 2009, p. 302)

In addition to the apparent lack of recognition of locality, Clark addresses, much like Beech (2009), the consensual fable or panacea of a 'fissureless' society, and how the preoccupation and rhetoric's of 'diversity' underrates the aspects and practical realities of disadvantage and structural/systemic inequalities—consequently eroding the role and function of politics (cf., Clarke, 2009, p. 302). Clarke's reflection might serve as a broader, philosophical understanding and background to the findings of how teachers and schools respond to elements of GERM with acts of 'care', since the ideals of the Unified School model has been related to welfare and egalitarian aims of equity and equality, and not to competition, efficiency, and excellence. Clarke's

arguments are highly in tune with Ricoeur's notion that ideological narratives which generate more or less deterministic anticipations of the future or 'common fables of glory' to be acts of 'political violence' which risk constraining peoples' and societies' capacity to think and act (cf. Ricoeur, 2005, p. 149). In this sense, the neoliberal policies might be both interpreted as depoliticised global policies or expressions of totalitarian global politics or both, both representing potential risks of violence on national/local democracies and communal/individual autonomy.

*Transparency that obscures?*

In their article 'When Transparency Obscures', Koyama & Kania (2014) present their study of 'the political spectacle of accountability', which they have explored through looking at 'onstage'/'backstage'/'offstage' conducts (i.e., stage-terminology of Goffman, 1959) of educational policymakers in New York City. Their findings show similarities to the patterns of diffractions described in my study, revealing that a high emphasis on transparency (output-monitoring and accountability) paradoxically may result in an obscured picture of school realities (diffraction/reflection). Koyama and Kania, in contrast to my study, do not study beliefs and practices of teachers. However, they do uncover shadowed practices (reflections) of *education policymakers* and describe their potential consequences. According to their findings, policymakers disguise racial achievement gaps and the negative schooling experience of Black and Latino students through accountability measures. Looking at the implementation and monitoring of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), with its policy-based punishment of low-performing schools, they add that:

NCLB not only fails to lessen racial and class achievement gaps, it also normalizes racism by disguising it within narratives of accountability and measures of transparency.

(Koyama & Kania, 2014 p. 148)

Koyama and Kania (2014) also argue that the use of transparency to obscure 'backstage' collusion appears to rest in policymakers' needs to justify and legitimise their public actions 'onstage'—securing their future positions and careers. They find that data-transparency not only raises questions of epistemology, but also ontological considerations, noting that:

Because transparency and accountability claim to offer a measurable, calculable and neutral representation of the reality and the practices of schools, they have become part of a discourse of ‘common sense’ policy solutions. However serious questions remain as to radical critique of how it is that we come to know and understand the world and how the world renders itself visible to our understanding is necessary in order to develop ‘new forms of representation, new types of knowledge and epistemological criteria’ (Grosz, 2005, 179). It is only through sustained investigations and critiques of the ways in which transparency has gained such currency in current neoliberal education policy that we might recognize what goes on in the popularized political spectacle hides more than it reveals.

(Koyama & Kania, 2014, p. 159)

Juxtaposed with the findings in my study, transparency-management appears to involve a risk of obscuring local practices (actions of diffraction/reflection), both on a school and teacher level, as well as on policy-actor levels—indicating that there is good reason to question the ‘factual’ and ‘objective’ character of educational test-results, and the use of these as accountability measures in policy monitoring of quality improvement in classrooms, schools, districts, or nations.

### **8.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE PREMISES OF THE HERMENEUTICAL ARCH**

The application of Ricoeur’s interpretation theory in empirical research is relatively scarce, particularly in critical studies (Wodak, 2011). The lack of comparative studies might be a weakness, making it difficult to evaluate the methodological strength of my study. Reviewing the hermeneutical arch in light of critical theories and other hermeneutical approaches, Wodak (cf. 2011, p. 623) argues that Ricoeur’s interpretation theory is limited in its sensitivity to material and structural dimensions of context, and also to critical self-reflection. She suggests that elements of intuitive and non-transparent speculations would be reduced if the theory were broadened also to encompass linguistic, cultural, historical, philosophical sources and critical discourse perspectives. In her view, this would help the analysis become more systematic and ‘retroductable’ (transparent and retraceable). Wodak’s critique seems to capture some of the limitations in the hermeneutical-phenomenological operationalisations of Ricoeur’s interpretation theory as seen in, for example, the nursing studies listed above. However, based on my own readings of Ricoeur’s work, which also includes

his later publications, I find his texts to entail detailed prescriptions of interpretation procedures that require the interpreter to engage in a highly systematic and transparent analysis. In combination with his narrative theories and the work on metaphor, where a person's narrative is understood as a carrier of a communal history (i.e., 'care'), and where metaphor is used to cast on to new ways of comprehending what the text is about, a critical dialectical analysis of actor/structure dimensions in a text is made possible. In Ricoeur's (2005) last publication, *The Course of Recognition*, the interpreters are provided with a way to scrutinise actively their own presumptions and beliefs in what Ricoeur describes as a process of *appropriation*. Appropriation is an interpretive mode of distanciation (i.e., 'oneself as another'), where the foreign elements of a text gradually are made familiar through the fusion of the horizons of the reader and the text (see Chapter 3).

Considering that Paul Ricoeur's writings on interpretation, hermeneutics, and metaphor were published years before he developed his narrative theory, it could be argued that concepts associated with different periods of his writing are incompatible. The justification for my particular adaptation of his concepts is that Ricoeur never left or rejected his former perspectives when entering the field of narrative; he rather used his former work as a basis to elaborate his thinking. His work on the rule of metaphor serves as a justification for his move to narrative and history. With reference to the close relationship between Ricoeur's early and late writings, I have thus treated some of his early concepts on interpretation and on history and narrative as synonyms.

The choice of using Ricoeur's hermeneutical arch as a conceptual and methodological guide in my analysis does not imply that I find this model without weaknesses. Based on my present understanding of the hermeneutical arch—and open to the possibility that my arguments might be based on misunderstandings—I find the premises of Ricoeur's model to be somewhat presumptuous. This particularly applies to the assumption that a meaningful whole is always present and can be discovered in texts. The possibility of actually dealing with fragmented and ambiguous constellations/relations is, as far as I can tell, to be expected in some narratives. This probability is necessary to keep in mind, not only in the interpretation

process but also when considering my possible private ‘colouring’ of the interpretations as a dialectic counterpart to whatever wholeness or units I might find in the narratives.

It could also be argued that the hermeneutical arch communicates a rather hierarchical perspective on the process of interpretation, by emphasising the successive movement from a Naïve phase to a Deep phase in textual analysis. Although Ricoeur argues that validation of an interpretation would require justification of being more plausible than other interpretations, the strong assumption of the interpretation moving in succeeding stages from Naïve to comprehensive might kindle overconfidence in my interpretations and weaken my ability to identify the possible strength of alternative interpretations. As I understand Ricoeur, however, the different phases of interpretation are not to be perceived as hierarchical structures, but rather as *successive* stages in a temporary sense, since they always are part of a circular hermeneutical process. The ‘phases of interpretation’ are much in line with how a composer works with musical themes or melodies (parallel to Life Stories), adding layers of structure, modulation, and instrumentation into an orchestrated composition (parallel to Life Histories). This ‘contextualisation’ and development of the theme enables the composer to ‘tell the story’ in a deeper, richer, and more nuanced way than the bare theme can bring about in itself.

#### **8.4 THE ‘PROBLEM’ OF ECLECTICISM**

My use of concepts and directions of interpretation in this study has been eclectic in character—combining a broad range of theoretical perspectives (e.g., narrative, post-structural, critical theorist), methodological approaches (e.g., ideographic, cartographic, historical, philosophical), and analytic procedures (phenomenological, semiotic, and critical metaphorical). Eclecticism is traditionally criticised for its atheoretical pragmatism and lack of methodological rigour, and also for its paradigmatic ‘ignorance’ and vagueness in its handling of theoretical concepts (cf. T. Stray, 2013, pp. 394-395). My approach could be criticised from a traditional paradigmatic discourse, where research paradigms or perspectives are justified and legitimised as to how they differ and position themselves to other established

paradigms or fields of research. Stray's answer to this criticism (applied within a clinical/educational discourse) is as follows:

The eclectic approach [applied in Stray's PhD dissertation] does not represent atheoretical pragmatism, but openness and respect for the value inherent in the diversity of theoretical and methodological perspectives applied in modern clinical and educational psychology. Differences in theoretical and methodological perspectives are valuable, not only because they [often] complement each other, but also in that they provide correctives and contrast to each other, which subsequently stimulates a differentiated way of thinking.

Stray, 2013, p. 395 [my translation]

The practice of discursive criticism of research originating from contrasting scientific paradigms are less common today than in the early phases of modernity, and we are witnessing a rapid change towards the use of 'mixed methods' and also of an increased crossing of borders in theoretic and scientific conceptualisation and theory (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). Much like the liquid identity formation observed and conceptualised by Baumann (2004), researchers increasingly take part in projects involving a collaboration between contrasting research traditions and approaches. An example of such a collaboration is the mentioned Norwegian study by Langfeldt et al. (2012), in which a mixture of historical case studies, classroom observations, and traditional survey-oriented approaches were applied. This research strategy contributed to an unusually rich and varied data material, and to some very well-founded conclusions (see Chapter 1). Instead of stressing differences, eclectic researchers and research projects concentrate on and explore the possible gain and fruitfulness of an inter-exchange of perspectives and methodological strengths, or as Lincoln et al. (2011) argue:

Indeed, the various paradigms are beginning to 'interbreed' such that two theorists previously thought to be in irreconcilable conflict may now appear, under a different theoretical rubric, to be informing one another's argument.

(Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011, p. 97).

This approach is also much in line with the reflections of Ricoeur (2005) on the potential path to new understandings inherent in the distancing or dialectic tension between two perspectives. Instead of arguing traditionally from ontology to

method, I have, in resonance with Ricoeur's propositions, explored epistemology *through the path of methodology*. I have thus allowed Ricoeur's hermeneutical arch of interpretation to be confronted, supplied, corrected, and supported by different research approaches and perspectives—generating a tension necessary to creatively expand the status quo in research approaches to knowledge, in this case to how GERM meets local 'ground'.

To many readers the special approach applied in this study might appear cumbersome, time-consuming and perhaps overstating the importance of contextual and historical analysis in the interpretation process. As with most qualitatively based research projects, broad generalisations cannot be drawn from one study alone. The 'heart' of such research might not be generalisability, but rather relevance and context sensitivity. This might be illustrated in the different interpretations of the mentioned study by Møller et al. (2010). It is perfectly possible that the three teachers involved in my study would have come up with answers in the structured interview applied by Møller et al. (2010) that would have supported the main conclusions of their study. As I pointed out in my masters dissertation (Stray, 2008), traditional sociological methods, including structured interviews, are limited in that the questions asked are phrased and structured by others. In this sense, they are embedded in external discourses (including the researchers') that may result in misleading interpretations of the participants' answers and actions. By asking subjects to tell their life story without leading questions, the fairly independent 'structuring' or emplotment of the storylines (as applied in the Ricoeurian hermeneutical arch) might provide information and understanding that traditional pre-structured methods would risk filtering out or mask. When the teachers are allowed the freedom to tell their own story, uninterrupted by an interview guide or a questionnaire, the culturally and historically embedded (idiosyncratic) dimensions of the teacher's attitudes and responses to policy changes are potentially given a voice (depending on the level of trust and context of the interview setting). This does not mean that the conclusions drawn from my own analyses are representative of the Norwegian teaching profession, or the only way of interpreting the empirical material in my study. What the three Life Histories presented in this study convey—

corroborated by other 'context- and history-aware' studies of the same theme—is that there is no simple trajectory from a centrally initiated policy change to its realisation in local practice. Each teacher is an agent, interpreting, understanding and practicing his or her profession based on his or her history and cultural heritage. The same could be said of the school setting the teacher is a part of, the local community and municipality, and so on. Each level—from the habitus of the individual teacher to other local agencies, will 'listen' to central policymakers with their 'local' ears, and adapt to new policies in idiosyncratic ways that may or may not be perceived correctly by the central agencies.

## **8.5 ETHICAL DILEMMAS**

The study of life histories is a delicate act of balancing. One important issue involves the care and handling of the individual state of the participants, and the risk of imposing a stressful and unpleasant situation, when placing the participants in an open and unstructured situation led by a stranger, as in this study. The requested act of remembering and recounting their personal life story in this open-ended way could also contribute to a reactivation of negative memories, or a triggering of unpleasant emotional reactions in some participants. In extreme cases, the freedom to choose theme and direction of the story might incur a state of disillusionment or resignation if the participating teacher were currently experiencing severe constraints or setbacks in his or her current life or work setting.

Another issue concerns my own involvement as an interviewer and as an interpreter of the stories. My responsibility for creating a supportive and collaborative atmosphere in the interview setting should be obvious. What would possibly imply a greater challenge was the need for personal non-involvement and non-leading communication from my side, required by the Life Story/Life History approach. This pertains both to the interview situation and to the later phases of structuring and interpreting the stories. Critical distance is especially important in the interpretation process, particularly in cases where the researcher shares a common class background or resembling life experiences or attitudes. In this study, my own personal biases and background as a former teacher and teacher educator might



have introduced a risk of romanticising the teachers' actions and beliefs, for example, by openly or subtly defending the teacher's account, or by twisting poor judgements or courses of actions by the teacher into more personally preferable and gratifying frames of explanation.

Some *might* find that I have presented the teachers' stories in an overly sympathetic way. The process of viewing and interpreting the teachers' line of argument in light of their life experiences, beliefs, and actions, and situated in a historical, cultural, and environmental context, would normally be expected to trigger a sense of empathy, sometimes also sympathy or even antipathy. Moreover, the possibility that my interpretations and conclusions could have been contaminated by such biases cannot be ruled out. This possibility was one of the main reasons for choosing the Ricoeurian approach to Life Histories, and not the collaborate approach recommended by Goodson et al. (1980; Biesta et al. 2008; Goodson, 2008). The Ricoeurian process of *appropriation*, as formerly described in Chapter 3, gave me a tool that helped me enter a mood of *distanciated* listening, characterised by an *act of recognition* rather than an over-involved projection of my own sentiment and understanding. To be distanciated does not mean to be distant or to express an objectifying attitude. On the contrary, in the Ricoeurian sense, it would be an act of ignorance if the life story accounts were not handled with a sense of 'care' and respect for the vulnerable situation of the interviewee. This also pertains to the interpretation of parts of the stories that would not resonate with my own personal and political biases, not the least in my portrayal and understanding of the policymakers supporting the GERM agenda. As I often experienced through the different phases of interpretation, the special Ricoeurian emphasis on the act of recognition increased my awareness of these biases, which in turn helped me to better understand the premises and rationality of attitudes supportive of the GERM agenda. As I shall argue in the next section, the growth and acceptance of the 'fluid' modernity, is not necessarily motivated by 'capitalist greed' or 'educational instrumentalism', even if this initially might have been an 'implicit' prejudice from my side—referring to my ideological and scientific basis in critical theory, the unified school model, and Bildung traditions in education.

## 8.6 CONCLUSION AND WAY FURTHER

The title of this study is 'The Teacher's Ways in Times of Fluidity'. The overarching question embedded in this title is: What relevance has modernity, with its inherent race for change, rationality, instrumentalism, and excellence, to the local refractions of educational policy changes? As portrayed in all three Life Stories of this study, time, pace, and societal acceleration seem to be important dimensions in the comprehension of the teachers' idiosyncratic responses to GERM. These dimensions are sometimes expressed as local cultural 'slowness' or an opposite 'metropolitan' urge for change and tempo; in other cases, as signs of stress and unfulfillment, or other negative reactions to constant demand for tempo and effectiveness—combined with worries about the strain these demands put on children and pupils.

As pointed out in the analyses, the 'resistance' to change coming up in at least two of the Life Stories, might have been interpreted as unprofessional attitudes, conservatism, rigidity, or even ignorance. What the deeper analyses revealed was that the teacher's responses were founded instead in positive and locally grounded values, representing what Ricoeur would have termed 'care' in his broad definition of the word. These attitudes were shown to resonate highly with former historical periods of humanism, reflected in educational traditions as reform pedagogy and the social democratic traditions of equity. What was of special interest in the findings was that all three teachers, independent of their attitudes towards modernity and to the metropolitan state of mind, seemed quite aware of the GERM agenda and the ambiguity implied in its policies (e.g., emphasis on inclusion and education for all on the one hand, and accountability, New Public Management rhetoric, evidence based decontextualised educational practices on the other). Also, all three teachers seemed to have resisted and negotiated the GERM agenda by working out their personal or idiosyncratic ways around its ambiguities, presumably to preserve their professional dignity, as well as protecting the pupils from the 'Times of Fluidity'.

Another aspect of modernity is the centralisation of governance and the flourishing of new bureaucracies, all engaged in implementing new reforms and policies in the local communities. The Norwegian Educational Directorate is such an

institution with a mandate to develop and implement new educational reforms. As shown in the historical account (Appendix 2), the centralisation and decentralisation of power has fluctuated throughout Norwegian history. In Norway, scepticism towards the capital and central governance has a long tradition, stemming from 400 years of Danish rule. This scepticism of 'foreign' governance can also be seen in a rather 'stubborn' and resistant attitudes towards EU membership in the Norwegian population over the last 50 years (Seierstad, 2014). A similar scepticism is apparent in the analysis, at least in two of the Life Histories (and indirectly also in the third). It is impossible to say from this study alone if these attitudes are common to Norwegian teachers. The stories might nevertheless convey an important message implying that to succeed with modern reform policies in the Norwegian school, the centre-periphery aspect has to be considered carefully. The scepticism towards elitism seems to be growing and openly expressed in many areas, and is often met with a corresponding rhetoric of populism and nationalism from the central governance. Parallel processes can be seen in the reception of Brexit in Britain and in most other EU countries, as well as in the 'establishment' reactions to the election of Donald Trump as president of the USA. What is communicated from 'the elite' when meeting public resistance and frustration from local communities in this way is often interpreted as arrogance and even disdain within these public communities. They might easily develop into what Ricoeur (2005) terms 'political violence', which is not to be understood as violent public reactions, but rather unintended effects of what Ricoeur ([2004] 2006) terms 'carelessness' and 'ignorance' expressed by politicians and policymakers.

Signs of political carelessness and ignorance of the central governance have been portrayed frequently in the national and local history of education in Norway, and are frequently found to be present in the three Life Histories in this study, although expressed in different ways. The conclusions that can be drawn from this, together with the shared supportive attitudes of the traditional humanistic and reform-pedagogical stances seen in Norwegian school history, are that it appears to create a need in the teachers to circumvent negative effects of GERM and seek solutions

within the negotiable space that the national laws and curriculums allow, without resisting the policy agenda in an openly and easily observable manner.

#### THE NEED FOR LISTENING EARS.

The results of the present study are not to be understood as 'facts' about Norwegian teacher's attitudes to reforms, but rather as hints or suggestions to the policymakers, and as an invitation to 'listen back' or become more aware of, and perhaps also more respectful of the experiences and knowledge that Norwegian teachers represent. What seems to be the central 'message' from Heidi, Karen, and Kristian in this study is that much of their professional energy is spent on 'caring for' the pupils, protecting them from the adverse effects of the GERM policies, such as instrumentalism and test regimes. The study also points to the possibility that important information about how the reforms are received may not be *refracted* back to the policymakers, that is, transparently conveyed as true responses that can be rationally treated and constructively applied by the central agencies. Instead, the real responses may be concealed or not communicated at all (diffracted). Also, the responses received by the central governance may be falsely communicated or understood as supportive of the reforms, merely 'reflecting' preconceptions of the policymakers.

In the process of evaluating new educational policies (or new policies in general), research is of decisive importance. The way this research is organised and performed is no less important if the aim is truly to grasp what is going on 'out there'. I believe that no central governance, no matter its political colour, is interested in stimulating diffractive/reflective responses but, instead, has a rational interest in a balanced and mutual dialogue with the local agents, in this case, the teachers. The results of this study may indicate that such a mutual communication has been lacking or insufficient in the introduction and implementation of the new educational reforms in Norway. The scientific community may share a responsibility for this situation, in that most of the research on policy changes traditionally has had a 'top-down' agenda, asking: 'Are centrally imposed policy changes successful?', or 'Why are they not successful?' instead of asking: 'What do the people affected by the policy changes believe in,

want, or need, and how can these needs and visions, presented and communicated by the professional experts on educational real life practices—the teachers—be met?’. In line with the recommendations of Priestly et al. (Priestly & Humes, 2010; Priestly, 2011), what seems to be needed is collaborative research (bottom-up), which perceives signs of diffraction or reflection as important messages that need to be understood and met with respect and with open listening, rather than suspicions of ‘ignorance’ and unprofessional attitudes.

Through my literature search for recent documents issued by various world organisations and institutions involved in the GERM agenda, I have observed an increased sensitivity to local refractions of educational reforms. In the last couple of years, international organisations and agencies, such as the OECD, UN, and even the International Monetary Fund (IMF), have gradually begun to reconsider their alliance with neoliberal ideology (see e.g., IMF’s article, ‘Neoliberalism: Oversold?’, by Ostry, Loungani, & Furceri, 2016). Following a growing evidence of negative side effects of neoliberal education and New Public Management, a recognition of the importance of listening and adapting to local context, culture, and history is emerging. OECD’s report ‘Education Policy Outlook 2015: Making Reforms Happen’, shows a reconceptualisation of the organisation’s perspective on policy reforms and implementation that appears to contradict their former approach (demonstrated by the involvement in the Education for All agenda and its establishment of a universal educational architecture and quality monitoring). In their report, OECD recognises that:

Much evidence highlights the importance of contextual factors in policy development and implementation. Policy reforms differ according to social, cultural and economic contexts and in different political structures.

(OECD, 2015, p. 6)

Other signs of change can be registered within the commercial educational industry, which for the last decades has been heavily involved in the supply and development of educational ‘tools’ and methods serving the GERM agenda. This industry has also been a central actor in contributing to the neoliberal rhetoric and to the promotion of ‘accountable’, decontextualised, and ‘evidence-based’ education,

attached to global educational initiatives. Fairly recently, there has been a growing interest from these firms and corporations in adopting a new educational 'language', not only of inclusion and equity but also of 'sustainability', 'deep understanding', and 'collaborative learning' (e.g., P21, 2017; OECD, 2015). Since markets tend to change by altered demands, this new and refurbished strategy is likely perceived to be important to the survival of the industry. The turn in discourse (e.g., from 'skills' to 'deep learning') could perhaps be linked to the growing documentation of how decontextualised approaches have failed to deliver, as reported in the evaluations of the EFA-2015 implementations and results (see Stray & Voreland; 2017; OECD, 2015; TST, 2013). Even if new signals from the educational industry are viewed as purely strategic manoeuvres to preserve a hitherto very profitable business, the changes in rhetoric might be interpreted as a sign of a 'turning of the tide'. If the world really is witnessing what Rudd and Goodson (2017) foresees as 'the long tail of decline for the neoliberal project', alternative and contextually rooted visions of educational policy development will be in need of attention, both by educational researcher and national/local policymakers.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Appendix 2

Appendix 3

Appendix 4



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## **Appendix 1—Three Stories of Teachers' Life and Work**



## HEIDI'S LIFE STORY.

Since graduating from teacher education, Heidi has been practicing as a teacher more or less at the same school, apart from one year when she was transferred to upper secondary school to follow-up one of her pupils from primary school. Her life story accounts mostly revolve around her experience and beliefs as a teacher, but she also shares insights into how private life and challenges influenced her decision to become a teacher, and what sort of teacher she wants to be.

Heidi tells little of her upbringing but gives a short account of her childhood education. She starts the interview by telling of her first years at school and how she remembers being excited about the thought of being a schoolgirl.

Yes, I think I need to go back to.. Kind of make a leap back in time to my early schooldays. I remember really longing for the time when it would be my turn to entering school. I had an older sister who had enrolled two years before me, and I actually started as a six-year-old because I was too impatient to wait another year. At that time, one generally entered school at the age of seven, but I was able to start a year before.

She describes herself as someone who enjoyed school, but at the same time as someone who must have appeared as very shy and quiet in class.

I was a quiet pupil. I guess I spoke. I don't think I spoke a word during all of primary and lower secondary school. I didn't continue any further at that time; I kind of took a break from school life. Yes. But I think you reach a point in life where you kind of get fed up of being quiet all the time. I don't know. I just... I had been silent all through my years at school, but at the same time I was a skilled pupil who managed well. It was just this... I was quite social with my friends. I remember how often we used to visit one another after school. We were a huge class. Thirty pupils, and a lot of girls, spending time in each other's place because we all lived nearby. My school was just a couple of blocks away. So, we were.. I had plenty of friends, but in class, I only spoke if the teacher asked me directly. Except from that, I didn't make a sound. So that was how thing was all through primary and lower secondary school, and I believe that it at some point just didn't feel all that meaningful, being that quiet. You can't... But I was just

very, very, very shy. Awfully shy. If I was spoken to by adults, I got all... Really got this immense sensation of heating up inside. Easily intimidated I would say. Extremely. Yes...

Having finished compulsory school, Heidi recalls being somewhat lost regarding what to do next but decided not to enter upper secondary at that point. Shortly after leaving school, she got pregnant and gave birth to her first child. Facing the challenges of becoming a mother and getting married at an early age, she gradually came to terms about who she wanted to be and become. After three years of marriage, at the age of 21, she decided to resume her education and enter upper secondary school.

After finishing ninth grade [the last year of compulsory school at that time], I kind of found myself lost regarding what to do. And then.. eh.. Then, at the age of 16, I got pregnant and gave birth to a child. So, my whole existence revolved around her, and everything else was kind of put on hold for a period. I have to think.. My oldest daughter.. What was her age when I returned to school again? Well, I got children. One when I was 16, and another girl at the age of 18. And at that point I married my husband, and we. It was really an awful marriage. I shall not go into the details here, because this story revolves around something else, but at the age of 22, I left the marriage. And, I recall only having one thought in my head, eh.. To resc [inc]...That if I was to become a person, a mother to my children, then I had to leave. So, we became this tiny little family, the three of us. And I'd kind of recognised, during my marriage... This growing aspiration of going back to school, kind of reawoke inside of me. Because it had really always been there in the background. So, I thought.. I kind of returned to school during the last year of our marriage, and... I loved it. I just.. I entered an upper secondary business school, because I didn't know whether I would be able to complete three years in a row. At that time you could finish one year at a time and receive your graduation diploma when completed. In those days, the upper secondary school was a bit different... I believe I graduated in 86 maybe? 86, 87? I believe my oldest daughter was four when I started. Maybe 87, I believe it was 87. But I remember concentrating on one year at the time, thinking that time would show whether I would complete or not. And take the steps from there, I guess. And that was in a way... It was in all of this that I got divorced, because my husband couldn't deal with it. That I.. I think he just watched me getting sucked into this school life, which I found so exhilarating. So, it ended in this breakup, but I continued to go to school. So, I completed upper secondary school, eh, while at the same time raising these small children of mine.

Having completed upper secondary school, Heidi recalls being in doubt about what to study, being drawn towards both the world of mathematics and studies that would enable her to work with children. Exploring different studies, her choices seemed

gradually to rely more on existential values than a preference for certain subjects. Taking a course in home economics, more or less as a random choice because she enjoyed cooking, she experienced the joy of making new friends and interacting with other people. The course became, in some sense, a remedy for the loneliness she had felt during her early youth, being a teenage mother.

After graduating from upper secondary, I didn't quite picture what to do next, because I really enjoyed working with numbers, but at the same time I was truly fond of kids. I remember, all the way back when I was a little girl, having my little brother with me.. He was always with me. He was clinging more to me than my mother really. It just was how it was. Was really just like, very, very fond of children. Babysitting. Watching kids. Was just fascinated by it, and just felt this immense love for being with children. But then, yes, I thought about it, but didn't quite know what to do. So, I entered this pre-course in mathematics? It was at ADH , I think that was what it was called then. It was in springtime. But I.. Having followed the course for some time, I gradually realised that this wasn't quite the thing for me. At the same time, I had applied for a study in home economics, a part of the teacher-education program, because I love cooking and that sort of thing. And I thought I'd just try a whole other subject and see how I'd like it. And so entered the teacher education programme to take a one-year study course in home economics. And I thrived. I really enjoyed it. Liked the people there and all. Because I felt, and really, if I think back on my childhood and youth, and especially as [I] became a mother at the age of 16, I got very lonely. It became only me and my kids. I had to work and I had to go to school, and I didn't really have like... The others at my age were in a totally different place in life. I was really, or it wasn't like I sat at home thinking of how lonely I was. I was rather more in a state of determination, wanting to prove that I could manage the lot really. A bit like that. Eh, but then I found going to the course in home economics really fulfilling; so, I decided to apply for the teacher-education programme. So, I entered teacher education. It was a three-year-programme at that time. So, I studied there for three years, completed my studies, and started working here actually.

Before telling of the many years she has spent in her current workplace, Heidi gives a brief summary of the time when she was transferred to another school in the area, following-up one of her pupils from primary school in his first year at lower secondary in order to establish a sense of coherence in his transition from one school to the next.

I've nearly spent all of my years as a teacher here, at this place. I spent one year in a lower secondary school in the area. It is a 1-10<sup>th</sup>-grade school further up the hill from here. And, in one period, working here, I had a pupil with cerebral palsy. He was in a wheelchair. I followed him for three years, here [in primary school], and then I followed him his first year at lower

secondary school. Together with another teacher at the lower secondary school, the plan was to make a good transition for him. After spending one year at this lower secondary school, I returned here. And I kind of feel. It's like I kind of feel..

Leaving this aside, Heidi starts talking about her life as a teacher and the development she has been through and the challenges she has faced as a teacher over the years.

I believe that my life as a teacher characterises my way in life in general really. The first couple of years I did things by the book. I don't suppose I carried out a single thought of my own. I just did as told and followed the protocols as careful as I could. And you know, there has been a lot of reforms coming and going. I think I've followed M87 and then L97, and today we follow the new curriculum, 'The Knowledge Promotion'. (Laughing) So, I have.. Despite all those aims and targets in the different curriculums [of the Knowledge Promotion], and despite my sincere hope that we'll be able to keep the current curriculum for a long time, I believe that the most important thing is to settle, given time to contemplate on one's situation. How one think[s] about the pupils and what you can provide for them. And over all the big and important questions. Because I feel that we haven't really been given space and time to do that. It's been: 'OK, a new. M87' and 'OK, L97, yes'. And they [the curriculums] have really been quite different. I just picture this bunch of seminars, trying to make it work, making new plans that barely is implemented before the next one arrives. But that has changed somewhat the last couple of years. At least now I have, or we have, been teaching by 'the Knowledge Promotion' for quite some time now. And that is why I feel that it [the current curriculum] is. Yes. There is something about coping with the adoption of something new at the same time as you're supposed to be teaching. To be who you are as a teacher, and doing what you find important, important to the children. Yes. So, I actually find the current situation to be somewhat peaceful, even though we continuously have to adjust two new policies. It's all sorts of things. They just come pouring down on us. It seems like we're in this constant fight with the municipality, whether it's about our working hours or just a lot of issues like that. And it can really make one sad, that they need to question these things in the first place. Yes, I feel these things bother me sometimes. But I also feel that it's kind of been my way of... Like being very insecure.. I remember how I, for several years as a teacher, because it was always something that you didn't get time to integrate properly, and for me I believed it came down to never getting on top of things and to make the new fit with whom I was as a person in a manner of speaking. It was all a rush, coping with one demand after another. And more and more things have evolved into this documentation mania. Everything is to be documented. And that can be quite tiring as well. But at least I find things more settled now than it was before. But in a way, I believe that has more to do with my personality and my personal journey. Because I felt, after being through this rather turbulent life, and facing all that really was required of me then, and that I kind of required of myself.. To manage to be a mother, become educated,



become something.. And the feeling you had to.. I guess I always had this feeling of being inferior in a way. Before. Never feeling good enough, always having to fight one's way through and up, if you know what I mean? It drained every power left in me I think. Yes. While now I am, kind of.. And it was the same thing in my teacher career. Because when you're feeling insecure, you'll never be fully satisfied with your accomplishments. I worked and worked and worked, and thought and tried and aimed to do things as correct and well as possible. And then it is just.. It is a tremendous task? It's an impossible task, and you'll never reach the end of it, if that is a goal.. But, that is just something one has to.. If that is one's goal, then one can't be a.. No.. One just can't..

Laughing at how she leaps back and forth in time, making parallels between her personal and professional development, Heidi turns quiet for a bit. When continuing, she briefly summarises the essence of her previous elaboration.

(Laughing for a period). Oh oh my..Eh... The point is, that I just feel very at ease with how things are today. I'm just like, right where I'm supposed to be. I'm feeling good. It's probably because I currently teach.. You know, it's kind of coincidental where you end up working. And I've always taught the older pupils. At lower secondary, I taught a bit home economics and stuff like that. I often taught home economics in the start. And the whole thing about home economics. I like it, and that might also just be how it is at first. You settle with the work you're offered in the beginning. And I'm probably a kind of person that, five years may pass before I begin to think things through.

Again, she leaps back in time, contextualising the processes that led her to her current job situation:

Before that, I just keep on working, just trying to get on top of things. You don't have time to place your feet on the table, contemplating on: 'Do I enjoy what I'm doing?'. Time passes by, and maybe one finds oneself randomly assigned to work at the upper primary level, discovering that this felt more right than teaching at lower secondary. So.. I ended up working at the upper primary level, and that's where I've spent most of my years at this school. Teaching from fifth to seventh grade, having taught challenging and less challenging classes, and classes where everything seems to be working all right. I feel, and it is probably a natural thing that comes with the job. It varies from one year to the next. How much time you spend figuring out the best way to go about.. Providing for the children as good as you possibly can. But, the last three years I've been. I've been teaching first grade. I started doing that after being through a tough period teaching seventh grade. I struggled to make the schooldays good for them. I was in doubt of whether I should have another go at seventh grade, but then the management asked me: 'What would you really like to do?' So, I thought to myself that I haven't tried teaching on the lower levels, with the younger ones, and it would be fun trying, just to see how it was like. And it was just wonderful. But I had never really considered that

before, and that is kind of odd since I really loved being around kids, all since I was a little girl. It's just fun. So much fun.. Now, I just enjoy my job to the fullest, all the time. There is always something to do. They say and do all these things, which we can build our teaching upon and just.. And even though we have to teach by 'the Knowledge Promotion', we have this space and autonomy.. We're not so restricted in a way. We do, of course, have to make sure to note down all the targets for each pupil, in each subject, on a weekly schedule, but one just has to make it into this kind of "contest" and try to have fun with it, like: 'Let's find out how to reach these goals'. Just do it, in a way. That's just a way that I feel it's possible to go about, but that might have to do with the fact that I'm teaching at the lower levels. Here [at these levels], 'The Knowledge Promotion' is manageable. It doesn't occupy.. It doesn't shape me as a teacher in a way. I feel I can be the teacher I want to be for my pupils. And I really enjoy it, I really do. It's so much fun.. It's so amusing.. But still, I do feel the pressure of always having to defend our profession, having to.. It's this distrust, and sometimes that can overwhelm you a bit. But on day-to-day basis I thrive in class, at school, and in my whole work situation. There are good days, and I believe the children experience good days as well. And, in my heart, I know that's the most important thing. They have a long road ahead of them, so it's about giving them a head-start in school, enable them to stand tall in their life journey. It's vital today. And I'm confident that I've been giving my very best in class, to my pupils, and, to my judgment, it's worked out alright.

While elaborating on her current situation and teacher beliefs, she turns to the many school innovation projects and agendas in the municipality. Although she appears a little weighed down under the number of projects going on, some have managed to capture her interest.

The thing is, in this municipality. I don't know how they practice things elsewhere, but there is always an innovation project going on. And recently we've been part of this amazing thing, called: 'Assessment for Learning'. And I do find the way their way of approaching assessment close to my own beliefs on learning and assessment. So, that's exciting. It's really good. We've been practicing this in our school for about five years now, and have become better at placing clear targets of each session, to make it easier for the pupils to follow in class: 'What is nice handwriting, and what are your thoughts on the matter?' Just guiding them through it. And it actually seems like it's easier for them to catch on when the targets and information given is concrete. 'This is what we are going to try to get a grip on in this session. Oh my! How can we go about this?' It's kind of about letting them in, collaborating on reaching the targets together.

Talking about how she finds pupil influence to be important in her teaching, she mentions an innovation program involving the schools in the municipality.

Inclusive learning environment, that's what it's called. And I kind of feel that what we are doing right now, and it sort of fit with the AFL , so I just kind of feel like.. Like it all sort of matches a little better, more than I've often felt before in my teacher career. Because the thought has most often been: 'How on earth am I to make these things work together? How am I supposed to translate these aims into something that I'll be able to teach in class?' And it can be really draining you know, when you just feel that: 'Oh yes it was that, and that, I haven't got to plan the ICT training yet' Right? How am I supposed to encompass it, and create it into something that I will vouch for as a teacher? But that's why.. When we got this letter from the municipality, regarding the inclusion program, we kind of got a bit like.. A bit like: 'Well, well, now there's another paper from the municipality. Oh dear!' (Laughing) 'Okay, we'll have to listen to this then..'. And they had this promotion of the program in a local church just down the hill from here, and I just found myself thinking 'Hey, this is exactly what we already are doing, this is what I believe in and what we are doing!' I actually felt quite inspired after going to that promotion meeting. (Laughing) And that doesn't happen every time does it?

Stating that this is where she finds herself, in brief, today, Heidi continues with the question of the future. Being very content with the present situation, Heidi still seems troubled when thinking about education and the teaching profession in the future.

It's a bit. I believe I can be a bit worried when thinking about it [the future]. Because, we are being imposed with, and pushed, and we're.. For instance, it's like this thing happening right now. People are starting to sue the schools for something that happened in the past, looking for compensations. So I kind of feel that it's a work environment that's being under a lot of pressure. Stressed. But at the same time, I believe, at least for me, experiencing this as a good period in my life, that this way teaching is good, it's good days, that I know a lot of how to make it this way as well. What's good. And knowing that, I might not let things in, which are not good. One has to be very critical of things these days. Because, if we find that what we do is working, that we must not let it go. And by that I don't mean that we should put an end to all educational development. That's not what I'm saying. But there are some good things that one feels are important. When we have a lot of good things going for us, which is good for the children, we can't just abide by everything placed at our table. But I kind of feel that up until now, we've had a tendency to do what we've been told. We gave away everything we've been working for, regarding reducing administrative hours in favour of enhancing the quality of our teaching lessons. All of a sudden, something happened there, leaving us with one more hour of administrative work, instead of less. So, we're in this constant fight against the municipality over working hours. So, I guess it can go both ways. I'm a little bit.. I've been thinking: 'What if someone suddenly figures that there is time for a new curriculum?' Because there's been a while since the last one arrived. But it depends.. We do have the habit of looking to Finland, at least that is what we have been doing the last couple of years. And I don't believe they have changed their curriculum all that often. So it's no use looking at schools over there when.. But

that is what people do these days, or at least has done up until now. Travelled to have a look over there.

One of Heidi's concerns seems to revolve around aspects of accountability and the tendency of having to face challenging demands from parents on behalf of their children.

I really feel we're in this battle. I can... and believe.. Not long ago we had this thing that just drained all my energy right out of me. We were portrayed a bit.. There were scores revealing that our school had a lot of bullying. I believe it was published in [mentions the name of a well-known national newspaper]. I was presented like: 'These are the bully-schools of Norway'. It was this list. And there we were. Our scores were high. And at that time we were quite aware of it, because we have these pupil check-ups every year, where the pupils are asked about how they like school and things like that. And I taught this class in seventh grade at the time, where there were a lot of behavioural challenges. Pupils that had this odd and somewhat fear-provoking behaviour, which might have led to some of the high scores on bullying. That some didn't feel too good at school. They might have been scared. Perhaps nothing ever happened, but they might have been worried that this person might hurt them or something. Looking over their shoulders all the time, feeling unsafe because they couldn't be sure what and if this person would do something to them, or. Just like, a bit insecure. Yes. A bit like that. And when our scores led us to be portrayed like this bully-school, we couldn't say anything. We're not allowed to... And that was really unfortunate, because we had to gather a meeting with the parents, to try to explain. And one might try to explain by telling them that there will always be incidence when a large group of people is grouped together over a period of time, but the hard part is to figure out how to solve things. We try to keep a close eye on things, keep the doors open so that they can come and tell, and do our best. Do what we can. And things have turned out for the better. Our scores today are quite good, but these things come and go. It all depends on.. But I feel that if I look at the group of parents, then some groups have this good tune to it, we're like a team. But with other groups one gets the feeling of having to fight the parents as well. And one can emphasise with them, being faced with all these stories. But, I feel that is an area of improvement, because it has this tendency of turning into a battle arena. Parents are more up front and active on behalf of their children. It's become much like: 'My child shall not..' A bit like that, yes?

Heidi leaves these issues aside and returns to the topic of educational plans and national curriculums, emphasising again how content she is with the current curriculum.

There are a lot of things that cross my mind when thinking about how things will be in the years to come. But I feel at peace. I feel that the things we've established here over the years, teaching the same curriculum which encompasses a space for professional autonomy, to make

it our own, to make something good out of it. We've just had this round, and we're all quite exhausted, of making new plans for everything. We had to because the previous ones weren't too good. We kind of needed more of an overview, and that takes time, and it isn't a whole lot of fun. It isn't a kind of work that I fancy using a whole lot of time on, but we had to and now it's done. And then, if they [the plans] are allowed to be, to be left where they are, and we could work... It's kind of sad to think about, that we have been led to this state where we can't find the power to shout or speak up. It is the only... I'm filled with hope, but if a new curriculum arrives then I feel I will become discouraged. I really do. (Laughter). Because if one has managed to work through all the administrative curriculum work, one really gets the opportunity to implement it of course, but also work with the things that really occupy your time as a teacher. As a good teacher, one has to focus both on the teaching content and at the social relations in class. Making sure everyone is included. And that is a humongous thing. So, if you're stuck doing administrative work and just barely get to plan the upcoming teaching lessons, something is wrong in my opinion. All wrong. And then we'll not be very enthusiastic down there, in the classrooms, and neither will the others. And I don't believe in that. One has to keep one's shoulders low in face of the pupils. There is no room for thinking that: 'I didn't get to finish that work last night and'. If something is obvious these days, it's that. This stress, I can feel it, and it sort of characterises our entire society as a whole, and we need to watch out for that. It's the big bad wolf really. One simply has to calm down. And that is in fact possible to do. But now I refer to teaching in lower primary education, and I might have perceived things very different if I taught at the upper primary levels. I might have felt it then. I don't think so, but I might have. The number of targets and stuff are just growing. I have a son in eighth grade and one in his first year at upper secondary school, and they are doing okay. I don't feel that they are stressed. So I believe we can remove the stress and make them feel that they'll manage. It's the thing about stress. I feel there is a lot one can do about it.

While elaborating on how to deal with stress, Heidi tells of her concerns about how one in education has become more and more occupied with pupil performance and test results. The thought of being governed by pupils' results, which at the time was a highly elaborated issue in educational policy debates, seems to terrify her. She appears somewhat ambiguous when it comes to determining the fruitfulness of the national quality assessment system, asking for some sort of balance between freedom and control.

There are so many screening tests right now, and I do know that in some schools pupils that don't do well on the test are removed, so that they.. Yes, they kind of place the focus on results. And I don't believe we fully can escape that. And I to find.. We just ran this screening test, and I was really anxious on behalf of my pupils. How would they do, what have they understood, and have they like.. Because eh.. But eh.. I just feel that's a terrible focus to have.

And the thought of being paid by results is just awful in my eyes. Really. It's been times when we have, that I've sometimes have excused some of the pupils from taking the screening tests. But then it is about how I consider the whole thing to be too much for the pupil to handle. It would be a painful experience for the pupil. It's just that focus [on results]. And then I don't see the point in.. Some find it a lot of fun to see how many points they can get [on a test]. And if you don't score that well, but still find it fun, that that's OK I guess. But if you're just stranded looking at all the things you're failing at, then.. I feel that when I get to know the pupils, then we have rather come to the conclusion that 'OK, then we can use it as something we do together. Can we do it together and see how far we'll come?' And then we sit and talk about it, and it doesn't become [inc].. That's where the focus should be I think. On the pupils, and what they're exposed to. Yes. If it's alright to let them go through it or not. And there are a lot of them. Screening tests. And we have to face them one way or another. But the thought of being paid for getting good test results... I just find it completely.... It's like, we're busy doing our thing here, and then these screening tests arrive and we have to make them work one way or another. We're obliged to see them through. But, in a way, it doesn't resonate with the spirit around here. I feel there is this good sense here, and the work put in inclusion right now. I don't know whether it is just Vennesla, Kristiansand and Songdalen, or a project related to the southern parts of Norway, because it seems to be on a voluntary basis. And they've chosen to focus on inclusion. And that just fits. I find that to be very wise. It fits with the spirit.

### KAREN'S LIFE STORY.

Karen tells little of her life and upbringing in general. She keeps her life accounts focused on her experience of her education and work as a teacher. She starts the interview by remembering her childhood dreams of adulthood and how these dreams were shattered in upper secondary school when she realised that she wouldn't achieve well enough in mathematics to enter veterinary studies in college:

I didn't plan to become a teacher at the outset. That wasn't what I was supposed to become. But I have always enjoyed school. I have not found anything to be particularly difficult or eh. Yes, so everything went well. And, at that time, I was really into animals, so my vision was originally to become a veterinary. But when I started at upper secondary school and took the 1M [mathematics] study course. I just couldn't keep up. And I tried to get help and stuff, but my teacher just stated that: 'No, you just have to learn all the formulas'. And I didn't find that very helpful, so I gave up. And then I figured that I couldn't continue with the advanced courses when I didn't even master 1M. So that left taking a veterinary education out of the question.

After upper secondary school, Karen chose to take a minor in English, figuring that it might be relevant to a future education. The next year, she applied for both nurse and teacher education:

I think I first received the letter from the teacher education programme, eh here, in Kristiansand, informing that I'd been accepted as a student. I'm not really from here, and I remember my mother phoned me, announcing that: Now you have been accepted at the nurse education as well, if you rather want to do that'. I had kind of this vision of seeing the world and rescuing children in Africa (laughter). But I chose teacher education.

Compared to her English studies, she perceived the teacher-education courses as quite easy but not especially linked to real-life teaching practice.

We learned a lot of pedagogical theories and things like that, but very little revolved around what being a teacher actually involves. Eh, so I hope that the study might.. I know that there

lately has been made some changes, which enables you to choose between a primary and secondary school programme, and so on.

She recalls the teaching practice periods as being more useful, although they also tended to vary in quality from place to place.

I remember it being.. I found the teaching practice periods terrifying (laughter). I must have spent a whole hour just planning one single session. I carefully noted every word I was going to say. But it was kind of.. What I actually learned from these periods varied a lot. But there was one particular practice teacher period that came forth as quite different. There was this female teacher working there, teaching us about classroom management, eh, she gave us very specific tasks for every teaching session. It wasn't just: 'Teach about this in mathematics', but more like 'In your next session, you're going to have a dialog with the pupils on a specific topic that you've chosen to talk about'. Something in that direction. I feel that we learned something from that.

Leaving her education aside, Karen starts to talk about her first teaching experience, picturing herself as fortunate to have been offered a teacher position shortly after graduating from teacher education:

The year I finished my teaching studies, I was kind of lucky because there was this school, or I was offered a position at that point (laughter). I didn't have to search or beg for jobs or anything. Someone called me up on the phone, probably because there was a change in headmasters at the school and many had applied for a leave. We were 14 teachers that were employed that year. So that was a bit eh yeah.. I was taking a course in music that year. Twenty credit points in music that year, in teacher education. So that might have been the reason. They were looking for a music teacher. So at that point, I was lucky and got a permanent position as a teacher after just half a year or so. We were in a bit of luck.

Karen characterises her first experience of being a teacher as awful, being placed with far too much responsibility as a subject teacher, kept on her toes at all times.

I believe it is the worst year I have experienced ever. Except for last year maybe, then we faced a lot of challenges. But it was tough. Music, physical education, English, and mathematics and so forth. There were four different classes in fifth grade, and a couple of classes in seventh grade. They were spread all over, and I was really just a young girl myself. So that was quite demanding. But at the same time, I was fortunate to be the assistant teacher in a couple of classes where I was guided by some very skilled and experienced teachers. I believe that was the place I got some inputs on how to manage a class and teaching sessions. So that was...

Karen pauses for quite some time after this last statement, seemingly in deep thought. Gradually catching up the thread again, she says,



It was quite demanding to Eh.. There were some pupils that, you know, probably struggled with something, creating a lot of disturbance in class. To manage something like that, being in lack of proper experience. And I'm probably the type of person that, well, I didn't share my complaints. I didn't want to admit to anyone that I couldn't cope with it (laughter). So I never went and told that: 'This class situation is hopeless. I can't manage'. So, I just went on, 'gritting my teeth'. There were others that taught the class that just ended up crying in the classroom, and the headmaster came to have a talk with my pupils. But I myself denied having any problems. Somehow I got through it, and I guess I gained a great deal of insights from these experiences. Just the experience of teaching music and physical education in classes that're not your own is quite.. It's quite an effort.

Thinking of this experience, Karen resonates that this might have been the first time when strategic planning and organisation of teaching lectures became important issues, placed in circumstances that required a thorough analysis of what worked or not, in the light of what was educationally desirable:

'It's kind of 'learning by doing'. Piaget and theories didn't help much when I was stuck there, with kids running on tables. (Laughing) What theory should I apply in this situation? No.. So that was kind of a rough start.'

Karen tells of how the aspect and awareness of her being a young and novice teacher influenced her self-confidence when facing new challenges at work.

I probably was a subject teacher for two years or so, then I was appointed as a contact teacher for a class in fifth grade. Eh, and many times I've thought that there might have been a lot of odd stuff going on back then, that could have been solved better. It went all right, but recently I've been thinking that it's not easy being young, expected to.. And, I especially remember the reaction of having parents being twice my age coming to parents' meetings, listening to me talking about their child. And I kind of lacked the knowledge, really (Laughter). So, there were some occurrences back then that weren't all good, but.. It was an OK class, but there were probably some of them that would have profited from a closer follow-up and support than what was provided for them that year.

In the following years, Karen gave birth to three children. She recalls that it was during this time, between some of her pregnancies that she first got the feeling of actually coping with her teaching duties.

I've got three children, so it has been a little bit like on and off again with pregnancies and parental leaves. But in between two of them [pregnancies], due to a retirement of another teacher, I was placed as the contact teacher in a seventh-grade class. So, that was probably the year I felt I worked stuff out a bit, how I was and how I wanted to be. Got on top of some

things. And probably had something to.. eh.. I think I read an article in some newspaper that year, about some school in the Oslo area that had profited from letting a mobile counselling team into the school, to help them with behaviour and issues like that. And I picked up an advice or two which I started practicing and found to be working. And the headmaster at school let me experiment and create room dividers, and yes. And this was really the year when the parents came, at the end of the school year, letting me know that I had done well: 'Wow, did he answer like that? We have never heard him answering like that before'. Just some kind of positive feedback on my efforts. And I thought that 'I must have accomplished something'. So, that was rewarding. I recall. It's like. Things you haven't thought of before. Like having regular routines and ensuring that there is a correspondence between what you say and do. We managed to create a system we could follow.

The following years, due to her pregnancy, Karen's work situation became a little unstable, moving back and forth between different classes. She describes her final three years at the school as somewhat more stable, but not without hassle. On the one hand, she was offered the stability and continuity that comes with following one class over a longer period, but on the other hand, as a parallel process, the continuous renovation of the physical environment going on at the school interfered significantly with the teaching conditions. The physical changes, which implied more open solutions, also affected the way in which the teaching sessions were organised.

In my last three years at the school, I followed a class from fifth to seventh grade. And that was quite wonderful. To establish this continuity. However, the school was being renovated at the time. It was this old brick building with long corridors, and stuff like that. During those final three years that I worked there, they rebuilt it into, not like the open landscapes we've got here, but more open solutions. But we didn't really manage to work it out. So it was a bit like.... I spent most of the hours teaching my class, being their contact teacher, and some hours as a subject teacher in different classes.

One of the main challenges Karen spoke of in telling about these years was adapting her teaching to fit a large group of pupils with special needs in her class. She tells of predispositions towards these children among the staff and their reluctance to make a joint effort. At one point, she says, the school started an innovation program, implementing a learning environment plan, the LP model, to improve the school's social climate. Karen recalls how working with this plan made her notice how one's perspective of the pupil's behaviour and struggles had lacked reflectivity or a

sensitivity of how the environment could enforce certain behavioural patterns or responses.

These three years there was a lot of work with the LP model. I was placed in charge of one of the LP-groups. And that was a bit.. I can say a lot about FLIK [327], but this project was an eye-opener when it started. Because it's so easy to.. I remember how it was, returning from break time, being met with: 'Argh, those pupils of yours again' They had done this and that, you know? So, it was just about changing the perspective a bit. Instead of only looking at the pupil or what they struggle with. Taking a look at oneself. 'How are my own actions maintaining this, or could we go about it some other way?' I think it must have been when I started reflecting on these issues. 'If something seems to have gone off on the wrong track, how can we think about it differently? Can we solve things in another manner?' I found this to be.. Even though I didn't find all the LP meetings and programs equally productive, I found the main idea behind it, to turn the focus back on ourselves and the teaching staff, productive. What is changeable and what is maybe not? Yes? When you have pupils that are struggling, then.. One of my concerns was that, even if we practiced giving homework and stuff like that, we should give room to practice whatever should be learned, at school. It wouldn't help sending them home with glossaries to learn by Friday, because that wasn't manageable for everybody. So I started considering things like that. Back then. There are of course things I should have done differently, about this pupil and that pupil... Some just seem to occupy more space than others, and are easier to.. I don't know, spend time on, or... Eh... I experienced that with bullying... Things can become very black and white. Like one reads in the newspapers: 'This is the bully and this is the bullied. Right? ... But when you know the source of the conflict, and the individual challenges a pupil might have, it becomes complicated. One cannot just say: 'Don't do that', if they're not quite capable of controlling it on their own. It may originate from something they have experienced, their situation at home. Things one really can't change and so one just has to try to make the school days as good as possible. Because, in a way, there they can come and be safe. And at the same time, you have to shield those being exposed to the behaviour. That has probably been the hardest part. The fact that you have access to information about a child that you can't.. I can't tell anyone unless the parents granted permission. So there were some occurrences back then which I think I should have dealt with differently. But. Yes.. [long break] That was then.

Reflecting on these issues, Karen makes a leap in time to when she decided to leave her job and start working as a primary teacher at a relatively new school located in a more prosperous area of the city. Having taught only in lower secondary school, her new job represented a range of new challenges. The physical environment and pedagogical approach were also quite different. Traditional classrooms were replaced with open-landscape solutions, resulting in a greater

emphasis on collaborative teams that shared the teaching responsibilities for a whole level. At the time of the first interview, she still worked at this school.

I moved to this school, it must be five years ago. At that time, I had been working at the other school for about 12-15 years. Something like that. I had been pregnant on and off for a period. At my previous school, they practiced this mentorship program.. Those who worked there showed us where everything was, and we were welcome to participate in parent meetings and stuff like that. I remember talking to someone there, telling me that they had been working at the school for 30 years. Their whole teaching career was spent at this one place only. I thought to myself 'Oh my goodness. That's inconceivable. You can't just be at one place. And then, in just a blink of an eye, 12 years had passed by. So, I kind of (Laughing): 'Maybe I should dare move to another place. Because you really get.. It's quite safe staying at a place where you know all the routines and all the people.. But working there did involve travelling across the city, crossing two toll stations back and forth. And that year the toll station fees were raised considerably. Since I wasn't going to follow my seventh-graders any further, I thought: The least I could do is to fill out an application and see'. And then I got a call from this place, and living nearby... My kids don't go to this school, they entered the school next by, so I figured it was worth a shot. Up until then, for all those years, I had been working in lower secondary school, and now I was to teach in first grade. So that was a major transition. But I had kids the same age at home. My daughter enrolled the same year as I was to teach first grade here. So it wasn't totally foreign either, the age and stuff. But it is a totally different job. To work with the small rather than those a bit older. And it should be. Yes. I enjoy being with the little ones, but on the other hand I was used to having a tighter schedule in seventh grade. With the meetings and all of that. When you're planning for a day in seventh grade, you might have to teach five to seven different subjects. And then I come here: 'Yes. Today we're going to learn about the letter A' (Laughter). So it did not take quite as many planning efforts before and after lectures. But then again, there are other things. They have to learn, in a way, how to be pupils. Entering a new regime. And that comes easy for some and not for others. But I found it to be.. Many states that: 'Primary school is too busy. It is so hectic while it lasts', and so on. I really experienced working in first grade to be rather peaceful compared to seventh grade.

Karen dwells on this experience, telling about the joy of being part of the children's first steps towards literacy and the huge contrast this represented compared to her former teacher responsibilities and experience.

I found being a part of their reading process very inspiring. They were about to learn how to read and count and all of that. So, I felt lucky to be a part of a team with two nice and experienced ladies. We shared the first level. And as I was quite unfamiliar with the system here, I just followed along whatever they suggested, like: 'Yes, we'll do that'. So, that was pretty much how the first year went by. The way they used to do something was the way we

continued to do it. We worked together for two years, and the group of pupils was actually quite alright. A couple of them struggled a bit with some extra challenges, but all in all, not much to speak of. It was a major transition compared to the previous school I had worked in, which had a larger number of pupils with minority backgrounds, and.. Yes, a bit different eh. We were more used to pupils with behaviour challenges and that sort of thing. Coming here was almost a bit. There was hardly any. Very homogenous really. Most of them came from stable and supportive family backgrounds.

Parallel to the transitions in teaching content, age, and heterogeneity of the pupils, the disadvantages inherent in the school's innovative team structure gradually became more and more apparent. The entrance of a new teacher made her realise how fragile this working structure really was, relying heavily on the internal dynamics of the teacher ensemble.

I still worked with one of the ladies when our pupils entered third grade, but then another teacher entered the team. And that was when I started noticing that this way of working.. In my previous job we also worked in teams on each level, but we taught our own class and our collaboration was limited to the staff meetings once a week. Apart from that, we were much more on our own with our teaching. Here, in this place, we are far more involved with one another's work, both in lectures and in planning. And at that point, I kind of learned to know that.. If you don't share the perspectives and beliefs on teaching, learning, and education, you're in for quite a challenge. So, it became. Yes.. That year was quite demanding, having to collaborate with this person.. Eh... So, in a co-worker-meeting, I made it clear to the headmaster that: 'If I'm continuing with these pupils in fourth grade, we really need some counselling and help from you to make this team work'. I also told him I would be interested in starting over with first grade, to have another go with them. So, then I was placed back in first grade last year. Eh. Even if I really hadn't asked for it to happen so soon. But, he probably figured it was just as well.. (Laughing) I don't know.

Karen tells of her second round at teaching first grade as something quite different from her first experience. The first time, she had been under the guidance of skilled teachers. This time she was the veteran of the team. There were also considerably more challenges involving pupils with severe learning and behavioural difficulties than in the previous group.

I was coupled with two relative[ly] inexperienced teachers, and I wasn't all that familiar with primary education myself, having only been through it once before. And additionally, some of the new pupils were in need of much support, they had a hard time getting into school routines. Something that might rely on individual traits that may result in some sort of diagnosis in the future, but it might also be issues in their upbringing and home environment.

A lot of things. But you don't know this when they first arrive, you only notice their behaviour. And they really struggled, it was very... But we've worked hard at it. We've received support from the regional mobile team and the child-care services, and we've also got help from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Ward at the local hospital. So, right now there is progress in a way. The first time I taught first grade had felt quite easy, because then I kind of leaned on them. And the group of pupils we had was all right. There were not many challenges to talk of. The fact that everyone in the team was experienced teachers also made a difference, even though we weren't all perfect. Last year, there probably was something, when the team was established, that could have been solved.. Better at the time. Given the fact that the children were so young, and.. We faced some challenges. Got off on the wrong foot maybe, when the team was established. All of a sudden, I felt like I was supposed to be the most experienced one, and it isn't always easy to guide your fellow colleagues without it becoming.. wrong. Yes... So we had to spend a lot of time getting on the same page, figuring out how to organise the simplest of things. And when we, on top of this, had to cope with pupils going ballistic in the classroom. We found ourselves in a situation where we had to bite over more than we could chew, in a manner of speaking, resulting in many sick leaves in our team. Today I'm the only remaining teacher of that team, and that has been.. So, next year, I'll be working with one of my male colleagues and the team will also get a new teacher.

Facing the challenges of teaching children with special needs, Karen and her team found it necessary to rethink their teaching practices, even if these new practices would conflict with the current educational protocol at the school. Instead of continuing in the currently approved direction, on which the open landscapes and collaborative team design was based, the team found 'regression' to be much more fruitful in helping these children by teaching smaller groups of children and returning to more traditional classroom lectures (as far as possible within the open-landscape building architecture).

We've had to leave many of the management's ideas of how to teach and educate. They want us to teach at whole levels, doing station work. And for some reason, I can't really understand why, one strives to keep the whole group of pupils, fifty children, together at all times. That's what they want. But we have come to the conclusion that we can't. We certainly couldn't last year. And when we got permission to split the group in two, right before Christmas, we clearly announced that: 'We can't go back to teaching the whole group after Christmas either. We have to make some changes after Christmas'. So we put our heads together and figured out how it could be arranged. After presenting our solution to the management, we were allowed to split the level into two groups. Both groups got a classroom of their own. One room was possible to divide into two rooms, provided with a closable door for each of the rooms. These children actually needed shielding. Too much stimulus and impressions. Imagine being

stressed at the outset, and then expected to interrelate with fifty other kids and four or five other adults. That must be.. It is probably.. The school is great in its own way, but for children who struggles in one way or another, I believe this kind of open landscapes becomes totally wrong. In that sense, I kind of miss the way I had it before [in the previous job]. Even if it can be tough to be on your own and abide with the sole responsibility for the many children with special needs, the pupils know who you are and are well acquainted with what's going to happen each and every day. They know where they belong, space-wise. And to one extent, that is what we have tried to accomplish here as well. When entering the open landscapes, we have tried to separate and divide the spaces with shelves and things like that. Splitting the sessions into two, instead of having all the children crowded together, like the common practice in this school. And. Yes....

After having paused for quite some time, seemingly pondering something, Karen reveals some of her main beliefs that she holds as a teacher, placing her heart with the unfortunate and challenged children.

I recognise, in myself, that during all the years I've worked, I've had a few.. those with learning difficulties, but also several who faced problems in their social relations. And I feel that it is with these children that I have made a difference. I was on this seminar once, at a time when I had a pupil who struggled with dyslexia and other difficulties. The female teacher who had taught this pupil from first to fourth grade in primary school, held this seminar for us before he was to enrol in fifth grade at our school. The thing I remember the best was when she stated that: 'The skilled pupils. They must receive extra and so on, certainly. But they will get bye. The question is how we can support those that struggle, to manage and complete their education? How can their everyday life in school be eased?'. So, it's probably safe to say that this has been my entrance point. There are those who say: 'What about the skilled ones? They're bored', and stuff like that. And my thought to this is that, yes, that might be accurate, but anyway, I don't believe that these are the pupils that mostly drop out of lower or upper secondary school. They'll manage. So, I figure, and I feel we have learned a lot about this. We had a visit. A child psychologist from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Ward at the local hospital told us a bit about how the brain functions. And I thought, 'Simple things like that. That is what they should have taught us in teacher education'. Right? Why they react in a certain manner? When the level of stress arises and the child is in a state of affect, practically anything can happen. She told us that the remedy for the particular child in question was to avoid letting the child being overwhelmed by emotions during the school day. To reduce the level of stress so that the child manages to relate to others and have others around him. But that, of course, is not easy to accomplish in real life without it affecting the other pupils.

Talking of this, Karen returns to the issue of open landscapes and whole-level teaching. With a slight edge of gallows humour, she visualises some of her more or

less chaotic teaching realities brought about by the schools 'top modern' educational architecture.

There are many pupils on each level, and everyone is entitled to their own.. to be seen and.. That is a challenge. Especially the way we're supposed to teach here, on whole levels. I, for once, function as a contact teacher in both of the groups at our level, and due to this arrangement, I have ended up spending most of my time with pupils for whom I'm not a contact teacher. A huge mess. On each level, from grade one to four, there are three contact-teachers, depending on the number of pupils. My last team managed to split it in three; we sometimes divided them into three groups [so that the contact-teacher function and the related group of pupils corresponded]. But in this team we haven't really managed to work it out properly. We've had to place one adult with this pupil and one adult with that pupil. We simply haven't been enough adults. So it's been quite a mess really. (Laughing). We've just come to the conclusion that it would be a lot quieter if we divided into two separate groups. One adult that is mostly here and another adult that is mostly there. So, lately, I've spent most of my hours here, but at the same time functioned as the contact teacher to five of the pupils over there (showing with her hands). So, it hasn't been trouble-free following them up adequately. Even though we plan and want to think and do things the same way, we often don't. Things are said and done differently, and then sometimes one forgets to tell the others when and where one left the original plan. Yes, I don't know (Laughing). So I do find many aspects of working in open landscapes and on whole levels challenging, compared to having a traditional classroom and the opportunity to follow up on the pupils' progress and learning directly. That is much easier when you're seeing them the next day and actually are going to teach the same subject over again. Instead, here everyone in primary education shall practice station-based teaching, where the pupils are divided into seven or eight groups. Two or three groups are usually lectured by a teacher, and apparently the pupils are expected to complete the remaining stations all by themselves. This leads to me teaching only a few pupils at a time, but repeating the same procedure over and over again. To a certain degree, the groups are also differentiated by the pupils' literacy level, at least in the case of reading and writing. Everyone that has reading difficulties or is slower in their reading progression is placed in the same group, and those who catch on quickly and have high progression compared to others are placed in another group. So that they function pretty much on the same level. But in physical education and arts and crafts, music and English, the pupils are divided into only two separate groups. It used to be group a and b, with half the time on each post, but now the pupils are placed together in groups much more randomly. We try to use special rooms as much as possible, so that if we have music, the other group can be taught another topic somewhere else in the landscape. And if one group has physical education, the rest can be at the library, and so on. We have also chosen to spend two days a week outside, instead of only one. In that way we can go on excursions with only one group at a time. And I must say it is a delight to be on excursions with only half the pupils, or just teaching half of them in the



landscape, having a bit more space. Yes. Eh. But as far as I remember we managed the splitting into three groups a lot better last time than we have this year. But [it] is sort of an exception this year, we can't really make it work. It might turn out better next year. But yes, that's how it is.

Finding the current situation a bit chaotic, Karen does, however, point to some advantages in sharing the teacher responsibilities, such as less planning and a greater flexibility in the arrangement of groups.

When we work in stations, we do. Like, everyone is taking part in the Norwegian lectures, but maybe one has the main responsibility for scheduling homework and the topic of the week and so on. The same thing in mathematics. Eh, and then there is an arrangement with subject teachers. I, for instance, teach English in both of the groups, and the science teacher teaches both classes, so there is this kind of distribution of the subjects. And if you look at it this way, there is less planning involved working with this model, than if you had to plan all of the subjects. In the higher levels, I know that they organise things more freely, sometimes they split into groups and teach them separately, and sometimes they teach on whole levels. And I do believe that, at the outset, this could be a good way to differentiate, if you can teach larger groups of pupils that are more or less on the same level and have smaller groups for those that needs extra support. That way you could follow one student up more closely, without it being too visible. We do have a couple of rooms for smaller groups, and previously we used one of these rooms quite often for individual teaching lectures, but not anymore. Eh, so, there aren't too many options to take pupils out of the classroom for individual teaching. But I do know that the teacher who teaches Norwegian-as-second language has used one of the smaller rooms, instead of assisting them in the presence of the others. Eh. I do believe the younger ones think it's nice to be in a smaller group like that. So, we often use, like, the school kitchen. Just now, after the pupils had taken the screening tests from the Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training, I used the kitchen as a classroom for my group the rest of the day, while the other group went on an excursion outside. That way, they kind of got the opportunity to sit close and help one another, instead of sitting separately at their desks. That kind of days is just luxurious (Laughing). It's just wonderful.

If given the option, Karen would be tempted to return to traditional classroom teaching. However, she has deliberately chosen to stay in her current job, considering that her current pupils still would have to attend and continue to go to this school with its open-landscape solutions.

I think I really would like to work in traditional classrooms again. And I'm not just talking on my own behalf. Well that's a strange thing to say, of course it is mostly on my behalf. But, on the other hand, I do believe that if I stay, then maybe I could be of help to those that find it difficult. That find it hard to make it work. Because they would have to go to this school

nevertheless. Eh.. There are several who claim that one of the benefits of working like we do, on whole levels, is that the pupils are being watched over by many adults, instead of just one. But I often wonder how they know that there is not in fact just more eyes looking at some of the pupils. Not capturing everyone, just recognising a few. So, the team has discussed if it would be wise to use social relation charts [sociograms] to explore whether somebody is overlooked. I truly believe that it should be mandatory when one works like this.. On whole levels. I remember how hard it was the first year, having parent meetings, thinking to myself: 'There are some pupils I don't know anything about. What do I do?' So I asked the other teachers what to do with this problem, and they responded that: 'Yes, but it's totally legitimate to say that you can't answer, and that you have to check with the other teachers' . I felt very uncomfortable with that solution. Eh. Was used to have.. Of course you don't have complete control over everything when you practice teaching in traditional classrooms either, but still. I felt more in control then, when I saw them every day, taught the same topic to the same class each week.. Here, I teach math outdoors with half the level, but I only correct the homework of my pupils [contact teacher pupils], and those are not the same pupils that I have taught. Yes so again. I find it to be a bit of a mess. I'm hoping for better days next year. We have decided, together with the headmaster, that there's only going to be two contact teacher positions at our level next year, each following one specific group. That might make it easier, to monitor. Eh. No, I think. No, I don't know. I like to believe that. Or, I believe that for the pupils it is. No. Most of them will manage OK anyway I believe. But for those who.. Who find it harder, I do believe that meeting the same adult every day, doing the same every day. I believe in that, for them. Some say that: 'Yes, but what of the risk of getting a bad teacher'. There are those who say that here.. But I kind of think: 'Well, well. If that happens, that should be treated as individual cases for the management to solve'.

Leaving these issues aside, Karen starts speaking of the subjects she enjoys teaching. She still enjoys teaching the subjects from her university studies and comes forth as an enthused English and music teacher. However, teaching children in primary school has also led to her fascination with the children's reading process, exploring and learning how her pupils develop their reading skills.

The first time in first grade, I was kind of just an observer. I was. Because at that time, it was the other two that were in charge. But last year, I felt that it was a bit on me, and I really enjoyed it. And then I started questioning things more: 'Why do we do it like this? I would like to learn more about that'. So, now, I would really like to. To study a bit. If I were to study or take a continuing course for teachers, it would be a course in how to teach children to read and write. Because I think that often, one just tends to do things the way one has, without considering whether there might be alternative, more adequate ways to go about it.

Dwelling on her experience teaching first-graders, Karen raises some concerns about the latest curriculum and education reforms, the 'Knowledge Promotion' and especially the enrolment of six-year-olds in the school system.

I started working as a teacher right after the enrolment of six-year-olds. So, I've kind of always taught when six-year-olds have been enrolled as school children.. But that might have been one of the major changes in our school system. Because, in the start, the rhetoric was that the first year should be all about play and stuff. But now. Now, they have already been through basic reading in kindergarten. Eh. Yes. So it is in fact just that. I think that the measurement stuff has changed drastically. No they even measure.. In second grade we have test[s] on a weekly basis. It's just.. Pretty insane. It might be fortunate to have aims and goals for each lesson, and to express one's teaching agenda clearly. That's reasonable. And to give the pupils feedback on their work is fine too, but eh. I don't know. It's gone over the top. I've got a daughter in eighth grade now. She's being assessed in everything (emphasising). She. I kind of get the impression that if you open your mouth in class, they note down and mark a grade on what's said. I think it's a bit.. I don't know how it got to this point. That we're pushing these small children through the school system.. In an awful hurry.. I kind of have this belief that they're really meant to be playing at that age. And play in school. But playtime is reduced to, it's next to nothing. They are expected to learn so much, or. One of my colleagues in sixth grade tells me they don't have time to teach arts and crafts if they're to reach the literacy and numeracy targets. The profession is under a lot of pressure, which is a major change since I started working as a teacher. I remember having tests back then as well, but that was more closely connected to topics. Like if we had been through a chapter in English, we would have a little test. A math test after finishing a chapter and so on. But now, it's just really. Yes. In everything... We're not directly obliged to carry out tests every weekend, but the thing is. Every step, bits and pieces, is supposed to be monitored and documented. I can't understand why. If it is in case of a future lawsuit. Why do you need all this testing, all the time, on what grounds? It's the same thing with these external screening tests, which take up a lot of our time. Time that could've been spent on teaching and practice. Time spent on correcting and reporting these test[s]. And there are things that I can't see any point of doing. Don't get me wrong, I do find literacy and numeracy important, and a few tests are okay, and some of them have been okay. Up until last year. Then we kind of got a bit of a shock when we received the new test. It was really demanding. (Laughter) And all the letters they were supposed to write. We hadn't been through them yet. So, it was a bit. Yes. But we do have a regional screening test, which I find to be okay. But if this is what to expect in the future, I don't believe I can use it for anything. It will just be a lot of wasted time of carrying it out, and being obliged to do so. It's. How to put it. They are time thieves. The test in literacy and numeracy from the directorate. And what I also find troubling is that if the pupil's test scores give reason for concern. No one from the directorate will be heading to our school, saying: 'Whops, I noticed something here. What can we do about that?'. It is like it comes as just as big a surprise the

following years, when the same pupils fail in maths all over again: 'Oh yes. Let them run some more tests': No, I don't know (Laughing) it's kind of.. If I can't use it for something, then it's.. I find it.. The screening test in English is way off what we focus on in class. We have reported it. One can only hope, right?

Looking to the future, Karen seems worried about current trends in education, worrying about the teacher's professional status and autonomy and the pressure put on children today. She describes how the teaching profession has transformed into a delivery service, all about pleasing the demands of parents and other stakeholders.

It used to be: 'You must listen to your teacher. Your teacher says this and that. Do your homework'. Something like that. But nowadays, it's kind of more like, the other way around. Parents demanding this and that of the teachers. Maybe not here, but I do hear people in the Oslo school region bringing their lawyers to parent meetings and stuff. There seems to be no end to it. I believe it's about the professional status. You can observe it everywhere, new regulations of teachers working hours, the whole new austerity emphasis in educational policy? Actually, I believe the whole open-landscape thing.. I can't see any other reason for it, than saving money. But, I could be wrong, since some schools are actually reconstructing the open landscapes into traditional classrooms again these days. So, I don't know. But I do feel they seek to tighten the purse strings, you know? Just thinking of the current union strikes, fighting to keep our working hours the way they are. I bet we're going to lose that battle in the end. There is, of course, a lot of professions under pressure today, but I feel that the summer break is vital. To restart. I don't know. I guess the autumn and winter holidays are disappearing soon. I don't know. The teachers might not need them, but the children may. I hope that will be the case, that the children go on holiday, while teachers stay at work. Things are worse in Oslo than here, but we might have to accept payment-by-result in the future. It's those sort of things. It's not just the teacher that plays a part in children's learning. Many factors are in play. We had this evaluation, stating that 'The results in primary education were great. A huge improvement'. But like. It wasn't the same children taking the first and second test. So I can't really see what the results are good for. (Laughter) It was a totally different group of children. It's not comparable... It's just. Everything. All those evaluations and.. The national tests and everything that follows. I don't know if the differences between schools are all that big really. Perhaps the school location makes a difference, at least it has in my experience. As I said, the arrangements here might fit some of the children, but not others. The groups of pupils differ, so I don't know how much emphasis should be placed on test results... Teachers also differ in their strengths. Some are good at teaching, some at managing and organizing. If one starts to govern schools by results, there is a danger that good teachers will tend to apply for jobs in schools where the pupils perform well. I don't know. I remember, in my previous school, some of the teachers were rewarded with extra pay. They had made an extra effort or an initiative or something. I remember how unfair it felt (Laughing), I kind of felt it was a personality thing.

Someone liked being in the spotlight, taking credit. And, it sort of was these people that received the reward, while all those working in more in the quiet.. Nobody noticed them. I thought of that a couple of days ago, when I read a proposal from the government, which suggested interviewing those who applied for teacher education. To see if they've got what it takes. And it made me think that, if it were me, I wouldn't have passed. When I was in my early 20s, I wasn't. I didn't have a whole lot to offer at that time, I think. I believe it has a lot to do with experience. You mature in the profession. I don't know (Laughing).



### KRISTIAN'S LIFE STORY.

In the interview, Kristian recalls his years at primary school as something positive. As far as he remembers, he did not experience bullying or other difficulties during these years. He mentions little of his time at primary school other than describing his primary teacher as a caring figure, which seems to contrast with his experience of lower secondary school which he portrays as tough years:

The lower secondary school I went to was indeed awful at the end of the nineties. It was war; every break time was a time of war. We entered as some innocent children from (anonymous) primary school, having to face the crazy bunch from (anonymous) primary school. It went mad. There were fights, and yes, secondary school was really quite unpleasant. Everyone was feeling tense and scared because someone was terrorizing the school environment. Eh. Today most of them have done very poorly. Unfortunate. Tremendously [bad]. But eh, I found secondary schools to be tough.

Despite his experience of living in a turbulent school environment, he still emphasises that he liked school. He pictures himself as an ordinary, average intelligent pupil who coped with school affairs in a straightforward manner. He stated that he somehow had been privileged, in the sense that he did not have to strive too much to achieve in school. Not until upper secondary school, which he describes as 'a reality bite'; work efforts to uphold an acceptable level became an issue. Wanting to get away from troubles he experienced in lower secondary school, Kristian chose to enter an upper secondary school located in a different area of the city. The school he decided on was a renowned general grammar school, and talking about that choice, he recalls that he initially considered taking vocational education in electronics. It was the school counsellor at his secondary school who convinced him otherwise, arguing that, considering his excellent academic skills, he ought to go to general grammar school. He says,

I still remember this, because I regret that I didn't get to study for an electrician. Eh, or regret? I can't say that I regret, but I could have studied for an electrician. I could have been an electrician.

Thinking of this, he becomes a bit startled, discovering that he doesn't really remember much from his years at the upper secondary school: 'probably liked being at the school. I don't remember much of it. I really don't. It is amazing. I remember very little, eh, other than it being OK. My grades were probably mediocre'.

Kristian shifts his focus for a moment to the question of how he became a teacher. He starts off by saying, 'I know this is important since both of my grandfathers and my father were teachers. And then there are my uncles and aunts. So, it is fair to say that I'm following in the steps of a whole line of teachers in my family.' Kristian seems to be proud of his teacher heritage, but he remembers this awkward feeling in secondary school, having his father working as a teacher there.

In secondary school, I was going to the school where my father worked. Eh. I found that to be unpleasant. My sister chose. We could choose between two schools in the area. And my sister was very deliberate in her decision to enter the other school. She was more in a state of opposition towards my father than I was. But well. I entered the school where my father worked. And Dad. Dad was sort of a legend. He was. He's crazy you know. I was confronted with loads of strange stories about him, over and over again, concerning all who had been my father's pupils through the years.

Kristian dwells on the memories of his father for a while, telling stories about how he, besides being a dedicated teacher, was an engaged politician in the local community. He portrays his father as someone not afraid to make a fool out of himself or to speak his mind about things that mattered to him. Kristian was occasionally embarrassed by this, but overall his father's reputation did not bother him too much, quite the contrary. He seems to cherish some of the unorthodox traits of his father's teacher character. He tells of how his pupils often visited their home and how his father liked facing challenges at work, especially those that involved working with youth in opposition and struggle with their surroundings. Kristian remembers developing close relationships with several of his father's pupils, recognising that his father expanded his responsibility towards their general welfare way beyond what was expected of him as a teacher. The appreciation his father



expressed for the teaching profession had, to some extent, inspired Kristian to become a teacher, even though he never really intended to enter the profession in the first place. Kristian said, ‘I imagine that very few in their early years have a strategic plan of entering the teaching profession’. He points to the fact that his grandfather also had been a renowned teacher, and as his father, his grandfather also embraced the teaching profession, ‘My grandfather retired just before I started secondary school. He was a teacher in arts and crafts’.

At the time of the interview, his grandfather was 92 years old and well-known in the community. Kristian portrays him as a man of many travels—travels mostly connected to preaching stories of the Bible. He talks of him as being a conservative Christian, although the rest of his family had been quite liberal in their religious beliefs. Like Kristian’s father, his grandfather also seemed to have a particular interest in teaching boys labelled troublemakers in school. They had shared this enthusiasm for being teachers, an enthusiasm that Kristian thinks might have rubbed off on him, even though he originally had his mind set on the electric business.

After recounting his teacher heritage, Kristian returns to the question of how he became a teacher. He talks of many detours, and like many other Norwegian teenagers, he chose to spend the first year after upper secondary school in studies at a folk high school<sup>33</sup> (Folkehøgskole) in Gjøvik, which is renowned for its music studies.

It might sound funny, but that was when my life really began. Eh. I went to the Folk High School in Gjøvik. And, like so many others who spend a year in a folk high school, I had an amazing time. I couldn’t picture what I should do with my life after that. Eh. I really couldn’t.

Despite not knowing what to do or become when he finished at the folk high school, he claims to have been very confident of what not to study. One particular subject he excluded from the long list of possible options was economics, which he

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<sup>33</sup> *The Folk high schools are a characteristically Nordic phenomenon, founded on the ideas of the Danish author and theologian N.S.F. Grundtvig in the 1840s, and which endorse lifelong learning, equality, and democracy as core values. The folk high school offers courses and studies in a range of ‘life-related’ subjects, such as outdoor studies, religion, or art/music/drama. The courses do not generate credit points, but they are open to everyone. Today, more than 400 folk high schools are established in Denmark, Finland, Sweden, and Norway, mostly organized as boarding schools.*

pictured to be both immensely tedious and unattainable owing to his low skill in mathematics at that time.

My grade wasn't all that great. In other words. Mathematics was my poorest subject in school. Ehh. I kind of got a 'G'<sup>34</sup> in lower secondary school, and with the solid help from my friends, I barely achieved a '3'<sup>35</sup> in upper secondary.

Kristian portrays his educational and career choices to have been guided mostly by coincidences or matters of the 'heart', whether it meant following his girlfriend to Bergen or prioritising his work as a sound engineer over his studies at the university. One of these 'coincidences' was a study course in Nordic language and literature at the University of Bergen:

Well. I got a girlfriend at the folk high school, which led to us moving to Bergen. And then I believe that it was pretty coincidental that I applied for the study of Nordic language and literature at the University of Bergen. And, that went really down the drain. I have. I always have. Parallel to my studies, even in high school, I've been working as a sound engineer. And when I got to Bergen, and got to know the student fellowship at Kvarteret, I started working as a sound engineer there. Everything else went out of focus. It was not much to talk of. I kind of took the pre-courses in science and philosophy, barely passing. And entering the Nordic study in wintertime. Eh. I just wasn't mature. I sucked. I remember being in a class of about 25 students. It was kind of... I felt as if they all were either aspiring writers with an extreme passion for the profession. And clever. Or they were teachers, taking the Nordic study as a continuation of their teacher education or something like that. And then some were... I thought they all were really bright. I just made a wrong choice. I did. I found the language part interesting. But the topics on literature just went straight over my head. The aspect of art. I just couldn't see the art in it. I had never really thought of literature as art. So I think eh. I worked as a sound engineer, and the studies went down the drain. Or I continued to study, but my exams went down the drain.

Discovering on his way to take the final exam that he had forgotten his exam papers at home, he decided to clear off and let it all go:

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<sup>34</sup> The previous norm-based scale in the Norwegian secondary school, where 'G' was the short term of 'Good'. The scale contained the following five normative categories: 'Lg' (Flunk, Not good), 'Ng' (Partly good), 'G' (Good), 'M' (Very good), 'S' (Excellent). In this scale, 'G' equalled 'D/C' in the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)

<sup>35</sup> The previous numeric scale in the Norwegian high school, which ranged from 1 (flunk) to 6 (excellent). The grade '3' equalled 'D/C' in ECTS.

And at that point, I just jumped off the bus and went home, packing everything. And the next day, with my whole life on my shoulders, I was on my way back to Kristiansand. But the year was not wasted. Eh. Because I discovered literature as art. As an art form. And in a way, that was valuable in itself, whether I had gained credit points or not. It has always been of value.

Even how coincidental the choice of studying Nordic literature and language seems to have been, Kristian notes that he had viewed the course as relevant as a part of a teacher-education program. He claims that the decision to become a teacher, at some point, was already taken when moving to Bergen, even though he struggles to find a reason for making that choice. Having experienced how satisfied his father and grandfather had been working as teachers was the closest explanation he could think of at the time of the interview. Together with a large group of friends, he moved to Oslo and began his teacher education. One thing he found strange in his new study environment was that his fellow students appeared quite immature, not serious about their studies. He claims it was like being back in high school where everyone was preoccupied with their social affairs, making a lot of noise in class. It came as quite a contrast to the engaged group of students from the Nordic study in Bergen. Analysing the difference between the two studies, he found that a problem with the teacher education was the first three years, which he portrayed as a 'random' mix of subjects and courses. In the Nordic study, everyone had been engaged in the subject and topics presented, but in teacher education, the students might be interested or skilled in one or two subjects while more or less indifferent to the other subjects and topics presented. The few elective courses during these years were characterised by much more enthusiastic students who were involved in the subject matter. He says that the lack of motivation might have been what triggered the unserious behaviour of his fellow students. Although he was quite satisfied with the courses given, he found that the mix of subjects was an unfortunate way to organise teacher education in general. Kristian remarks that this experience also could have been connected to how he matured as a student during the four years as a student of teaching. According to him, he did not acquire proper study techniques or recognise the value of study groups before the fourth and final year when he attended the specialised courses in science and social studies:

At that time, I was finally in a class where everyone was genuinely interested in the subject. I really learned a lot that year. The science professors at the University College in Oslo were excellent. Eh. The professor in chemistry was engaged in his teaching, letting the student work quite freely. Stating that: 'Here's the key to the chemistry lab. Do whatever interests you'. Eh. The biology professor was a strict, elderly French woman who fitted perfectly into the role of a biology teacher. She placed us in study groups where we were supposed to memorise like about three to four hundred different species and families of flowers, stones, birds, and animals. It was like brilliantly planned and organised. And the science didactics were fantastic. It couldn't be more closely related to real life practice than that.

Kristian appreciated how the University College let the students use and borrow their facilities, tools, and accessories for their projects. He talks about how the students were given the opportunity to take over as school leaders and teachers for a whole week at a primary school in a countryside area, focusing on teaching science. He praises how the University College made sure that the students were given access to all the equipment they needed at all times.

It was like. Did we need liquid nitrogen? 'Yes yes'. She [the biology professor] took care of it. Ten litres were immediately delivered to the school, making the whole thing into a great party. So that was a really amusing time.

He also recalls the professor in social science to be truly inspiring, taking his students on a trip to Russia. Talking about this professor, Kristian sums up his overall impression of teacher education at Oslo University College, stating once again that the academic staff on a general basis were highly qualified educators. The only problem, in his experience, was the mix of topics and subjects the first three years, leading to a demotivating study environment where only a few students showed a genuine interest in the subject matter. He remembers how their professor in mathematics was given a rough time:

So many were annoyed with him. I couldn't see why. He is the best math teacher I've ever had. (Laughter). Eh. But he was kind of abrupt in his teaching, moving forward at high speed. I barely kept up. But I eh was very pleased with the education I received at University College in Oslo.

What Kristian valued the most were their teacher-practice periods. He enjoyed being a teacher, even in the role of a student teacher. Looking at the student teachers today in his current workplace, he recognises their struggles, remembering

his effort just to cope with the long working hours, the multiple responsibilities, chores, and routines. He also appreciates how fortunate he was to have been hired as a novice teacher at the same school where he had been a student teacher:

The headmaster. It was kind of the last thing he did before retiring. The fact that he hired this group of lads, newly graduated teachers and student fellows—me, and four other boys. There were hardly any men working at the school at all, more or less unilaterally female employees. And then he hired a whole bunch. And they were skilled people. Really. And. I kind of felt like the lucky guy who benefited from being in the friendly crowd of these people, taken along since I was one of them. But it was a clever move, and we established a good working environment in that primary school.

Talking of being a primary school teacher, he starts to problematise the newest reforms in teacher education, where the students have to choose whether to become a primary or secondary teacher in advance of their studies. In his experience, this might lead to a gender problem in primary schools in the long run.

I certainly had never imagined myself as a primary teacher. (Laughter). And that is. None of the boys I met during my teaching studies had any plans of becoming primary teachers. None. I didn't know anyone that considered that as an option. And when I think of the new Teacher Education, I don't know the numbers yet, but I am quite curious about the number of applicants for the different courses. I would never have applied for the primary teacher education if I had to choose. And that is. That is a shame. Eh...

He pauses for quite some time after this statement before moving on to his first experiences as a primary teacher. He recalls how the skilful and experienced elderly female teachers at the school took him under their wings and how he might have been blind to that fact at the time:

I did not realise it at first, but in retrospect, I think it was the elderly ladies. The elderly ladies that worked there, they were brilliant. Words cannot describe how fabulously skilled they were. They were amazingly sharp. Their capacities were just astonishing. Eh. Bright people. And I have never thought of myself as particularly brainy. I'm no specialist, I'm a generalist, but this was. This was. Being with them, I pictured that they must have been the best candidates ever leaving upper secondary school to become teachers.

Kristian describes working in a team with these two ambitious female teachers, and how he tried to keep up with their pace. He felt lucky to be relieved of the role of head teacher, getting to know the profession under the guidance of experienced teachers. In his experience, having worked at several levels in both primary and

secondary school, being a head teacher in lower primary school levels involves far more responsibility than in the higher levels. 'One has to give more of oneself.' Observing trained teachers in action, he realised that:

If you're going to be a teacher, you sure as hell must strive to be a good one. You cannot rest, putting your feet on the table. That wasn't an option at all. So, it was. It was a kick start working with the two ladies. Amazing people to work with. She. Eh. When developing plans for the following week, she [the eldest] would wait and listen to all our suggestions. Always embracing our ideas. She had her own opinions for sure: 'Maybe we could do this and that.' She was chock full of experience. When we found ourselves stuck, she just reached for her files up on the shelf, suggesting: 'Should we. What about this?'—leaving us nodding: (Laughter) 'Yes we should'. Eh. So, yes, my first year was incredible.

Kristian found the following year to be much more challenging. He was placed in a team with two female teachers, one older and one younger than himself. The team was in charge of a third-grade class, a class that had experienced a lot of difficulties and conflicts during the previous year. Kristian appreciated the challenge and responsibility of the task ahead of him but recalls how tough it could be working as a teacher in an upper-class area:

It was a whole lot of work and a lot of fun. We [his team] were conscious of the fact that we had to, everything we did had to be thoroughly justified at all times. I followed the class through primary school, and it became my class. It is no doubt about it. Eh. Despite the high-flying neighbourhood, many things came to pass behind closed doors. A lot of things. I still meet up with some of my pupils. Eh. Childcare issues, violence, alcoholism, and everything one comes across as a teacher. There is one student that I still keep in touch with on a regular basis, and two others that I see two or three times each semester. Eh. It was some class, but I learned a great deal.

While teaching this class, Kristian's school was named one of the pilot schools in the national 'Assessment for Learning' program<sup>36</sup> (AfL). Kristian describes working

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<sup>36</sup> In January 2007, The Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training had been appointed by the Ministry of Education and Research to initiate initiatives for improving assessment practices in Norwegian schools. Based on evidence that children and parents did not receive enough information about the children's achievements, the project, 'Better Assessment Practice,' was launched in the period 2007-2009. The project was monitored and coordinated by the University of Oslo (ILS) and was seen as an initiative to test different models of 'criteria for goal attainment' (ILS, 2009 Rapport lagret på hjemme-PC). Based on the results of the project, a national 'Assessment for Learning' program (AfL) was initiated by the Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training on behalf of the Ministry of Education in 2010, aiming to enhance the assessment practices in classrooms. In 2011,

with AfL with great enthusiasm. It felt like being a part of a larger pedagogical and professional development project:

Some of the teachers at our school, including one of the teachers from my team, they went. Along with other teachers from the Oslo-schools, they went to Canada and returned with tons of new ideas. And at that point, I realised the energy placed in development project around in schools. It felt good to be part of the drive that characterised that period. Eh. And learning about Assessment for Learning, which I'm still very into, but, which since then has come to entail much more than it originally did. Today it is really.. I really find it odd that they call it 'Assessment for Learning', because it all really boils down to learning.

When there was a change of headmasters at his school, Kristian says he discovered how important pedagogical development projects can be to a school. The new headmaster did not seem to share the former headmaster's pedagogical ambitions, being mostly preoccupied with administrative affairs.

What replaced the former [headmaster] was a lame story. It was just an administrator. And then the whole pedagogical development project went dead. Totally dead. Eh. And I remember missing. I missed it. Eh. I had been involved with it for several years, and then it just vanished.

Parallel to this shift in headmasters, 'Competence for Quality' of 2009 was introduced. The reform initiative opened the possibility for Kristian to engage in further studies, allowing him to work 60% while still receiving payment for a 100% position as a teacher. He and a colleague signed up for a course in mathematics. Having low confidence in his mathematic skills, remembering how he struggled back in teacher education and upper secondary school, Kristian describes being quite ambivalent about taking the study. At one point he felt so lost that he longed for a way out:

I was terrified. I was studying with a colleague from work, and we were just clueless. Totally lost [loud voice]. We were given an assignment for the upcoming session, and we did not stand a chance. We just couldn't solve it, so we started visualizing or, we explored: Was there any escape from this? Was it possible to bail out? Go back to full positions as teachers? What

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*the Norwegian AfL project became a part of OECD's project 'Governing Complex Education Systems' (GCES), which sought to gather research evidence of how one could understand and govern the increasing challenges in steering the implementation of education policies (Hopfenbeck, Tolo, Florez and El Masri, 2013)*

would it cost us? Yes. OK. A hundred thousand kroner.<sup>37</sup> That's nothing right? (Laughter). It was quite bizarre, but we made it to the end. It just required a hell of an effort.

Today, he appreciates having seen the course through, recognising that he gained a lot of knowledge in mathematics that year. Never before had he worked through and solved so many math problems and equations. Claiming that every math lesson before this course had been nothing but 'peanuts' in comparison, he concludes that 'I would never have been a math teacher today if it hadn't been for that year'. He returns to the cultural shift at the school brought about by the new headmaster. Once again, he states that the pedagogical development project was dead, describing it as knowledge and competence that went into thin air. The experienced and skilled senior teachers left their jobs and started working as mobile counsellors for teachers in need of support in the Oslo region. 'Everything went downhill. Moreover, the headmaster didn't lift a finger. She invested in new chairs and tables for the staff room. That was it. She couldn't care less about the children'. Being quite serious as he tells of this experience, he suddenly lights up, remembering being placed as the head teacher for a very challenging class in this period. It was the toughest class he had ever encountered as a teacher. 'It was great,' he laughs. The previous class he taught had been an easy task, but this one represented the opposite.

Chairs and tables were flying through the classroom. Not a day went by without a crazy fist fight. They showed no respect for anything. Tons of work. Tons of cooperation with the childcare services. Eh. I had to call several parents every day, giving them the daily report. Plenty of meeting with different agencies: The Educational Psychological Counselling Services [277, 281, 282, 285, 289, 304] in the municipality, and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Ward at the local hospital and God knows who. But the great thing about this class was that I discovered a whole lot. About how to deal with such circumstances. I experienced being a teacher in two entirely different classroom realities. I, and this is a good comparison, this awful list from Haugerud school that leaked to the media<sup>38</sup>. Poor people, it's quite devastating. But, I

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<sup>37</sup> 100 000 NOK, roughly 10 500 EUR

<sup>38</sup> Norwegian newspapers printed a protocol from Haugerud school in Oslo on May 4<sup>th</sup> 2015, consisting of 52 pages of rules of conducts for the teaching staff. The list gained a lot of media coverage, but several teachers from Haugerud school went public, defending their headmasters' implementation of the protocol, considering the contextual conditions under which the protocol had been implemented, describing it as a joint effort by the school staff to enhance the professional collaboration and work climate (Bjerkebro, 2015).



thought of my class when reading that list. Because, when dealing with the insanity in this classroom, I had to systematise everything. Eh. I had routines. I did not write them, but I had protocols for my every step. I created protocols of 'How do you enter the hallway? How do we place ourselves in the hallway? How do we enter the classroom?'. To get a sense of order in the classroom, there had to be a protocol for everything. Many of them needed it. Needed to know that: 'When you're walking in the classroom to gather your books, this is your route. Because this person sits over there and that one over there. And either you're going to slap them on their heads, or they are going to elbow you when passing'. Eh so I had to create a strict regime in the classroom. And it worked. Really. It took a few months, but it turned out all right in the end. All right, considering the circumstances, it wasn't all bright. Eh. I didn't get as far as I had hoped for, but I got it under control. And then I think of Haugerud school because that has been a chaotic school. A lost case. And then this headmaster has taken this firm grip on things, and done a fantastic job. Eh. And unfortunately, it [the rules of conduct] has all been recorded in writing and leaked to the media. And yes, he certainly has crossed some lines that, eh. But I can understand that if you're the head of a school that is falling to pieces, with a staff that's running in all directions, and where learning processes are becoming more and more absent, you have to do something for sure. But oh my, it must have been embarrassing. It has to be.

Having worked at the same school for seven years, Kristian decided to make a change. He applied for a job at a newly built secondary school in the city. After what he describes as a long and thorough application process, giving a lot of interviews, he got the job. At the time of our initial interview, he still worked at this school. As a new school, the staff consisted of only 10 teachers, an assistant headmaster, and the headmaster. There were no classes in the ninth or 10th grades, only eighth grade. The school management was highly elaborated in their interpretations and engagement with the curriculum. The headmasters had thought out the school's educational profile with thoroughness and careful attention to details in the curriculum, fronting the 'Core Curriculum' to create and protect the space for professional growth and a holistic approach to education. Kristian describes working with the Core Curriculum as a new and surprisingly positive experience:

The management was quite clear that the 'Core Curriculum' was our Bible. I had, of course, read it before, back in teacher education when we still used the earlier curriculum L97. Eh. And I think L97 was the national curriculum during my first year as a teacher, and then the new reform 'The Knowledge Promotion' was implemented. Eh. But I hadn't been particularly engaged with the Core Curriculum', besides what we had learned about it in teacher education. But they [the leaders] were, they were really into it: 'We shall see the people and

human beings before us. We shall regard the pupils in a more eh more holistic way than is common in many schools'. And they stated. It is two very prominent leaders by the way. One of them stayed for only one year. Now she has become the area director for one of the districts in town, eh and that was not surprising. She's got sharper elbows than anyone. But is very clever at what she does. And brilliant at designing our team back then. And the other leader has a long history in the Oslo schools. Eh. Has written a lot of textbooks. She previously had a position in the school authorities responsible for pedagogical development issues. She also worked as a consultant and lecturer. And well, to sum it up. They are renowned in the political landscape in Oslo, and they also expressed quite vividly that: 'We don't give a damn. We do what we find best. The area directors and others amongst them can say whatever they please'. I do believe they were authorised to create a path they were willing to vouch for. And then, finally, I once again got to engage in professional and pedagogical development projects. It was truly a gift to be a part of.

Kristian seems to appreciate his current work situation. About 60% of his position as a teacher is dedicated to classroom teaching while 40% is kept open for work related to pedagogical development projects. He states that the primary challenge his school faces today is pupils stressed out by the multiple demands and expectations of performance and success that characterise their environment. Like the primary school where he first worked, this secondary school is located in an upper-class area. The parents are ambitious and highly involved in their children's education. Although Kristian appreciates the parents' engagement, he says that it often places a lot of pressure on his pupils to perform in school.

They [the parents] keep a close eye on what's going on at school, and our students seem to have the highest shoulders in town because of that. Everyone is planning to enter the town's most prominent upper secondary school. They are all becoming doctors, economists, lawyers, or whatever. So, we have a very high incidence of such problems in our school. Panic attacks during a math test and stuff like that. It's devastating to watch.

To deal with this problem, the school has tried to lower the focus on performance and learning outcomes by trying to remove summative assessment in the form of marks and grades as much as possible until the final exam in 10th grade. There is no use of grades and marks in eighth grade, and Kristian is sure that the ninth and 10th grades will join in on this very soon. He notes that the school does evaluate and assess the pupils' learning, but that one tries to keep the focus on formative assessment and feedback.

We have this philosophy of, we practice right? We shall. The teacher is only to wear the judge's robe one single time, and that is at the end of 10th grade. Until then, we [the teachers] shall take the role as coaches. You know I'm dreadful at remembering names, but eh we watched a video lecture by someone that vouched for the removal of all grades of course. He said. He said a few things that really got to me. That: 'When you wander around in the classroom. If then, you see pupils that somehow try to hide what they are doing, and that are hesitant to let the teacher view their work, then something is wrong. Then you're on the wrong track as a teacher'. Eh because it must be, or should be, the other way around. That pupils rather shout, 'Hey Kristian, come over here. Show me how I can do this better'. Right? And it was like I suddenly realised the connection between this work and reducing the use of grades. The teachers were. They were quite opposed to his suggestions, noticeably, when he first presented his thoughts. But now we have tried to follow up on some of it by removing all grades and marks in the eighth grade, giving them solely at the end of the year. And our experience of that is exclusively positive.

Focused on learning processes, Kristian tells of how the teachers in his school try to approach the subject matters in a more holistic manner, emphasising the use of interdisciplinary approaches which offers the pupils a broader pallet of experiences and sources upon which to draw. The weight is placed on giving the children opportunities and space to express themselves, which means acknowledging how different they all are. Some might thrive with writing tasks while others feel more confident with an oral presentation. To capture this diversity, Kristian states that the school has organised test situations in a way that allows the pupils to apply and show their competence through different mediums, which at a minimum should include both writing and speaking.

There are a lot of pupils in our school that perform well in writing. And then there is a large group of pupils that just can't cope well with that situation and that need [loud voice] to show us what they're capable of, some way or another. If they can't, then we have failed as teachers. We would be letting a whole bunch of talented pupils pass through school undiscovered [pausing]. It is the most important thing I've learned working here. In essence, it's about a professionalisation of the teacher occupation, and I appreciate that.

Continuing this line of thought, Kristian begins to reflect on the growing emphasis on evidence-based research in education today. Stating that he recognises and agrees with a lot of current findings in classroom research, he also points to the fact that teachers often are capable of reaching the same conclusions themselves. He refers to a Norwegian researcher within the field of education, Thomas Nordahl, making a

similar point, claiming that if a teacher does something that does not work, he should simply stop doing it. Agreeing with Nordahl, Kristian states that:

You don't need Hattie to tell you what works or doesn't work. Your experience in the classroom will show you. What I did just now. Was it fruitful or not? I can't recall how many times I have found myself doing something that's not working as I planned. I then I ... go on, doing it all over again? That makes me. Then I get quite pissed off with myself. One needs to be professional at what one does. It has to be based on knowledge of what works. If it means discussing Hattie, that's fine. I just wish people would read more than the summary of his research. He provides a long list of reservations of how to interpret his research findings, which no one seems to be aware of, including me. But being a science teacher, with an interest in science and science philosophy, might have led me to be more preoccupied with the question of whether I'm doing things the right way. You need to make sure that it works. If not, you surely need to find something else to do with your time. Fair and square. It's all about being a professional teacher.

To engage the teachers in pedagogical development projects, Kristian tells of how his leaders have relieved their pedagogical staff of their teaching duties by including development projects in the teachers' weekly schedules. Compared with how staff meetings normally are organised in other schools, like the first school he worked in, Kristian finds his leaders' solution much more efficient and constructive. He recalls how the staff in his former school would meet every Wednesday, wasting their time discussing the same topics over and over again. The main content of the meeting was thus narrowed to recurring issues such as 'how to organise the national day', and 'what to do about pupils throwing snowballs at each other.' Having experienced how inefficient staff meetings might be, Kristian regards this new model, where teachers are given time to immerse themselves in pedagogical issues, as an enormous privilege. Lately, the focus has been on curriculum work, making the connection between the aims and targets of the national curriculum and their daily teaching. Preoccupied with the Core Curriculum, Kristian describes his frustration over how the Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training designs its curricula web pages.

I find it very peculiar and it kind of provokes me. When you enter at Udir.no [the directorate's web pages] to view the curriculum pages, you press 'Find curriculum', then it appears. The first thing you see is shortcut tabs to the main subjects, among them mathematics. And if you press on the mathematic tab, you're sent to. Yes. At first, you get the targets for the first and second grade. Then second to fourth grade. And so on right? And then I press the tab for eighth to

10th grade and am directly sent to the subject targets [In the Subject Curriculum]. Then you are kind of left scrolling your way back through every page in the curriculum [To find the Core Curriculum]. It's quite odd. But I must admit that I too have done that when making semester plans [not scrolled back to the Core Curriculum]. And when making the yearly reports. Because the main page didn't provide it [a tab to the Core Curriculum]. One is consistently manoeuvred straight to the subject targets. Few scroll back to search for the principal aims of the subject, so that is what we have been working on lately. We have been working on finding the core intentions of each subject. What is the purpose of teaching this subject, and what does that imply for our daily teaching? And then something has taken me by surprise. Things I've never thought of before. For instance, in mathematics, it is stated in the principal aims that one shall make sure to adapt the teaching in a gender inclusive way. It further states that you shall [emphasised] ensure that the teaching engaged both girls and boys. It probably has something to do with the cultural heritage. Eh. In old textbooks, one seldom reads about what Kari [female name] does. The central character in the textbook examples is most often Ole [male name]...[Pauses] And you find the same thing in science. The awareness of this [the principal aims] have thus consequences for how one work[s] as a teacher, for how one teaches. Working like this [with the core intentions], gives me the feeling of being professional in my teaching. Working towards being an expert in my field and discipline.

Stressing the importance of working with principal aims and content knowledge, Kristian also emphasises how insights and knowledge of human relations are vital in his work as a teacher. He states that working with the Core Curriculum has given him a broader picture of his professional mandate, which includes an obligation to professionalise and continuously strengthen one's social and relational skills.

One must. As a teacher, nothing is more important than building relationships. It is no question about it. If you don't establish a good relationship with your pupils, it does not matter what you do in class. But eh. One can learn to build good relationships with the students. So. So, in our school, that is where our focus is today. It makes me feel, not because I have this glorified picture of myself as a teacher, but at least I feel I'm striving to become a better teacher. Eh. I've never been that conscious of these issues before, about pedagogy and engaging in the broader picture, as I am today. Using my father's words, I have never had such a tremendous time as a teacher as I have today (Laughing).

Appreciating his current situation, Kristian also points to how lucky and privileged he is to be working at this particular school, aware that hundreds of teachers stand in line, eager to take his seat. Being a renowned and attractive workplace for teachers has, according to Kristian, led to a highly qualified and professional staff. 'There are no skeletons in the closet here'. That was not the case at his previous workplace. He

remembers being troubled about the previous school's organisation of special and adapted education, pointing to a bad habit of assigning to pupils with special needs teachers who couldn't handle ordinary teaching in classrooms.

I actually think it is a quite common practice. There was this lady, obviously ill, that was, that wanted to work. She had been working as a school inspector, and still benefitted from the income as an inspector. But eh, she wasn't capable of classroom teaching. She wasn't capable of being around pupils at all. So she was placed with a group of children with special needs. It is totally unheard of. Was I furious? You see? It's a disaster. But I believe it occurs in many schools. Maybe not as extreme as in this case, but when there are people unfitted for the teaching job, saying that: 'No. I can't teach a class'. If you're unable to teach in a classroom, what are you doing there? You need to get the ... out of there. Find another job. But that is easier said than done, bearing the legal employment protection and rights in mind. And thank heavens that we've got these rights. But sometimes they appear too rigid. Bottom line.

Leaving this issue, Kristian turns to the topic of national tests, recognising that they have been of value in his development as a teacher. To him, the national tests have been a way to mirror the results of his teaching. He does emphasise, however, that it is his leaders' attitude and approach to the national tests that has made it possible for him to value the feedback these tests offer. The test is not used to hold the teacher staff accountable for the pupil's scores and results; they are merely meant as a tool for the teacher to evaluate his or her teaching, using the results to detect areas of success or in need of improvement. He says that he has learned much from analysing the results of the national test in mathematics, using them to locate weak spots in his teaching.

One can actually gain a lot of useful information from the national tests (Laughter). Eh it [is] so easy to spot where. Like information about a pupil. You get tons of information about each pupil. Eh, and then you're also informed of the status on a class level. What things? We have a different teacher in science. What am I saying? I mean mathematics. I've been looking at the results of the tests in mathematics, since I am a math teacher. Eh stuff like that. What are this teacher's strengths? What can this teacher do differently? Is it a topic that has been taught that now shows to be in need of improvement? How can we solve it? And then, talking only about my own experience, I have found the test to be constructive in my work with the class and the pupils. But that is because they [the tests] actually have improved. I think they're good. And then there are these other tests that come from the local authorities in Oslo that eh. Doesn't really work that well. We have this math test. Before Christmas, every ninth-grader participates in this local math test in Oslo. All of the schools in Oslo. A whole day. And this test

is related to. You see the authorities in the Oslo school have constructed these additional guiding targets to the curriculum. They have operationalised the main targets into more specific ones. But not every school is. Or quite the contrary. Not many schools adopt these targets in their teaching. So, our pupils end up taking this narrow test that doesn't include the range of topics and areas that they have been taught. And because some topics are placed in a different order than suggested in the additional guide, our pupils are required to answer questions that they haven't been prepared for. All because we have chosen not to follow the additional guide.

Like with the additional guide, Kristian finds that there is a similar problem with the placement of targets in the national curriculum. In his experience, there is seldom a correspondence between the targets and the textbooks. According to Kristian, this most often leads the teacher to plan his or her classroom lectures by the textbook, rather than the curriculum targets, leading to a mismatch between the national or regional tests and the topics taught in class.

This is mostly a problem in mathematics where the textbook is followed quite closely. We don't use textbooks in science, social science, or religion. But in all the subjects, we have chosen to follow the order we find best, but then this doesn't match the additional guidelines.

Aware that this lack of correspondence might lead to lower scores on national and regional tests, Kristian again praises his leaders' approach and attitude, creating and shielding the space for professional autonomy and judgement

They say [his leaders], 'The Core Curriculum is our Bible'. And..yes.. They have pointed it clear for us. 'You should not be afraid of any of this [test-regime and accountability]. It is us [the leaders] that shall take the brunt'.

The educational policy in Oslo is highly contested, both in research and in media coverage. Still, Kristian seems to thrive as a teacher in the Oslo school environment. He admits that he feels somewhat in opposition to the massive critique towards the educational policy in the Oslo schools. He recognises that being a teacher in this area involves a great deal of pressure, but the schools are also showing good results on national tests. This last claim is well documented in the public result charts of the previous national test where Kristian's school ranks on the upper level, placed among the top 20 schools in Norway. Being proud of these accomplishments, Kristian still seems to be worried about certain trends in educational policy when thinking of the future development of the teaching profession.

Eh. Picturing the future... [Pauses] Eh, I'm a math teacher, and I was visited by a local newspaper some months ago. They did a paper on the math crisis in education. And eh, in our school. I too share this curiosity of how the subject of mathematics is going to develop in the future, Eh, and I get. There is no doubt that the subject is highly prioritised and stressed today. Eh. I also teach music. I probably suffer from an inherited disposition when it comes to music. So I teach music. I've always taught it, and I have never [emphasised] heard of a continuing course in music. Never [emphasised] heard of it. Never [emphasised] received an email. A music course has never [emphasised] been advertised on Fronter [a digital learning platform]. That's just. It's incredible.

Kristian has high hopes for development in educational policy in the next years, looking forward to the new Official Norwegian Report, 'The school of the future' (NOU 2015:8), which has been evaluating future needs in education. At the time of the interview, the report was not yet published, but Kristian had read some of the consultation drafts.

It addresses both depth and broadness. Eh. The range of competencies required in the future is insane. What. What skills do our pupils need to attain? And it is. It will require a broad range of competencies. You will have to be able to cooperate. Self-efficacy is the new word. You don't have to know it all, but you have to know what to do when you find yourself incompetent of something. And some subjects are really extensive, like Norwegian. One has to learn a whole lot, but I know that our teachers in Norwegian they. [Pauses] It all comes back to the principal aims in the Educational Act. 'Dannelse'<sup>39</sup>. 'Dannelse'.

He hopes that the report will lead to an increased emphasis on professionalising the teaching occupation and that the report will support a more holistic approach to education. He hopes that the question of 'good education' will be debated more in the future and that being a teacher requires more than love for children.

You have to love children. But that can't be what. It can't be the reason why you enter the teacher profession. Because you love children. It must be because you want to be a teacher. One that teaches and that knows pedagogy... [Pauses] You're a teacher. It's your job to establish a good relation to each child in your class.

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<sup>39</sup> 'Dannelse': Not directly translatable to English. Closely connected to the German concept of 'Bildung', a cultural and formative upbringing]



Once again, the professional element of the teaching occupation is emphasised, fronting that the justifications for one's actions and choices must be based on established knowledge or legislation, not personal sentiments. Kristian's last hope for the future in education is that the teaching profession gains a higher status in the community. Not because he finds an elevated status important in itself, but because he thinks that it will bring skilled teachers into schools, like the bright elderly female teachers whose guidance he feels fortunate to have in his first year as a teacher.



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## Appendix 2—Grand Narratives of Norwegian History of Education in Times of Modernity

In the following presentation of Norwegian history of education, I have chosen to address historical events and processes that resonate with concepts of modernity. The historical accounts, on national and local levels, will be arranged into the following phases: ‘pre- and early modernity’, ‘classic modernity’, ‘late modernity’, and ‘liquid modernity’ in chronological order. The periodisation of the different periods is based on a matching of societal and educational development in Norway with Rosa’s and Bauman’s characterisations of different phases of modernity. Timelines of modernity might thus be differently defined in other contexts, cultures, and disciplines (e.g., modernity representing the beginning of civilisation in archaeology, or the period in-between 1945-1980 in a more ‘postmodernist’ orientation). Modernity in this study is conceived as expressions of ‘societal acceleration’ (i.e., Rosa, 2015).

Local responses to modern development in education are exemplified through the ‘case’ of Kristiansand and its surrounding counties (Agder). All the participants in the study have a close connection to this region, either through upbringing, teacher education, or work. It would have been preferable to have covered the detailed historical outlines of the particular communities of each participant. This has not been done due to the risk of identification of the participating actors and environment. In the account of the local history, emphasis has been put on Kristiansand (and region) as a cornerstone in the modern development in education in Norway with its close strategic and economical connection to Denmark and the European continent.

The presentation is meant as an analytical index of historical information in the reconstruction of a cultural heritage signified in the teacher Life Stories (see PART III,

Chapter 6). It is thus comprehensive and rich in detail—encompassing various aspects of certain periods, such as societal characterisations, school development, teacher education, people enlightenment, welfare, special education, class/folk culture and gender issues, and so on. In contrast to a standard thematic historical presentation, the following grand narratives will be more fragmented in character (de-emplotted)—as cross-sectional representations of the historical periods.

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# NATIONAL LEVEL

## 1.1 PRE- AND EARLY MODERNITY

'Pre- and early modernity' are seen here as the emergence of societal progresses of cultivation and education, where occupations, time perspectives, and identities still were closely connected to family heritage and tradition (scripted courses of action).

### EARLY SIGNS OF MODERNITY IN NORWAY.

What scholars seem to agree upon in their grand narratives of Norwegian education is the strong connection between Christianity and school development from the medieval cathedral/Latin schools until the emergence of a unified school system in the 18th and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Recent research also suggests that there still exist remainders of the Lutheran Confirmation rituals in Norwegian teacher education today (Jensen, 2016). Additionally, there also seems to be a shared understanding of a progressive, left-wing turn towards nation building and folk-emancipation from the mid-1800s to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century—sowing the seed of what is presently termed the 'Norwegian Unified School model'.

### *THE PEDAGOGICAL CONSEQUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.*

The most renowned scholars of Norwegian educational history, Erlend Høigård and Ruge (1963), find the school system to be one of the main pedagogical consequences of the societal turn to Christianity and church ruling in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries. The church's quest for moral enlightenment expanded the aims of children's upbringing beyond inherited, family-prescribed roles, skills, and responsibilities. Additionally, the Christian upbringing and biblical knowledge required certain levels of literacy—relying primarily on textual sources.

Due to the lack of independence from Denmark (1389-1814), the early development of provision of common schools in Norway was subject to Danish rule

and administration. Along with the Lutheran Reformation, a new educational agenda was initiated in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. The king was replaced by the Pope as head of educational affairs.

Through the School Act of 1739, King Christian 6<sup>th</sup> sought to provide school opportunities to children in rural communities in the kingdom. The school act was closely related to the Law on Confirmation of 1739 (Reeh, 2016 p. 93). The ties between the Lutheran Reformation and the educational agenda of King Christian 6<sup>th</sup> is often explained in the context of an expanding Pietistic influence in northern Europe (see, e.g., Telhaug & Mediås, 2003; Reeh, 2016). At the time, no law, even a king's order, was to be in (apparent) conflict with the will of God:

The only exception to the demand for total obedience to the king was if the king demanded something that was against the will of God. In this, the legacy of Martin Luther was too strong to be ruled out by a Danish Lutheran king.

(Reeh, 2016, p. 92)

The Danish school act requested rural communities and the local church in Norway to organise and provide at least three months of schooling, for all children, until a satisfactory level of reading and biblical knowledge was obtained. Children were to receive their education after the age of 6-7 and no later than Confirmation.<sup>40</sup> Preferably, teaching duties were left in the hands of the local sacristan. Reading skills and the Lutheran Catechism constituted the curricular core. Lessons in basic accounting and writing were to be offered in exchange for an additional school fee (School Act 1739).

A noticeable feature in the School Act of 1739, both concerning the overall teaching framework or curricula as well as in the governing norms of teacher qualification, was that moral virtues such as discipline, temperance, and justice seemed to be of greater value, hierarchically speaking than, for example, literacy and numeracy skills. Additionally, with respect to teaching, pedagogical and didactical knowledge (i.e., Pontoppidan's explanation) seemed to be viewed as essential to the

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<sup>40</sup> *This flexible arrangement of confirmation lasted only until 1759 when a new regulation required seven years of obligatory schooling for all children.*

teaching profession. Together with the landlords and church aides, the bishop and priest were placed with the responsibility to engage, educate, and examine suitable teachers (sacristans) and thoroughly judge whether:

- the teacher-candidate could teach children how to read;
- he had comprehended the Catechism and Pontoppidan's explanation and thus could teach the Catechism to children in such a way that they would grasp the true meaning of their childhood lessons, and in a simple, convincing, and understandable way, make this knowledge applicable;
- he had proper credentials of leading an immaculate life in particular with regards to whether he swore, lied, or was known to have a weakness for alcohol, lust, or strife; and
- if he had good literacy, numeracy, and communication skills and was able to write orthographic Danish.

(School Act of 1739, [My translation])

If a teacher showed any signs of hesitancy or unwillingness towards teaching certain children, or other forms of misconduct, he was to receive one single warning before being terminated from his teaching duties. The law mandated all teachers to follow Pontoppidan's explanation of the catechism, '*Wahrheit zur Gottesfurcht*' (1737) and later on his hymnbook (1740). Providing a set of 759 questions and answers to be learned by heart by the children, Pontoppidan's catechetical didactics strongly regulated the pedagogical and didactical frame of interactions between the teacher, the student, and the learning content (School Act of 1739).

Between 1739 and 1741, there was an interesting and quite sudden change of direction in educational governance. The School Act of 1739 had emphasised a strict control and monitoring of school results and practice by the bishop and priests. The use of central regulation most likely originated in a perceived 'bleak situation' in rural areas and a low trust in teachers and farming people's ability and will to engage in educational duties (Telhaug & Mediås, 2003). This strong central regulation and control of schools nevertheless changed with the new legislation of 1741. The new School Act decentralised the administrative authority to local communities, turning the norms of the School Act into guiding, rather than regulative principles of

schooling. Telhaug and Mediås (2003) suggest that this rapid change in governance might indicate an acknowledgment of how the centralised policies had been too ambitious and unrealistic in the case of Norway. Compared to Denmark, environmental and communicative barriers related to the natural scenery and social geography were much more present in Norway (e.g., scattered and barely accessible rural communities and the reliance of ambulant schooling arrangements).

Norway's lack of independence seems to have led the country to fall behind the educational development which characterised other European countries at the time. The provision of higher education (education of priests) was, for example, expanding much faster in the two other Scandinavian countries than in Norway due to the Danish administration (Høigård & Ruge, 1963). Unlike their Scandinavian peers, Norwegian students were obliged to spend at least one year at the Danish University of Copenhagen before they could enrol in studies elsewhere in Europe—such as Paris. Høigård and Ruge (1963) holds this arrangement to be one of the main reasons why the development of a national language in writing and the establishment of universities was so much slower in Norway than in Denmark and Sweden—a retardation which made Norwegian schools dependent on foreign-language curricula until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## 1.2 CLASSIC MODERNITY

The 'classic modernity' phase is here characterised by the emergence of higher education provisions and the entrance and growth of more egalitarian and secularised policies, folk orientation, and enlightenment

### THE UNIFIED FOLK SCHOOL AS A SECULAR, NATIONAL IDENTITY PROJECT.

Parallel to a growing secularisation in education, a narrative of the Norwegian kingdom and folk heritage emerged in the wake of 1814, legitimising the independence of Norway as a national state by the year 1905. The School Act of 1824, and the following guidelines of 1834—which came in the wake of the establishment of a Norwegian university in 1811 and the Norwegian independence



from Denmark in 1814—expanded school subjects also to include lessons in, for example, singing, writing, mathematics, needlework for girls, and gymnastics for boys. The Compulsory School Act of 1860 and 1869 also emphasised the aspect of national heritage in the curriculum, represented by fictional excerpts, legends, fairy-tales, rhymes, and rules<sup>41</sup> (Tønnessen, 2011). The school acts merged the former rural school (common), Latin school (grammar), and citizen school (vocational) into a unified ‘folk school’ system. Telhaug and Mediås (2003) notes that in addition to the influences of the European Enlightenment, the educational reforms emerging in the 1850-1860 period should also be viewed in the context of a renewed, politicised teaching profession. Education was neither to be local nor international, but national at heart (Telhaug and Mediås, 2003).

Beyond the ambitious quest of establishing a national folk school, the educational reform sought to expand professional jurisdiction and teaching hours, strengthen teacher education and payment, improve teaching methods, and ensure a replacement of the church position in educational affairs with state and democratic influences. Through the establishment of progressive teacher unions, the societal position of teachers rose extensively (cf. Tønnessen 2004, p. 28). At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, educational debates covered a spectrum of issues and critiques, from the relevance and appropriateness of Pontoppidan’s explanation in the modern school system to the question of what should constitute the proper official language of writing. A radical ‘grassroots movement’ among the young generation emerged, inspired primarily by Grundtvig’s folk high school visions of a ‘living word’ and ‘happy Christian life’—opposed to the ‘dead’ language and curricular practice of the current times (Høigård & Ruge, 1963). The image of an ideal teacher was dramatically altered. From being mere technical servants of the church, following the prescriptions of Pontoppidan’s explanations, the ‘renewed’ teachers should be enlightened and charismatic leaders positioned to awaken the spirit of Enlightenment and national pride in their pupils (Telhaug & Mediås, 2003).

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<sup>41</sup> P.A. Jensen (1863), *Læsebog for Folkeskolen og Folkehjemmet. (Readings for the folk-school and folk-home).*

N. Rolfsen (1882), *Læsebog for Folkeskolen. (Readings for the folk-school)*

One of the main spokesmen of a unified folk school was Ole Vig (1824-1857)—portrayed as a vital promoter of Grundtvig’s educational ideals and the leading visionary in both the folk school debate and the emerging folk high school movement. During his short life, Vig made an unprecedented leap in social ranks. From being born a crofter’s son, he ended his life, only 33 years of age, as an esteemed teacher; writer, public speaker, and journal editor (see Bye, 2014; Dokka, 1967; Høigård, 1963, Telhaug & Mediås, 2003, Tønnessen, 2011). Vig’s educational vision was a common school which cultivated the national character and raised peoples’ awareness and knowledge as citizens—in both political and juridical affairs. He stressed the importance of placing historical knowledge as the main objective in a folk-school education and that a teacher should awaken not only the intellect but also the heart, imagination, and curiosity (cf. Telhaug & Mediås, 2003). In Vig’s view, the poor had to be enlightened to partake in civil affairs. A folk school, in this sense, was thus a path towards making state policies represent the interest of the common people, or the nation as a whole (Bye, 2014). Despite his lifelong aim,<sup>42</sup> Vig did not live to see the opening of a folk high school himself. However, passing on his beliefs to the upcoming generation, the first folk high school was opened in 1864 by Vig’s student, Herman Anker, near Lake Mjøsa, located in the southeast of Norway (Høigård & Ruge, 1963). Equally important in establishing the folk school (1860) was Hartvig Nissen (1815-1874), a prominent scholar and Left (Liberal) party politician. He worked hard to develop a school based on the traditions and languages of common people that would limit the position of Latin and include subjects of natural science in the school curricula (Høigård & Ruge). He developed a model of higher levels of education, suggesting that middle schools should encompass a joint school programme from 10-16 years of age. Nissen’s agenda was to modernise the school system, inspired by democratic ideas of civic enlightenment and cultivation. His

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<sup>42</sup> *It has been questioned whether the legacy of Vig’s visions of the folk high school development has been quite biased by his later followers, since the empirical sources to Vig’s life are few. Some even claim that personal letters and other textual remainders of Vig might have been deliberately destroyed by folk high school enthusiasts, due to a discordance between Vig’s original thoughts and visions and the symbolic narrative of Vig as a folk hero (Bye, 2014).*

model was not realised in full but was, nevertheless, central to the forthcoming school reforms of the next century (Dale, 2008; Dokka, 1967; Høigård and Ruge, 1963). Vig and Nissen represented an entrance point to classic modernity in Norway where education gradually provided for a greater social mobility and occupational choices detached from family background and social ranks.

#### THE RISE OF A FEMALE WORKFORCE AND SOCIAL WELFARE PERSPECTIVES IN EDUCATION.

By the mid-1800s, women were declared suitable to serve as teachers. By the year 1873-1874, women were also allowed to partake in teacher exams, specially adapted for female teachers (Dokka, 1967). An advanced exam was provided in Christiania, Christiansand, Bergen, and Trondheim, while a basic exam was offered in the remaining counties, both in rural and urban areas (Dokka, 1967).

Representing a cheaper workforce—only receiving half the payment of male teachers—the number of female teachers skyrocketed at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Tønnessen (2011) notes that by 1890 female teachers represented 62% of the teaching staff in urban areas. She adds, however, that the perception of females as unfit to teach older boys prevailed for a long time in the countryside, while the female teachers themselves—belonging to the social elite—hardly acknowledged the male teachers due to their low social rank (Tønnessen, 2011). Dokka (1967) refers to similar gender issues, noting that the female teachers, belonging to the upper class and urban life, were not familiar with rural lifestyles. Not only did they perceive male teachers to be beneath them both in social rank and manners, they also actively chose their professional path to a far greater extent than their male counterparts. As unmarried daughters of prominent families, their career options were often quite narrow, but becoming a teacher nevertheless represented a deliberate choice to these women (Dokka, 1967). He adds that:

Not only did the women offer a new set of values in a male-dominated school, and not only did they approach their work with great enthusiasm and excellence; they additionally established an entirely different interchange than what had ever existed between the common school and the higher ranks of society before. With the female teachers, the common school was placed even more under a direct influence of the cultural practices of the elite, and by

them [the female teachers] the upper class got better acquainted with the various sections of the population, their living conditions, customs, and traditions.

(Dokka, 1967, p. 243 [my translation])

In addition to the school acts in the 1860s, the first stages in the establishment of a modern welfare state and a unified education system were realised with the 'Law of Child Asylums' of 1837, the 'Abnorm School Act' of 1881, and the 'Child Welfare Council Act' of 1896. The Latin school was transformed into 'Gymnasium'.<sup>43</sup> In line with the democratic ideals and introduction of parliamentary state governance in 1884, revisions of the School Acts in 1888 and 1889 granted parents greater influence on school councils. In about half of the urban schools, parent representation was mandatory. Every member of the council should be representatives of primary stakeholders of some kind. These revisions even opened the possibility for female members (Dokka, 1967).

#### UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT IN URBAN AND RURAL AREAS.

Even though one might see traces of a break with the strict catechetic curricula during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as in the introduction of Nordahl Rolfsen's reading book in the 1890s, the European ideals of Enlightenment were not translated into common practice in rural areas for many years to come. In schools, the catechetical didactics of Pontoppidan still ruled the ground. Less than 10% of the schools taught additional subjects, such as writing, mathematics, geography, and history—probably due to the poor training of teachers. About 2,000 to 2,500 teachers worked in rural areas, mostly in ambulant teacher positions. Close to none of these teachers had any form of teacher education by 1837, and even with a growing emphasis on teacher seminars in the cities,<sup>44</sup> only about 600 of the rural teachers had graduated from teacher seminars by 1853 (Dokka, 1967). The lack of qualified teachers often placed the full responsibility of teacher supervision and guidance onto the vicar, postponing the break with catechetical didactics (Dokka, 1967)

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<sup>43</sup> *Matriculation preparation programmes, which later represent higher secondary education.*

<sup>44</sup> *Teacher seminars were already established in Christiansand in the years 1799-1803.*

The overall provision of education and teacher's salaries largely depended on location and societal inequalities, represented by, for example, the divisions between Latin schools, citizen schools, and common schools. The professional status of the teacher occupation was low, and their professional autonomy was, correspondingly, limited (Telhaug & Mediås, 2003). The general attitude towards the teacher occupation was that nobody in their right mind would want to become a teacher if their societal position would allow them otherwise. The only exception would be those who sought to be relieved from army service obligations (Dokka, 1967).

From the mid-1800s, school officials reported a high degree of resistance and lack of compliance in rural areas, stating that parents kept their children from school, nearly bringing the national reform agenda to a complete halt in some communities (Telhaug & Mediås, 2013; Tønnessen, 2004). Telhaug and Mediås (2003) suggest that the lack of resonance between the local culture and language and the school curricula—relying on foreign languages and texts (Danish, German, Greek, or Latin) and a content that almost completely neglected rural life and culture—might have triggered a feeling of alienation among parents in rural communities. Høigård and Ruge (1963) describe a similar discordance between the school agenda and the farming communities but find that the conflict was primarily due to a general lack of recognition of or trust in teachers' (sacristans) skills and knowledge in rural areas, stating that:

The resistance among farmers was both caused by the challenging condition of the national economy and that they did not see the necessity of schooling. They claimed that they could provide sufficient lessons of the Bible themselves and that the children's efforts were needed at home. Additionally, the level of knowledge of the ambulant teachers responsible for teaching the children was so poor that it did not seem to be worthwhile paying for.

(Høigård, 1963, p. 46 [My translation])

Tønnessen (2011) refers to similar tensions between school officials and parents, in a study from the 1860s that followed the school acts on local levels. She quotes a complaint by a local county priest:

School applications are way deficient. A deficiency, which has its deepest roots in caretakers and parents' incredible lack of the right kind of love for their children [...] The children are

being kept from school, being declared as an indispensable workforce, they are forced on fishing leaves, requested to stay home collecting firewood, protect the cattle from wolves, look after the baby for the mother who is left alone and so on, and so on. There's no end to the manufacturing of excuses to neglect school attendance, calling for compassion with the poor fisherman [...] So that is their never-ending blues, and it is becoming so immensely boring and tiresome.

(Tønnessen, 2011, p. 31-32, [my translation])

A statement from the rural parents' experience with school demands illuminates a totally different perspective on the matter. In contrast to the priest's portrayal of the bleak situation in rural schools, the parents picture an ignorant and arrogant attitude towards common people among school officials:

With its primitive concept of cultural differences, the school brings forth their alphabet, believing it is going to fill a void, that it is finally going to qualify an unqualified population, that it shall introduce knowledge where no knowledge exists, that it has come to save the doomed. Resisting school could also be interpreted as an expression of pride.

(Tønnessen, 2011, p. 32, [My translation])

Tønnessen (2011) also shows the many benefits of the introduction of permanent school solutions in rural communities. The prospects of a teacher's life were bettered. The teachers no longer had to plead for food and shelter in every town. The establishment of permanent school buildings contributed to raised school taxes, but at the same time the permanent teacher residents allowed communities to restrict teacher payment to a minimum and for parents to keep a close eye on the teacher's and the school's activities (Tønnessen, 2011). The rural school provision was, however, still far behind city school developments. While monumental school buildings were erected in the cities (large enough to organise and divide the pupils into classes by age and gender), rural schoolhouses were small and kept in a rather poor condition.

#### THE EMERGENCE OF EGALITARIAN VISIONS AND CLASS STRUGGLE.

Between 1890 and 1920 the number of pupils enrolled in the Norwegian folk-school rose to 130,000, and nearly 6,000 new teachers were hired during these years. Due to retirements in the current teacher force and the growing demand for

teachers, a large percentage of the teaching staff lacked teacher education. (Rovde, 2014). Teacher unions emerged, but the different backgrounds of the teachers led to huge internal strife. This was especially the case with the female teacher union, fighting for gender rights and equality. As representatives of the societal elite, it is fair to assume that being paid less than half of a man's salary and following gender specific teacher programmes was intolerable for many female teachers. Only a minority of the women joined the Teachers' Union until the Female Teachers' Union was established in 1912 (Rovde, 2014).

The turn to parliamentary governance and the introduction of voting rights for both the common man and woman made the question of education and social integration an issue of the people, and not only the elite. Despite a revolutionary socialist and communist rise in Europe and the Soviet Union, the Norwegian policies followed a more moderate social democratic path—emphasising pragmatic and economical solutions rather than class struggle. Common for both the Marxist and social democratic movements was the view of education as part of a strategic egalitarian and welfare agenda (Myhre, 1988).

Even though education policy and ideals still were characterised by national pride, early traces of 'policy borrowing' and calls for modernisation are visible in education policy. Looking for examples and arguments of a unified school system for all children, policymakers referred to the establishment of modern education systems in Switzerland and US (Telhaug & Mediås, 2003). In the American school policies, one found a model of combining lower and higher school levels, while Switzerland provided examples of how an integration of all children was feasible (Telhaug & Mediås, 2003). These political arguments were not based on comparative studies of educational models but more on superficial assumptions. Even the frontiersmen of the Norwegian unified folk school had to admit that the world lacked examples of school systems with the capacity of education for all. In the absence of supportive evidence, their arguments rested on the cost-efficiency of managing one type of school, instead of several (cf. Telhaug & Mediås, 2003, p. 71). In this sense, there has been an element of economic and public management emphasis in the social democratic model of education for all from the start.

Myhre (1988) points to two divergent reform pedagogical paths—one occupied with the aspects of ‘freedom and self-expression’ and the other with ‘active engagement and sociability.’ He argues that it was the weight placed on self-regulation and self-engagement that represented their common core. In Norway, however, these new ideals were introduced in times of austerity and a political preoccupation with questions of cost-effectiveness in welfare in the 1920s, moving the child-centredness of reform pedagogical ideals into an economical and societal frame. Inspired by German experimental psychology and American pragmatism, the liberal-progressive policies of the reform movement sought to demythologise educational research through empirical psychological/pedagogical studies—establishing pedagogy and education as an academic discipline (Dale, 2008; Helsvig, 2005; 2014). Teacher seminars were transformed into teacher university colleges, the first in Trondheim, by the year 1922. The new teacher education programmes were initiated as egalitarian alternatives to the traditional academic culture and knowledge perspectives of the universities (Rovde, 2014).

Except from Bildung-oriented scholars such as Erling Kristvik (1882-1969),<sup>45</sup> the educational advocates of the reform pedagogical movement in Norway abandoned the romantic folk visions inspired by German enlightenment (Dale, 1999). In its place, an agenda of class, gender, and individual emancipation and formative pedagogies came to characterise policy initiatives in education and educational research. Besides international figures such as John Dewey and Ellen Key, prominent scholars and teachers of the reform developments in Norway were Anna Sethne (1872-1961), Helga Eng (1875-1966), and Bernhof Ribsskog (1883-1963)—some of them serving as policy advisers and members of the government (cf. Telhaug & Mediås, p. 107).

Dale (2008) argues that the strong test-orientation in educational research between 1920 and 1930, with its attention on pupil capabilities and educational outcomes, introduced modern perspectives of differentiated and adapted education to educational policies. The new Unified City Folk School curricula represented the new form of state management and control of schools—evident in the School Act of

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<sup>45</sup> See Thuen & Vaage, 2004, p. 137.



1939,<sup>46</sup> where educational norms, grades, and examinations were to ensure a fair assessment and selection processes (Dale, 2008). This ambiguity and tension between sociological and psychological ideals is highly apparent in the educational policies and visions of Anne Sethne, one of the main authors of the school acts in the 1930s.

*ANNA SETHNE (1872-1961).*

Sethne practiced as a teacher and headmaster at Sagene folk school for 46 years and was both an editor and chair of the female teachers' union from 1919 to 1938 when she retired. Together with Ribsskog, Sethne promoted a comparative and psychological perspective on educational policy, with emphasis on quality- and equality-assurance systems (Dale, 2008; Telhaug & Mediås). Observing that the current middle-school arrangement benefited only the privileged, Sethne worked to facilitate access to higher education for common, working-class people. She aimed to establish a rational, unified model of education, which would streamline the relation between middle and comprehensive schools. A comprehensive school (the former folk school) was to become the primary foundation on which a variety of higher education programs could build. Sethne urged that everyone should be obliged to enter and complete the comprehensive school programme before being allowed to enter higher levels of education. She also advocated for including kindergartens in the education system, as an early initiative to enhance school children's literacy level, as well as to shelter and support their early development (Dale, 2008). Sethne was an early promoter of school healthcare, arguing for the benefits of good physical constitution—increasing children's' work efficiency and well-being, and thereby reducing social inequality. In line with Anna Sethne's welfare ambitions, one can see the early foundations of school psychology services, or what was later to become the Educational and Psychology Counselling Service (EPCS). The establishment of this service was an initiative to locate and withdraw 'slow' and 'retarded' pupils from the ordinary school provisions. A school psychology office was opened in Oslo in 1938 by

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<sup>46</sup> *'Normalplanen for bygdefolkeskolen av 1939' (Norms of the city-folk school plan of 1939)*

Charlotte Bühler, but was closed only two years later when the German armies occupied Norway in 1940 (Hustad et al., 2013; 2016)

Together with Ribsskog, Sethne served as a member of the curriculum committee from 1936-1939 and was often called on by Church and Education Minister Nils Hjelmtvedt for advice on educational matters (Telhaug & Mediås, 2008). As a policymaker, Sethne vouched for the use of guiding principles rather than a traditionally prescribed teaching content. The new tides of reform required dynamic curricula which were not entangled with outdated worldviews and knowledge (Dale, 2008). With a strong emphasis on the three Rs of education, Sethne argued that the minimum requirements of a comprehensive education should be that the pupils could transform their thoughts into decent language and, through good handwriting, flawlessly write them down in their mother tongue. In mathematics, all children should master basic calculation. She believed self-governed exercise to be the most viable approach to raising literacy and numeracy achievements among pupils. The pupils were to be encouraged in their work and corrected only by caring remarks based on mutual recognition (Dale, 2008). Much in line with the later universal human rights agenda of the United Nations that emerged in the wake of World War II, Sethne engaged in educational peace initiatives. Seeking to promote anti-war attitudes, she wanted to teach children to collaborate and peacefully settle their disputes (Dale, 2008).

#### THE OCCUPIED SCHOOL.

The Norwegian teachers were highly resistant to the Nazification of schools and teaching. Over 1,100 teachers joined the resistance, with the chair of the Teacher's Union, Einar Høigård, as the lead activist. Following Høigård's '10 commandments' of resistance, non-violent resistance based on social disobedience served as an efficient form of resistance. Høigård commanded:

1. No teacher shall have anything to do with 'Norges Lærersamband' (the Nazi Teacher's Union).
2. The teacher shall support all resistance against 'Ungdomstjenesten' (the Nazi army service for the Norwegian youth).

3. Every attempt of NS propaganda must be dismissed.
4. No one must agree to a position of the school board or a supervisory committee.
5. Every permanent position is blocked.
6. Before [an acceptable plan of matriculation censorship is ready], nobody must engage in censorship duties in the written matriculation exams.
7. Meetings [and courses] arranged by the NS government is blocked.<sup>47</sup>
8. Forms received from the Domestic Department with demands of personal data are to be put aside and not be preserved.
9. Every school manager shall be loyal to their school boards.
10. No one shall obey orders from incompetent positions.

On February 14, 1942, a declaration was distributed by a secret committee of the teacher resistance urging teachers to sign and send to the Nazi teacher's alignment, stating that it was impossible for them, as teachers, to partake in the Nazi alignment or their army services for the Norwegian youth, due to reasons of personal conscience and professional agreements. Most of the 14,000 teachers in the country signed the declaration. Several teachers were sent to concentration camps during the five years of war (cf. Nygård, 2016; Kvam, 2013).

#### THE NATION BUILDING AND WELFARE AGENDA (1945-1970).

Two world wars in less than five decades gave rise to international alliances on many levels, both among and within nations (e.g., United Nations, ECC, and NATO). This emerging climate for cooperation can also be seen in national politics in Norway. Besides the hegemonic position of the Norwegian Labour Party, the post-war period was characterised by a social democratic compromise, where the conservative parties and the Labour Party found a middle ground to uplift the poor and marginalised by establishing an inclusive school system (Thuen, 2010). As a continuation of the educational agenda of Nissen in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and Ribsskog, Hjelmtveit and Sethne in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the government

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<sup>47</sup> 'NS' was the acronym for 'National Samling' (National Unity), the Norwegian Nazi party, led by Vidkun Quisling.

strengthened the connection between the comprehensive school system and higher education even further. Based on the Swedish educational model, the comprehensive school was expanded to encompass nine years of free, public education (Telhaug & Mediås, 2003). Exiting the world war, the politically initiated changes in educational policies reflected an emphasis on the questions of humanity and democracy (Briseid, 2009; Klafki, 1958; Telhaug & Mediås, 2003). The agenda of the cross-political platform was to educate to citizenship—in a free democratic society. Teachers were encouraged to instigate a sense of societal responsibility in children, along with respect for human dignity, tolerance, and the ability to work and cooperate with others. In addition to these virtues, the new generation was expected to be conversant with the cultural and historical heritage of the country (cf. Briseid, 2009, p. 1). The aims of common cultivation ('Bildung'), which had been removed as the general purpose of education in the School Act of 1939, were reinserted in the School Act of 1959. As a counter-response to the pragmatist emphasis of the reform-pedagogical policies, this represented a Christian and cultural renaissance in educational policy and a preoccupation with general didactics and the question of content matter (e.g., Klafki, 1958). This emphasis on a Christian upbringing as part of the core purpose in the curricula was not popular among the Labour Party members. With the School Act of 1969, biblical teaching in school was separated from the formal confirmation preparation—removing the traditional church authority in school management affairs (Tønnessen, 2011).

Between 1950 and 1960s a romantic vision of the 'core' family emerged, introducing specific ideals of childhood and gender. On a common basis, this period is referred to as the era of the 'housewife family'. Cherishing children's leisure time, the school hours were kept short (Tønnessen, 2011). The UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child was adopted in 1959. According to it, children needed special protection, opportunities, and facilities regulated by law or other means, for a healthy and normal physical, mental, moral, spiritual, and social development in conditions of freedom and dignity (UN, 1959). As technology began to relieve women from their domestic duties, more and more women entered the labour force. Consequently, early childhood years became increasingly institutionalised through the provision of

kindergartens and longer school hours (Blom, 2004). It is reasonable to believe that this institutionalisation strengthened the call for a stronger international and national system regulation.

The main motives for establishing education as a nation-building project were neither instrumental nor economical. They were instead to establish education as a societal value characterising the welfare state. In line with the social democratic spirit, education represented the heart of a welfare society together with the healthcare systems. However, the realisation of these ideals did not come without societal costs. In between the years 1945 and 1980, Norway was among the biggest spenders on social welfare, along with Sweden and Austria (cf. Huber & Stephens, 1998, p. 357). This decommodification of education, does not, however, indicate that the ideas of 'human capital' were not on the rise and that economic considerations were of less importance than they are today (cf. Telhaug and Mediås, 2003, p. 159). The argument of cost-efficiency was still used as a justification for the Norwegian Unified School model. Telhaug and Mediås quote a statement from Samordningsnemnda (Tribunal of Coordination) in 1952, which captures this belief in education as a societal investment, arguing that: 'Our competitiveness and independence as a people greatly depends on our educational system' (Telhaug & Mediås, 2003, p. 159, [my translation]). This emphasis on cost-effectiveness and competitiveness, nevertheless, served as a legitimization of large state budgets and spending, rather than mere calculations of economic profits and calls for austerity measures.

#### *SPECIAL EDUCATION AND THE EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELLING SERVICE (EPCS).*

In 1947, the Ministry of Church and Education renewed the national regulations on education for children with special needs. State-governed schools for blind, deaf and mentally handicapped children were established in most parts of the country. The School Act of 1939 was further expanded in 1952 with provisions for special schools for children with speech problems or social adaptive challenges. In addition to the 'State Schools of Special Education', there were still some special schools owned and run by local municipalities in this period.

The School Act was revised again in 1955. This revision implied that the responsibility for special education was placed on the state and municipalities, but financed by state refunds (cf. Hustad et al., 2016, p. 16). With the School Act of 1969, the role of the school psychology service (in 1976: the Educational Psychological Counselling Service [EPCS]) was to ensure special educational support for pupils with special needs in schools, kindergartens, other institutions, and within homes. In addition to teaching, parent and individual counselling, activities stimulating people's social, physical, and mental health were also to be incorporated in their services. The EPCS evaluated proper educational and social/psychological measures based on professional assessments, after referrals from parents, schools, and healthcare services (the 1969 Act. § 1–4). In its early phase (before the new regulation of the service in 1996 (Forskriftene)) the ECPS played a significant role as counsellors in the assignments of children to 'normal' or special schools (Hustad et al., 2016).

#### EDUCATIONAL VISIONARIES.

The ambiguity in scholarly and policy discourse becomes evident when looking at the work and visions of prominent educationalists such as Helge Sivertsen (1913-1986), Tønnes Sirevåg (1909-1994), Åse Gruda Skard (1905-1985) and Johannes Sandven (1909-2000) (Briseid, 2009; Vaage & Thuen, 2004).

Helge Sivertsen, the Norwegian educational minister from 1960 to 1965, is highly credited for the development of the nine-year Unified Comprehensive School, seeking both systemic emancipation and social cohesion. His reform is highly inspired by the Swedish comprehensive school model, which Sivertsen followed closely (Telhaug & Mediås, 2003). He is remembered as one of the core members and of the Labour government of Einar Gerhardsen, representing both a political and bureaucratic approach to questions of education:

In the two fields, school and language, Helge Sivertsen became a symbol of the integration of folk-cultivation in social democracy—and its steady technocratic impoverishment in the hands of Gerhardsen.

(Slagstad, 1998, p. 308)

In contrast to Sivertsen, Sirevåg returns to the question of knowledge and cultural heritage. He is, however, more inspired by Anglo-American pragmatism, phenomenology, and democratic perspectives on knowledge, such as Dewey, Mannheim, and Livingstone, than the German ideologies of Bildung and enlightenment (Briseid, 2009; Telhaug & Mediås, 2003).

As an educational visionary, Skard seemed less preoccupied with the aspects of nation building than her male counterparts. This does not imply, however, that she lost sight of how societal values and human rights perspectives represented vital parts of children's development and upbringing (Briseid, 2009). In her work at the UN, UNESCO, and OMEP<sup>48</sup>, Skard attacked the approach to child care and upbringing, characterising the contemporary pedagogical practices in schools as authoritarian. As a child psychologist, she views pedagogy in a lifelong perspective, from early childhood years to adulthood (Raundalen, 2005). Although Skard promotes a child-friendly perspective in education, she stresses the importance of firm and empowering teachers, capable of addressing the pupils' fundamental needs while also nurturing a compliance of will consistent with societal expectations and virtues (Briseid, 2009).

The educational scholar who parts most from the humanist and reform-pedagogical perspective in his thinking is Sandven. Engaged in empiric and psychological research in education, he showed no appreciation for the historical perspective or German Bildung tradition. He viewed the humanist tradition to be too subjective in its character; its overabundance of opinions and assumptions had no place in scientific research, which should rely on objective knowledge and evidence (Telhaug & Mediås, 2003). A research occupation for Sandven was to investigate the relation between motivation and school performance. Based on an extensive survey and longitudinal research project, including more 3,300 participating pupils, Sandven concluded that:

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<sup>48</sup> OMEP: A non-profit and non-governmental, international organisation concerned with early childhood education and care.

A certain degree of emotional lability, combined with high religious and social sense of responsibility (co-reaction) and a relatively low intelligence, maturity quotient between 75 and 90, triggered high capacity of school-work (1964, p. 77-83, cf. 1966, p. 85-87).

(Sandven, cf. in Dale, 1999, p. 211)

According to Sandven, the problem could be a result of the stress placed on instruction in traditional teaching approaches, instead of problem-solving. He also argued that an emphasis on the latter might have engaged the currently bored but otherwise intelligent pupils (Dale, 1999). Being a highly-esteemed researcher and professor at the Pedagogical Institute at the University of Oslo, Sandven removed any trace of and literature related to the German Bildung traditions. He also placed Reidar Myhre, the successor of Einar Høigård, in a marginalised position as an assistant teacher at the university, before removing him altogether in 1956. From 1974 to 1984, Myhre worked as a professor at the Institute of Pedagogy at the University of Trondheim. Today his academic work is considered a classic in philosophy and history of pedagogical ideals (cf. Dale, 1999, p. 321).

### **1.3 LATE MODERNITY**

‘Late modernity’ is here characterised by a rising infrastructure in societal affairs, where individual occupational choices, lifestyles, and rights accelerated rapidly, emerging in the 1960s.

#### **THE DAWN OF AN OIL NATION.**

In the aftermath of the Cold War, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War, Norway unexpectedly faced a growth in state and private wealth in the 1970s. The discovery of oil led to great advancements in public services, employment prospects, and infrastructure. From being next to a homogenous culture, Norway developed into a multicultural society in just a couple of decades. In 1971 the first wave of labour immigrants arrived from the East, including 600 Pakistanis. The immigrants were met with poor conditions and severe racism, which generated barriers for integration in Norwegian communities. Because of escalating challenges, the government decided to restrict the Act on Immigration of 1957 in a Revised Code of 1975 (UDI, 1989). In



the late 1980s and early 1990s the civil war in Chile caused Latin American refugees to seek protection and asylum in Norway for political reasons. The stream of people seeking refuge during the Gulf and Balkan wars in the 1990s represented the largest groups of refugees in Norway to that time. The question of their integration and then inclusion was suddenly an issue in educational policy and school realities.

In addition to the attraction of immigrant workers, national prosperity was visible in the provisions and expansion of upper secondary schools and kindergartens, as well as in an integration of children with disabilities into the regular education system (Tønnessen, 2011). These developments should, however, not be read as sole effects of wealth, but also as refractions of the global agenda of preventing child and youth labour, as well as a growing youth and the feminist movement. The UN's Minimum Age Convention of 1973 indirectly addressed the need for compulsory schooling up to the age of 15, as a minimum, to ensure the effective abolition of child labour (UN, 1973).

During this period, the Norwegian educational policy seemed to keep its social democratic agenda of generating equal opportunities and social justice. Seeking to integrate all children into the 'unified school,' day-boarding schools for children with disabilities were shut down. When the School Act of 1969 was implemented in 1976, the EPCS became an authorised counselling service by law. Provision of local EPCS services was seen as a substantial support in the successful integration of children with special needs in the ordinary school system, an ideal which strongly characterised the development within special-education policies during the 1960s and 1970s (Hustad et al., 2016, p. 16). By the School Acts of Upper Secondary Education of 1974, and through a revised code of 1975, EPCS was also to provide counselling services to pupils in upper secondary education. This Act established EPCS as a frontline national service for children and youth with special needs (Hustad et al., 2016, p. 16).

In harmony with a growing corporate industry and globalised economy, the perspectives on welfare seemed to alter during the 1980s, representing the 'means' instead of the 'ends'. Examples of this are how the practice of earmarked funding of

schools was terminated, following a decentralisation of the facilitation and provision of special needs education onto the municipalities. Questions of school assets and priorities were thus left in the hands of local policymakers. This change appears to have put the demand for special school establishments in decline. The growth of special schools reached its peak in 1980. The number of special schools in the mid-1980s was 26 primary schools and 11 higher secondary schools. Within seven years, the whole practice of State Schools of Special Education was discontinued and revamped into State Resource Centres ('Statlige Kompetansesentre') with only a counselling function.

Parallel to the social democratic ideals in educational policy, there are traces of a 'new' reform pedagogical turn. The new school reforms emphasised child-centred teaching, nurturing the uniqueness and potentials of each child (Telhaug, 2003). Replacing the emphasis on receptivity, effort, and social compliance, the new ideas stressed creativity, emancipation, self-realisation and autonomy (cf. Telhaug, 2003, p. 281; Stray & Voreland, p. 90). An increased emphasis on stakeholder involvement in school affairs is seen at the late 1980s in the establishments of parent- and pupil school councils. As a possible refraction of the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, the emphasis on involvement could be interpreted as a shift in educational policy, combining the Nation-building project with a more rights-oriented 'market' strategy, regarding pupils and parents as 'consumers' (Norwegian: 'brukere') of education and welfare (cf. Stray & Voreland, 2017, p. 90-91).

Between 1970 and 1974, 189 schools were designed with open solutions. This design was inspired by architectural trends in the USA during the 1960s (the so called 'Trump design' after Lloyd Trump). However, the landscapes were fairly quickly refurbished into traditional class-room solutions in the 1980s, after massive complaints of noise and distractions both from teachers and pupils (E. Vinje, 2013).

#### *THE SCHOOL ACTS OF 1974 AND 1987.*

Together with the curricular design group, Hans Jørgen Dokka began working on a proposition for a new curriculum ('Mønsterplan') in 1967. In line with the curricular request of the School Act of 1969, the proposition was sent to a hearing in 1970, and

a new curriculum (M74) was introduced in 1974 (Ministry of Education and Church Affairs, 1974). The curriculum was temporarily revised in 1985 at the request of Minister of Church and Educational Affairs Kjell Magne Bondevik. A permanent revision of the school curriculum (M87) was published in 1987 (Ministry of Education- and Church Affairs, 1987; Wivesland, 1995).

In line with reform-pedagogical ideals, the School Acts of 1974 and 1987 stressed the importance of local autonomy in school affairs and a locally grounded teaching content and curricula. The national curriculum was to be viewed as a framework for local school developments and support for teachers (Tønnessen, 2011; Stray & Voreland, 2017).

The new radicalism emerging at the turn of the 1970s, which is highly visible in the new curriculum, changed the question of equality to a question of equity in education (e.g. Hellesnes, 1969 or Christie, 1971). An example of this is how the New School Act of 1974 prescribed that every school above the level of comprehensive school be reckoned as higher secondary schools, including vocational schools. The question of equity might still be most pronounced in issues of evaluation. The norm-based system of marks and grading was criticised for being suppressive, generating competition and divisions among people. To give a 'fair' mark was seen as more or less impossible, and highly instrumental (Elvik, 1978). The discussion of marks and grading was hardly new, but it undoubtedly escalated in the 1970s. Lysne (2006) writes that:

Norway has a rather unique history concerning educational assessment and grading, with frequent shifts of grading scales and troublesome introductions of new operative directives. Fights over formal assessment and grading have been going on almost continuously from early in the nineteenth century, and on some occasions, as in the 1970's, expressed by opponents and defenders of the system with such strong passions that hardly anything like it is to be found in another country.

(Lysne, 2006, p. 330)

When the question of an absolute scale and goal-oriented system of marks and grades was issued, the legislative function of the curricula became accentuated. By legitimising their arguments in the new curriculum, M74, and its emphasis on the

superiority of the curricular principles and methodological recommendation, the teachers were provided with a juridical defence against the implementation of an absolute, goal-oriented system of evaluation. The former practice of a norm-based system was thus allowed to continue (cf. Lysne, 2006).

#### **1.4 LIQUID MODERNITY**

Liquid modernity' is here defined as a period where traditional identities are dissolved and replaced by more fluid (and shallow) identities adapted to a rapid pace of societal change.

##### **POLITICAL DESTABILISATION AND THE NEOLIBERAL TURN IN ECONOMICS.**

On both a national and global level, political and economic instability were increasing in the 1990s. There was an intensified criticism of the social democratic welfare models' ability to cope with challenges of unemployment and 'debt crisis' in Norway, which had arrived in the wake of the global economic recession in the early nineties. The triumph of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the technological milestones reached by the computer and communication industry contrasted with the harsh realities of the Gulf and Balkan wars which were unfolding in our living rooms through CNN's live broadcasting. A rapid acceleration of both global economics and international conflicts, represented by a growing nationalism and destabilisation of Eastern Europe, marked the entrance of the new decade with a mixture of distress and hopes for the future. Norway's almost unconditional adoption of the EU legislation through the European Economic Area Agreement (EEA), after the rejection of EU membership in the referendum of 1994, may be seen as a sign of a growing conflict between the political elite and the Norwegian grass roots. The rise of neoliberalism and new public management (NPM) reached the shores of Norway in the late 1980s, marking a shift in thinking by the political elite, including many prominent left-wing politicians—a trend that was also clearly observed all over Europe and the Western world.

The wave of neoliberalism gave few marked repercussions in Norwegian policies until the latter part of the first decade of the new century. In many ways, the 1990s represented a period of growing interest in the 'Nordic model of welfare' as a viable way forward for policies, for instance, in the Baltic areas. In the World Summit for Social Development in 1995, the representative of the Nordic Council presented the characteristic features of the Nordic model, concluding that:

As Baltic co-operation grows, it is important to take into account the way in which other countries, over the years, have built up their co-operation, and forms for such co-operation. The way in which the Nordic countries have been able to learn from history may also help the Baltic countries to understand that co-operation with each other and with the world around them is an essential feature of development. The only difference is that the Baltic countries will be able to take advantage of the experience gained by other countries—for example the Nordic countries—in achieving prosperity and social welfare. This is why the Nordic Council will be giving high priority to co-operation between the Nordic region and the Baltic countries over the next few years.

(Svensson, 09.03.1995)

#### *THE NEW WAVE OF EDUCATION FOR ALL.*

The adoption of a new economic and political policies in Norwegian educational practices is clearly seen when looking at the developments in Norwegian school policies of the 1990s. In 1992, the State Schools of Special Education were closed and replaced by 13 national and seven regional State Resource Centres. The new mandate of the centres was to ensure that all children, youth, and adults were given a proper, meaningful provision of adapted and adjusted education, preferably in their community and home environment (cf. KUF, 1993, p. 2). The national and regional centres were eventually merged and centralised into the 'State Educational Support System' ('StatPed') at the end of the century.

The restructurings of the special schools during the 1980s and 1990s and the new reform of Health Protection of People with Mental Retardation in 1991 expanded the responsibilities of the EPCS. In this period, the service was increasingly criticised for its narrow perspective on individual disabilities. There was a growing call for ecological perspectives within the service, which could help understand and deal with the environmental structures and social dynamics at play. When entering the 1990s,

a shift in focus was emerging within the EPCS—away from the traditional diagnostic and defect-oriented emphasis of special education and towards a counselling policy stressing systemic supportive strategies directed towards the school environment, teacher leadership and communication, and peer-group interaction in the class. While there was a massive integration of pupils from State Schools of Special Education during the late 1980s and early 1990s, these children were not necessarily socially included in the class and school learning environment. The Salamanca Declaration of 1994 radically altered the perspectives on heterogeneity in teaching—perceiving diversity as a resource, rather than barriers for learning and development—seeing that it might create experiences of belonging in and participating in a group or community with others (Håstein & Werner, 2003). This new ideology did, however, face challenges in the transformation from political visions to practice (Haug, 2003). According to Kiuppis (2014), and his analysis of the historical meanings of inclusive education, the Salamanca statement represented a paradigm shift in the field of education across the world, moving from integration to inclusion. By fusing inclusive education and special needs education with education for all, the principle of inclusive education became fenced (cf. Kiuppis, 2014, p. 754).

The reform policies of Gudmund Hernes, the Minister of Education, Research, and Church Affairs, in the early 1990s carry some strong resemblances to the visions of Anna Sethne and of US pragmatism and liberalism. By recentralising the curricular authority to the state—while at the same time decentralising the economic and administrative responsibilities onto the municipalities—the neoliberal foundation for educational administration and management (NPM) was introduced (see Nesheim, 2006). In addition to the neoliberal aspects, Hernes' policies also represented a renaissance of the questions of cultural cultivation, as well as national refraction of the UN's educational agenda. In line with the Jomtien agreement on the World Declaration on Education for All in 1990 (UNESCO, 1990) and the Salamanca Statement of 1994 (UNESCO, 1994), an effort to reduce inequalities is visible in Hernes' reform policies, discursively moving the emphasis from integration to inclusive education.

#### *ACCESS TO GENERAL UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE ADMISSION CERTIFICATION.*

Entering the 1990s, upper secondary vocational education still did not qualify for studies at university levels. In this sense, the current school provision and certifications functioned as systemic conservation of class divisions in the Norwegian society. The vast majority of students in vocational programmes were from a working-class background, while those who enrolled in grammar schools mostly represented the middle and upper classes (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2003). Turning educational visions into political practice, Hernes' School Act of 1994 granted everyone who had completed nine years of compulsory schooling a statutory right to three years of upper secondary education, free of cost. It also provided all who attained general university and college admissions certification with the statutory right to access higher education studies and partake in examinations. Perceiving education as a medium for equal opportunities and rights, an extensive reform program was put in motion to ensure educational access, coherence, continuity, and quality. The reforms included radical changes from kindergarten to adult education (KUF 1997). To facilitate equal opportunities—believing in the individual human being's capacity and power of will—Hernes integrated vocational and grammar into one system of higher secondary education, making it possible to combine and choose between different 'lines of study.' The final modules of vocational programmes (Vg3) allowed the pupils to make a choice between two years of apprenticeship, or one year of common core subjects for general studies certification.

#### *THE 'CORE CURRICULUM'.*

To support a coherent system of education, a new curriculum was introduced in 1993 (Ministry of Education, Research, and Church Affairs, 1993). In line with international agreements, the Core Curriculum of 1993 embraces human rights, dignity, and diversity as essential educational and societal values (cf. Ministry of Education- Research, and Church Affairs, 1993). In his foreword, and in line with a social democratic spirit, Hernes announces that society is responsible for making equality of educational opportunity a reality. His belief in human capacity is unmistakable:

The aim of education is to expand the individual's capacity to perceive and to participate, to experience, to empathize and to excel

(Hernes in Ministry of Education, Research, and Church Affairs, 1993, p. 5)

Breaking with the educational vision of M74 and M87, the Core Curriculum places an additional emphasis on human cultivation and citizenship. In this regard, the principal purpose of the Core Curriculum differentiates between education at comprehensive and upper secondary levels—progressively expanding the weight on civil cultivation. In primary and lower secondary, the curricular purpose is to assist and cooperate with homes in pupils' Christian and ethical upbringing. Comprehensive education should develop the mental and physical abilities of the pupils and give them a broad general education so that they would become useful, independent citizens—in private and public life. Additionally, it should promote intellectual freedom and tolerance, and emphasise the establishment of a cooperative climate between teachers and pupils and between school and home (cf. Ministry of Education, Research, and Church Affairs, 1993, § 1). The aspects of cultural heritage, human rights, and citizenship duties are even more pronounced in the curricular purpose of upper secondary education than in the lower levels. In addition to laying the foundation for a future working life or studies, education should assist the pupils/apprentices in their personal development by increasing their awareness and understanding of basic Christian and humanist values, the national cultural heritage, democratic ideals, and scientific thought and method. Upper secondary education was to promote human equality and equal rights, intellectual freedom and tolerance, ecological understanding, and international co-responsibility (cf. Ministry of Education, Research, and Church Affairs, 1993, § 2 & 3)

In addition to the main purposes of education, the Core Curriculum provided educational aims in light of seven visions of human capacity: the spiritual, creative, working, liberally educated, social, environmentally aware, and integrated human being.



*REFORM-97—THE RE-CENTRALISATION OF CURRICULUM.*

The reform policies of Reidar Sandal, the new minister of Education, Research, and Church Affairs, did not represent a change in the former course set by Hernes (Telhaug & Mediås, 2003). The new School Act and national curriculum (L97), introduced in autumn 1997, established a 10-year Unified Compulsory School—enrolling children in school at the age six instead of seven (Ministry of Education-Research, and Church Affairs, 1996; Blossing, Imsen, & Moos, 2013; Germeten, 1998). The Core Curriculum of 1993 was kept fully intact in the new curriculum. L97 is characterised by being highly goal-oriented. In contrast to the later target and output-orientation in the curriculum of 2006—and in resonance with Hernes idealistic visions regarding the capacity of human will—the curricular objectives generally refer to specific teaching approaches or inner experiences, feelings, and development generated by being exposed to an educational content of a ‘communal’ character (Ministry of Education, Research, and Church Affairs, 1996; Engelsen & Karseth, 2007). Engelsen and Karseth (2007) point to how the re-centralisation of the curriculum and the emphasis on Common Core knowledge should be situated in a broader context in light of liberalist and conservative influences of the Thatcher government in the UK and the ‘cultural literacy’ movement in the US emerging in the 1980s. Telhaug & Mediås (2003, p. 342) argues that ambiguity was generated by the contradictions of the political and the pedagogical agenda in the curriculum, stating that:

The final edition of the curriculum, which was published in 1996, but not in use before 1997, appeared to be a compromise between the minister’s fight for a common core base of knowledge and culture, and the demand for the profession of a curriculum adjustable to local distinctiveness and heterogeneity among the pupils. The solution was a ‘both this and that’, or a comprised pedagogy,

(Telhaug & Mediås, p. 342)

According to Bachmann (2005), L97 should be considered as a content-regulative system, where the curriculum represents leading authority.

### *WAVES OF REFORMS IN TEACHER EDUCATION.*

Two acts regarding teacher education were implemented during the 1990s. The first, announced in 1992, introduced a curriculum framework for a four-year teacher-education programme in 1994, (KUF 1994). The next act, in 1998, stressed the importance of a broad, general education. It consists of a wide range of low-credit subject courses, which made the programme somewhat fragmented in design. The programme limited optional subject courses to the final year (KUF, 1999). Due to the expansion of comprehensive school in 1997, the act granted early childhood teachers the right to teach in lower primary school, from the first to the fifth grade, by taking an additional exam in teacher education ('Pedagogisk Arbeid På Småskoletrinnet', PAPS).

The Comprehensive School and Upper Secondary School acts were not, however, welcomed by all. Some voiced concerns that Hernes' policies represented a challenge to teacher education recruitment, as larger and more heterogeneous groups of pupils were allowed entrance to higher education programmes. Such concerns were related to the fact that admission requirements were low, but also to questions of teacher qualification (Germeten, 1998).

In 1999, in the city of Bologna, a European quality-reform agreement of higher education architecture, referred to as the Bologna Declaration, was signed by 29 European countries (ECC and EU countries). The agreement sought to standardise higher education in Europe in accordance with a Bachelor, Master, and PhD design. The study programmes were to be adjusted to a European Credit Transfer System, which would allow for internationalisation and student exchange across borders. The reform offered a new set of educational terminologies such as 'lifelong learning' and 'quality assurance systems', 'quality standards' and 'learning outcome'.

### THE TIDE IS TURNING—THE EMERGENCE OF A GLOBAL EDUCATIONAL INDUSTRY AND REFORM MOVEMENT.

At the end of the 1990s, one can see a turn in discourse in educational debates towards portraying the 'Unified school' model to be a waste of potential talents, and

that educational outcomes failed to match reasonable expectations of competencies and skills. One should strive for higher achievements and progress for every child, to meet international standards and compete on a global level in an emerging knowledge economy (Tønnessen, 2011). Entering the new millennium, there is an intensification of the economic premises in educational provisions. Content- and Bildung-oriented pedagogy is discredited, while educational policies become more concerned with the question of cost-efficiency, qualification frameworks, and output-monitoring. Following the Bologna Declaration, the UN agreements, and the release of the first result of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), educational policies started to adjust and rely on an emerging educational industry (GEI) and the global educational reform movement (GERM). In 2001, the Norwegian Parliament approved the 'Quality Reform of Higher Education' (White paper: 27, 2000–2001). Commenting on the turn in policy discourse in the White Paper, Garm and Karlsen (2004) observes that:

Here "quality" was interpreted as high academic achievement in accordance with international standards. "Governance" was understood as increased institutional and individual freedom and autonomy inside a "Management by Objective" governance concept. Institutions were rhetorically given freedom to choose the means to become more efficient and increase the quality in accordance with central aims and state control over assessment and certification. The "quality reform" encompassed both college and university education and adjusted Norwegian higher education towards international standards while encompassing 'new public management' as governance strategy (Karlsen, 2002).

(Garm & Karlsen, 2004, p. 736)

In the wake of the first results of OECD's 'Programme for International Student Assessment' (PISA, 2016) announced in 2001, one can trace the emergence of a global quality agenda in Norwegian educational policy—expanding the schools' and teachers' responsibility to cover more than traditional teaching duties. Concerned by the current developments in the teaching profession, Kirsti Klette said,

There is growing evidence, internationally, that the working life of teachers is undergoing profound and dramatic changes. Curriculum demands are broadening. The impact of and pressure incurred by reform effects are intensifying. Accountability, assessment and the paperwork created by them are increasing. Teachers are being urged to widen their role as professionals and take more responsibility beyond the classroom door: as curriculum planners

and leaders, as mentors for new teachers, as collaborative planners and decision-makers with colleagues.

(Klette, 2002, p. 266)

### *PARTNERSHIP FOR 21ST CENTURY SKILLS (P21).*

Besides economic organisations and institutions, like the OECD and the World Bank, the global educational industry is presently represented by partnership coalitions of business communities, education leaders, and policymakers all over the world—the P21 or *The Partnership for 21st Century Learning* (formerly the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21), 2017). The coalition of P21 was founded in 2002 and consisted of more than 50 international corporations and foundations (including profit and non-profit), among them Fisher-Price, Walt Disney, Lego, Ford Motor Company, Apple, and Intel.

Since then, the P21 has provided recommendations for policymakers and governments on skill strategies and prospects of vital future competences in a global economy (see the recommendations in the Norwegian Official Reports—The School of the Future [NOU, 2015:8]). The P21 website announces openly this close collaboration with governments all over the world:

P21 has achieved success demonstrated by our growing list of leadership states and expanded membership. Additionally, the Framework for 21st Century Learning has widely become the recognised model for infusing 21st Century Skills into the curriculum.

(P21, 2017, 'Our history')

### *EDUCATION FOR ALL AGENDA.*

Since the millennium, the most influential frameworks promoting human rights for inclusive education and sustainable development has been the eight 'Millennium Development Goals' (MDGs) and the six goals for 'Education for All' (EFA), framing the priorities and agenda of an expanding global educational reform movement. (cf. UN, 2014; Stray & Voreland, 2017).

During the last two decades, the EFA initiatives have enabled massive progress in both school enrolment and literacy achievements of children all over the developing world (UNESCO, 2014). However, having emerged as an educational ideology and

agenda of the industrialised West, the EFA agenda has been accused of contributing to a conceptual (instead of locational) re-colonisation of the Global South (Stray & Voreland, 2017). Coupled and operationalised by the use of New Public Management (NPM) mechanisms, aspects such as cost-efficiency, standardisation and decontextualisation in the EFA implementation frameworks somewhat appears to overshadow the cosmopolitan ideals of the inclusive education agenda (e.g., 'ILFE-Toolkit', UNESCO, 2005). In the process of propagating and 'implementing' EFA's educational agenda, the developing countries experience limited space for influence and negotiation (due to dependence on aid provisions from Western countries) (Stray & Voreland, 2017). In 2013, the United Nations received an issue brief on 'Education and Culture' from their technical support team (TST) discussing current barriers to be taken into account when developing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) post-2015 agenda (TST, 2013). One of the most worrying feedbacks issued was how the way in which EFA promoted its one-size-fits-all design disregarded countries' diverse starting points, financial resources, and capacity. TST also claimed that 'inadequate attention has been paid to the financial, human capital, and infrastructural resource constraints' (TST, 2013, p. 2).

Seemingly sensitive to critique, the MDG and EFA agenda of 2030 appears to be based on more mutual accountability mechanisms and sustainable development than former frameworks—removing some of the stress placed on output measures, (OWG, 2014; UNESCO, 2014).

#### *Responses to EFA agenda in Norwegian educational policies.*

Responding to UNESCO's Education for All (EFA) 2015 targets, Kristin Clemet, the minister of Education and Research, announced that inclusion already was integrated in Norwegian education policies. She recognised, however, that the country still faced challenges in the realisation of their inclusive goals concerning low performers and a low completion rate of minority pupils. She notes:

Some of the main challenges in Norwegian schooling is an average level of mediocre achievements, a high discrepancy between the educational achievements of high and low performing pupils, and a poor correlation between the use of resources and educational outputs. The Norwegian school is struggling to include and motivate low performing students.

A high number of students with e.g. an immigrant background, physical disabilities or reading or writing difficulties early drops out of education or is left without a sufficient gain of their schooling.

(Clemet, 2003, p. 4)

Maintaining a focus on learning achievement when addressing aspects of inclusion, instead of, for example, psycho-social challenges in pupils' learning environments, Clemet rhetorically justifies her coming arguments of a need for stronger quality assurance mechanisms in the Norwegian school system.

In the wake of the massive global aid-agenda—a branding of the 'Nordic model' is seen, followed by research on 'best practice' transfer of the model into developing economies (e.g., Carroll & Palme, 2006). Simultaneous with the emergence of this kind of 'policy-borrowing' (see Steiner-Khamsi, 2014.), a rapid rise of think tanks promoting a liberal market ideology all over the world is well documented (McGann, 21.01.2017). Like her international peers, the minister of Education and Research was named as chair of the Norwegian right-wing think tank Civita. Through Civita, Clemet has made considerable effort to lobby public opinion in the direction of a distinct liberal discourse in educational management (Jensen, 2010; Elstad, 2009). Igniting a call for change and quality assurance among the public, she manufactured a sense of crisis in education (Beck, 2009), supported by the alleged low performance of Norwegian pupils in PISA 2000 (Sivesind & Elstad, 2010). Clemet connected PISA results to the former reform-pedagogical policies in Scandinavian countries (see, e.g., Clemet, 19.01.04). The fact that Norwegian pupils performed at an *average* level on skills tests and above average on societal knowledge questionnaires was not mentioned. Neither were the aspects of inclusive vs. segregated school systems or matters of curricular practice and design accounted for. The reference to average results as 'mediocre' points at Clemet and Civita's strong political agenda and a movement of educational thinking in a direction very far from what appeared as an almost unanimous emphasis on the principles of equity and inclusion among Norwegian policymakers in the 1980s and early 1990s.

### *THE NATIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM (NQAS).*

Clemt introduced the National Quality Assurance System (NQAS) in 2003. Governed and monitored by the Ministry of Education and Research, NQAS was to be regulated by National Education Acts and Independent School Acts and their respective curriculums (Søgnen, 2002; Eurydice, 2017). In addition to a Quality Assessment System (QAS), the NQAS included school inspections, quality and monitoring reports (e.g., 'Utdanningsspeilet' and 'Ståstedsrapporten'), international tests and surveys,<sup>49</sup> digital platforms, and locally developed tests and reports. NQAS positioned the nation's counties with the responsibility of ensuring and assessing the quality of upper secondary education programmes and vocational education training provisions. Similarly, the municipalities were obliged to implement NQAS on comprehensive school levels and to supervise and guide the local schools in the process. The county governor was placed in charge of inspection and guidance on municipal-county levels.

### *The quality assessment system (QAS).*

The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training was established and assigned administrative responsibility for the development and implementation of QAS. Assessment results were to be aggregated and published at the digital platform known as Skoleporten (The School Portal), providing statistical data on examination results, the national test, and screening tests. In addition to the QAS results published at The School Portal, pupil surveys were developed to map the psycho-social learning environments in school. Due to sensitivity considerations, these results were subject to a more restricted legislation on publication than the exam and test results (cf. Eurodice, 2017).

**National Tests:** The first national tests were introduced in 2004. According to a national evaluation of school leaders' and teachers' experience with the national tests, the tests were well received, apart from the reading tests. A high number of teachers reported that test to be too demanding for pupils in the fourth grade in

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<sup>49</sup> Today Norwegian Education partakes in the following international tests and surveys: PISA, TIMSS, TIMSS Advanced, PIRLS, ICCS, ICILS, TALIS, and the Starting Strong Survey (cf. Eurodice, 2017)

primary education. The evaluation also showed that the facilitation of coding and assessment collaboration had been prioritised by school leaders to a limited extent (Ugland, Hind, & Qvam, 2004, Havik, 2005). The tests in 2005, were criticised much more than the tests in 2004. They were judged to be unreliable and invalid test instruments by researchers and in great need of improvement (Skarheim, 2005). At the same time, scholars severely criticised the design of the national test, asserting that it was not fit to serve as a pedagogical support instrument. They were instead designed for out-put monitoring, implying that the intention for the introduction of these test regimes had been municipal comparisons and league table competition—risking practices of ‘teaching to the test’ instead of curriculum-based teachings (cf. Stray, 2008, p. 19). The results of the revised national test in 2007 generated a large media storm, and public ‘blaming game’ (see Weaver, 1986), where stakeholders and policymakers, in an effort to free themselves from being held accountable for poor test results, moved the question of blame downward in the hierarchy (Ingvaldsen, 2007; Ruud, 2008; Uleberg, 2008a). The national test has, however, been much improved in the later years, and schools and teachers—especially the younger generation of teachers—seem gradually to have endorsed them as valuable (Hermansen & Mausethagen, 2016).

**National Examinations:** The national examinations represent a more traditional form of evaluation in Norway than the other instruments of quality assurance (Kirke, Utdannings, & Forskningsdepartementet, 1995). The Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training is responsible for the design of the exams, while school owners (the municipalities) are responsible for running the exams in accordance with ruling laws and legislation. The exams are supposed to provide the pupils with an opportunity to demonstrate both their range and depth of knowledge and competence within a subject (NDET, 2007a). Before K06, the exams should facilitate a holistic evaluation of the pupils’ competencies in light of the curricular objectives. By the introduction of K06, the emphasis turned towards assessing pupils’ attainment of curricular targets (cf. Stray, 2008, p. 20).

**Screening tests:** Screening tests in reading have been developed by the Norwegian Reading Centre in Stavanger since the 1990s. The test is meant as pedagogical



support to schools and teachers in locating pupils with reading difficulties (Engen, Solheim, & Olofsson, 2004; cf. Stray, 2008, p. 20). In 2000, the Ministry of Education, Research, and Church Affairs introduced mandatory screening tests in reading in second and seventh grades. The Norwegian Reading Centre was given the responsibility for collecting data and providing monitoring reports to the National Learning Centre<sup>50</sup>, while Statistics Norway (SSB) was responsible for school selection (cf. Solheim, Tønnessen, & Oftedal, 2002, p. 3; cf. Stray, 2008, p. 20). Later screening tests were revised to include the curriculum targets of K06. By 2008, additional screening tests in arithmetic were introduced. The tests were developed by the Department of Teacher Education and School Research at the University of Oslo. In 2009, the screening test in reading was mandatory in the first through third grades, while tests in reading and arithmetic were to be mandatory in the first year of upper secondary education by 2010 (see NDET, 2015). In recent years, a growing tendency of using the screening tests to rank and compare school or teacher performances have been reported alongside a practice of ‘teaching to the test’. The providers of the tests have criticised and warned about using the test for monitoring purposes and for ‘payment/award-by-results’ management since the tests have been designed exclusively as supportive tools within the frame of adapted education (Lesesenteret, 2017).

**Pupil reports on learning environment:** In 2001, the digital survey ‘Elevinspektørene’ (The pupil inspectors) was initiated as an opportunity for pupils to report on aspects concerning their learning environments such as school motivation, well-being, bullying, pupil involvement in school activities, teaching methods, assessment and guidance, and school democracy (Wærness & Kavli, 2003, Stray, 2008). The survey was later renamed ‘Elevundersøkelsen’ (The Pupil Survey) and is today optional from fifth grade and upwards but mandatory in the seventh and 10<sup>th</sup> grades and in the first year in upper secondary education (Udir, 2017).

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<sup>50</sup> In 2003, the National Learning Centre was merged with the Norwegian Support System for Special Education in the new Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training.

### *THE KNOWLEDGE PROMOTION (K06).*

As part of the new Quality Reform, Clemet introduced a new curriculum for lower and upper comprehensive school titled 'The Knowledge Promotion' (K06). A change in government placed the implementation process in the hands of the new 'Red-Green' Government of Stoltenberg<sup>51</sup> in the fall of 2006. K06 represented a contrast to the visions and input-oriented objectives of L97, concerned with the cultivating function of the educational content, training of skills, or problem-based collaborative learning projects. While preserving the Core Curriculum of 1993 completely intact, just like in L97, the new parts of the curriculum represented a totally altered design. Teaching objectives were replaced with learning targets—defining the minimal level of pupil performance at each educational level. The legislative function of the curriculum was strengthened by the change in wording, especially in light of how educational outputs were now being monitored through a national quality assessment system (NQAS) consisting of national tests in the three Rs, national exams, screening tests, and pupil surveys. In contrast to the custom of using 'maximum' goals in the curricula, the new standards held school owners and the teaching profession accountable for pupils' inclusion, learning, and educational development (Andenæs & Møller, 2016; Engeland, Roald, & Langfeldt, 2008; Engelsen and Karseth, 2007).

Thuen (2010) points out that the concept of 'The Unified School' is absent in government documents in the first decade of the millennium. Referring to the doctoral study of Janicke Heldal Stray (2010), Thuen notes how Clemet admitted to be calculatingly silent on this fact, deciding not to point it out before 'some researcher' would catch on to the change in terminology. The term 'Unified School' had been replaced with the term 'common school' in a deliberate attempt to open the door to privatisation of education. Although the new government quickly returned the political emphasis to public education, they never reintroduced the concept of The Unified School (cf. Thuen, 2010; Stray 2010, p. 203).

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<sup>51</sup> *Red-Green Government of Stoltenberg: a coalition of Labour, environment, and left-wing parties.*

### *ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING (AFL).*

In efforts to establish formative assessment practices in schools, the Ministry of Education and Research requested the Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training (NDET) to develop a better practice of assessment in education, holding that many pupils attained unrealistic perceptions of their own competencies during primary school due to not receiving proper information about how their performances match the curricular targets. The ministry, therefore, wanted the directorate to explore and evaluate assessment models that would give the school owners, managers, teachers, pupils, and parents standard quality criteria for curricular aims and targets attainment—differentiated between high, average, and low attainment (Ministry of Education and Research, 30.01.2007).

In response to the ministry's request, the directorate initiated the research project 'Bedre Vurderingspraksis' (Better Assessment Practices) in 2007. Standardised criteria of aims and target attainment were developed and differentiated on different levels. The University College in Vestfold was placed in charge of the school pilots, with Roar Engh positioned as leader of the project. The pilot included eight comprehensive schools trying out different assessment models, which the main project could develop further (cf. Engh, 2007, p. 2; NDET, 2007b; 2007c).

In the main project, in 2008, 78 schools explored four models of national criteria of target-attainment. The models differed in regards to whether the schools were to develop or use the criteria. One model did not apply the term 'low attainment', and on secondary levels, the descriptions of each level in the ECTS scale were used instead of target-attainment criteria. Later, the formative assessment practice came to rely much upon the work of Trude Slemmen and Line Tyrdal, who were involved in developing an 'Assessment for Learning' (AfL) practice in the municipality of Oslo. Inspired by a Canadian model of assessment for learning, they developed the foundation of the current legislation on formative assessment today ('Underveisvurdering', §3-11). In 2011, the Norwegian AfL project became a part of OECD's project 'Governing Complex Education Systems' (GCES), which sought to gather research evidence on how one could understand and govern the increasing

challenges in monitoring and directing the implementation of education policies (Hopfenbeck, Tolo, Florez and El Masri, 2013)

*THE RISE IN PROVISIONS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION.*

Despite policy and research initiatives on inclusive education during the 1990s, one can observe an increase in special educational measures and exclusion of children with special needs from the regular school programmes at the turn of the century (Knudsmoen, Løken, Nordahl, & Overland, 2011; Nordahl & Haustätter, 2009). In addition to the EPCS services, the municipalities began piloting the use of recourse groups or ambulant teams during the 2000s. The teams were meant to provide schools and teachers with a closer follow-up on children with challenging behaviour patterns by being present for a longer period in classrooms (e.g., Ambulant Team' in Oslo and Mobile Team in Kristiansand). Between 2006 and 2012, the number of children in need of special education nevertheless rose by 40% and the total number in special education teaching lessons by 20% (KS, 2012). Nearly 70% of the children considered in need of special education were boys (Knudsmoen et al., 2011; Nordahl & Hausstätter, 2009). Learning and behaviour problems are the most common justification of the need for special education. Teaching lessons for children with special needs have mainly been provided as group-based lessons (two to five pupils) outside regular classrooms. Such exclusion from classroom teaching has also been used in the teaching of children lacking formal documentation of special education needs. However, this represents an unrecorded practice, which makes it difficult to calculate the exact number of pupils excluded from the regular school programme (Knudsmoen, et al., 2011). Segregated forms of school provision seem to be an institutional solution to cope with pupil heterogeneity, even though policy guidelines stress that inclusive education has to be viewed as an adapted education for all, within the frames of a common learning environment and quality in teaching (Jenssen & Lillejord, 2009). According to these regulations, special education is not to be practised as a teaching provision detached and isolated from the regular school programme. The use of individual education plans should also be avoided as far as possible (White Paper 18, 2010-2011).

The rise special education provisions seems to be parallel to changes in special education expert institutions. In 2004, StatPed moved one step further towards becoming an administrative policy service when its services were included in the new Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training, together with the Norwegian board of Education (Læringscenteret). Between 2012 and 2016, additional efforts were made to reduce the institutional complexity of StatPed, and a simplified infrastructure placed one national and four regional directors in charge of StatPed services. As part of this centralisation and reduction of institutional complexity, StatPed's main office was set in Oslo.

*THE GROWING EMPHASIS ON ADAPTED EDUCATION.*

In the aftermath of the turn to inclusion, Norwegian educational policies turned more and more in favour of a use of adapted education measures (for all pupils), with the aim of reducing the extensive use of special education and segregating practices in schools. Special education was reduced to a legal term concerned with individual rights of specially adapted curriculum (Individual Education Plans) if such need was assessed and confirmed by an EPCS councillor or a certified specialist. This opened the possibility for more systemic practices of adaptation, allowing for structural and relational perspectives on class communication and behaviour.

*A CONTINUOUS WAVE OF REFORMS IN TEACHER EDUCATION.*

Having been through a range of reforms in the 1990s, plans for a new act was already announced in 2000 by the Mjøs Committee, barely one year after the past reform was initiated. In 2003, an agency for quality assurance in Norwegian Education (NOKUT) was established, mandated with responsibility for higher education evaluation and accreditation, monitoring teacher education programmes by output control and management.

In line with the Bologna process and the Quality Reform, the new teacher education was converted into bachelor programmes adjusted to the European Credit Transfer System. The reform aimed to stimulate internationalisation and student exchange across borders and provide students with a broader range of choice in the

programme design (educational shopping). Instead of establishing a three-year bachelor and two-year masters programme, a four-year model was continued in the general teacher education programme. The early childhood education programme was already designed as a three-year programme and was thus more adaptable to a bachelor model. Garm and Karlsen (2004, p. 737) concludes that there were five trends characterising the Norwegian teacher education reforms at the time, characteristics that it shared with teacher educations in other European countries.

1. An expansion of length in general college education programmes.
2. An assimilation of didactics and discipline studies.
3. An academisation through a subject-centred and discipline-oriented teacher education.
4. Options of specialisation in the programmes.
5. An emphasis on subject didactics

Looking at the five characteristics, it seems that Garm and Karlsen's observation forecasted contemporary trends in education (e.g., Teacher Education Act of 2013 and 2017).

In 2009, The Ministry of Education and Research introduced the new reform initiative 'Competence for Quality'. The initiative intended to provide a permanent system of in-service training for all teachers and school leaders, integrated with the initial teacher education. It also established the right to and obligation for in-service training for all teachers (Grøttvik, 2013). Of all the governmental initiatives from this period, the in-service training initiative was probably the most highly valued change in the eyes of the teachers (ref. NIFU-report, 2016)

#### CONTEMPORARY DEVELOPMENT.

In addition to technological innovations, the world seems to have entered yet another 'time-rush' in the renewal of the international and universal frameworks for sustainable development and action (MDG and EFA 2030). Traditional educational systems all over the world have been exposed to massive interventions and 'modernisation' during the last two decades—both seen in and represented by:

- The MDG and EFA goals of 2015 and 2030,

- The Bologna process and Quality Reform of Higher Education.
- The global educational industry (e.g., OECD, World Bank, P21. etc.).

The close connection between the financial market and education is evident in the concerns raised by teachers' unions the last couple of years. In 2014, the Norwegian Union of Education expressed unease with how educational policies are becoming influenced by international agreements and the global education industry (cf. Stray & Voreland, 2017). In their report, the union warns:

International organisations, agreements and programmes influence Norwegian education policy in several ways. Particularly OECD's involvement in PISA and other international tests, as well as the rationale behind adjusting education to the labour market through the Skills strategy<sup>52</sup>, has been a subject of debate (OECD 2012a, 2014a).

(Union of Education Norway, 2014, p. 8 [translated in Stray & Voreland (2017)])

The same document went on to highlight the establishment of the TISA and TTIP trade agreements as another example of international processes that might have a major impact on the content and design of Norwegian education. In addition to the issues addressed by teacher unions, the global educational discourse is increasingly criticised by Norwegian researchers within the field of education, raising concerns on how Norwegian policymakers have underestimated the altering effects that a global educational industry (GEI), accountability, and quality regimes might have inflicted on the Norwegian Unified School model (Stray & Voreland, 2017; Imsen & Volckmar, 2014; Langfeldt, Elstad & Hopmann, 2008; Helgøy & Homme, 2007).

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<sup>52</sup> See *Partnership for 21st Century Learning* (formerly *Partnership for 21th Century Skills*). Web address: [www.p21.org](http://www.p21.org).





### PHASES OF MODERNITY IN KRISTIANSAND

#### 1.5 PRE- AND EARLY MODERNITY

Pre- and early modernity are seen here as the emergence of societal progresses of cultivation and education, where occupations, time perspectives, and identities still were closely connected to family heritage and tradition (scripted courses of action).

#### EARLY SIGNS OF MODERNITY IN KRISTIANSAND.

Historical reports seem not to show an exact date of when the first cathedral school (Latin School) was established in Kristiansand. It was, however, mentioned in a letter from the Danish king to Palle Rosenkrantz, November 28, 1642—only one year after Christian 4th founded the city.

In the city, early signs of modernisation and industrialisation are visible in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Andreas Swane already established a press and book publisher in 1780, which later was bought by Consul O.P. Moe, a renowned local businessman. Moe became the sole provider of news in the county, besides publishing several books, mainly of religious content (cf. Leewy, 1961, p. 55). Parallel to the introduction of press technology in the area, local refractions of the European Enlightenment appear in church and school affairs. In mid-February 1800, Bishop Peder Hansen delivered a draft on how he envisioned schooling in the rural communities. His suggestions were rejected several times until the Danish king called for their approval some years later (Byberg, 1988). The bishop is said to have been inspired by the German Enlightenment and Bildung traditions, perceiving the French and Anglo-Saxon countries to be stuck in their 'medieval' practices (Herlofsen, 1965; Byberg, 1988). His strong beliefs in the Bildung traditions are visible in his engagement with and initiatives for schooling and enlightenment in the communities. He vouched for a broadened curriculum, such as free gymnastics, long before this became common

practice elsewhere (Herlofsen, 1965, Byberg, 1988). He perceived school to be the best societal tool for bringing enlightenment to the people. By starting early, one could prevent prejudice and superstition through the power of knowledge and reason. He was supposedly convinced that when the children then reached early adolescence, one could spot their enlightened character and heritage from a distance in their happy, shining faces (cf. Byberg, 1988, p. 53). According to Byberg (1988), the bishop placed much effort in educating rural school officials, but apparently, this led people in rural communities only to despise the teachers, even more, alienating them even further from the local culture and knowledge traditions. However, that did not seem to stop the bishop's hopes of aiding the unenlightened peasants in their rather bleak situation—arranging reading gatherings, handwriting competitions, and introductions of what he found to be appropriate (religious) literature. He expressed repulsion towards the free evangelist movement of the upcoming folk hero Hans Nilsen Hauge and was greatly concerned for a societal and moral decay following Hauge's activities (Byberg, 1988). Byberg quotes the bishop in his plea to the councillors to solve the growing problem and folk-movement of Hauge:

For given reasons, I must, as my last mission in what has been my first official position in Christiansand's county, plea the High Council to consider any possible ways appropriate to prevent an evilness, which will condemn what could have been lovely people into a mental and moral corruption.

(Byberg, 1988, p. 60 [my translation])

The threat that Hauge's movement represented to the bishop is better understood in a broader societal context of the Napoleonic wars and the hope of independence this evoked in Norwegian citizens—keeping the Danish monarchy and church officials on a high alert, especially in a harbour city like Kristiansand. The city held a key position in the kingdom of Denmark-Norway, and it is reason to believe that King Christian 4<sup>th</sup> must have had an eye for its potential when he founded Christiansand in 1641. In the years succeeding Napoleon's defeat and the new union of Sweden-Norway, a new spring of enlightenment is traceable in the city affairs of Kristiansand.

*FROM RASP HOUSE TO TEACHER SCHOOL.*

At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a Rasp House (prison) was established in Kristiansand offering church ceremonies, school, and confirmation preparations. Several of the prisoners failed to pass their confirmation exams over and over, and some even turned 50<sup>53</sup> without passing, remaining bachelors throughout their lives (Leewy, 1958). According to Leewy (1958), School Teacher Braun, the first teacher at the Rasp House, brought in several hymn and devotional books. For some time, the only reading materials represented a biblical content. However, closely connected to an official initiative by the Justice Department, aimed at providing relief and assistance to the unfortunate, provost Borck from Kongsberg delivered exemplars of 'Christen Thormodsens Levnedbeskrivelse' (the life story of Christen Thormodsen). The book was intended as a contribution to the Rasp House, providing educational material assumingly adapted to the prisoner's low levels of social and mental cultivation (Leewy, 1958). The provost's gesture probably represents the first official policy or initiative towards adapted education in Kristiansand. In addition to this, one could see a beginning of discriminating practices based on the question of worth and fittingness:

During the years 1828-1840 only 12 obtained confirmation out of 64 new arrivals of non-confirmed prisoners, but by the year of 1840, efforts were made to better the current state by placing the sacristan under the supervision of the priest, to teach all non-confirmed suitable and worthy of teaching lessons. It was a mixed-gender class, but they were placed at separate tables.

(Leewy, 1958, p. 100 [My translation])

When the Rasp House was shut down, the building was refurbished into a teacher school (1877-1940). Representing modern progress and prosperity, the traces of the building's former purpose were erased (Leewy, 1958).

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<sup>53</sup> *Life expectancy in 1830 was only 42 for men and 47 for women. Even though these numbers must be viewed in light of a high child-death rate, the average age of death was considerably lower than today (Bye, 2014)*

### *THE FREE COUNTY SCHOOL.*

Observing the poor conditions of common people, Consul Daniel Isaachsen decided to provide free education for unfortunate children in the county. In 1788, 36 children were enrolled at the school. When the school was moved in 1797, new facilities allowed Isaachsen to offer education to 36-40 boys and girls. The boys and girls were given lessons at different hours, the boys in the morning and the girls in the afternoon. In addition to teaching lessons, the school offered clothes to six to eight of the pupils for a low, symbolic price (4 rdl). From 1799, the school was registered as an official common city school committed to following the city curricula (Leewy, 1956c). Teaching and learning materials were scarce, and the growing popularity of the school led to crowded classrooms and poor teaching conditions. A female teacher, the virgin Berthinka Korsvig, was hired in 1842. The decision to include a woman in the teaching staff was frowned upon but accepted due to financial considerations, seeing that she would receive only half of a male teacher's wage. As a result of public pressure on the city council to improve school provision in the Common City School, a Unified Folk School was established in 1850, representing the end of Latin school, citizen schools, and common schools in the city. Supportive lessons for pupils with special needs were initiated in 1866, three nights a week. Except for this support, these pupils followed the regular school programme and ordinary classes (ref. Jørgensen, 1950).

Isaachsen's school was closed in 1871, and the girls and boys were divided into two separate schools. A new school was built at 'Tordenskjolds gate,' and was opened as a school for boys in 1871. The girls remained in the school building, which formerly had been the location of the city's work asylum, 'Kong Carl Johans Minde' (Jørgensen, 1950). The children were divided by age into seven different levels, replacing the former under and upper levels of mixed-age arrangements (Jørgensen, 1950).

## 1.6 CLASSIC MODERNITY

The 'classic modernity' phase is here characterised by the emergence of higher education provisions and the entrance and growth of more egalitarian and secularised policies, and folk orientation and enlightenment

### HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCHOOL PROVISIONS FOR ADULTS.

Kristiansand appears to have been a pioneer in the field of teacher education. In 1839, 12 years after the School Act of 1827, 'Christiansands Stiftsseminarium' (Kristiansand County Seminar) was established at Holt, an old rectory east of Kristiansand. The (church) rector of Holt County, Andreas Faye, was affirmed the institutional headmaster and manager. Faye was recommended as a highly suitable candidate, considering his respectable character and heartfelt ambitions for the young generation (Jansen, 1951). Faye placed a great emphasis on catechetical didactics and the three Rs but also introduced subjects such as singing and geography.

Due to efforts of Jørgen Løvland, the city was the first to offer teacher exams for women. Under the guidance of school inspector Grieg, the results of the initial exams for women in 1884 were considered to be quite 'nice' (Steen, 1948). Besides teacher education, it was the establishment of a school of engineering in 1879 that would eventually appear as the most significant contribution to folk education—serving as a continuation of the folk school provisions—as an opportunity for people engaged in trade and craftsmanship to enrol in higher education studies. Up until then, the only opportunity for higher education for this group had been courses in ship or building plans design, which did not attract the city's tradesmen and apprentices. School hours were scheduled in the afternoon due to concerns in the industry that a morning schedule would interfere and restrain the industrial progress and modernisation of the city. The church's earlier initiation of a Sunday school for boys occupied with manual labour during weekdays was based on a similar argument—facilitating the modern needs of basic literacy and numeracy skills and civil cultivation in the mercantile businesses without losing a valuable workforce (Steen, 1948). For

working-class people, school was an 'off-duty' preoccupation. The ancient Greek concept 'skhole,' as a notion of school as 'free leisure,' somewhat captures the mercantile industry's perception and attitudes towards education at the time. Educational investments could be considered desirable as long as it benefitted, not restrained, business progress and profits.

#### THE PREJUDICES AGAINST RURAL PEOPLE'S WANTS AND NEEDS.

The local accounts of teacher and school development after the establishment of Holt seminar speak of the emergence of a more secular and folk-oriented vision among progressive scholars. Breaking with tradition, they distanced themselves from the pedagogical practices of the church and the catechetical didactics of Pontoppidan. Placing the seminar in rural surroundings was in line with the new wave of romanticism and adoration of rural life. However, the main reason for the rural placement of the seminar probably also had to do with the notion that a proper distance from the city centre of Kristiansand could spare students from the temptations of the urban lifestyle. After some time, Faye reports that many would like to see the seminars move closer to the city. The promoters of keeping the rural rectory rather embraced a 'romantic' agenda, arguing for rural peoples' needs of shielding from the mental state of the metropolis. The founder of Christiania's (Oslo) Labour Union, Marcus Thrane, who spent most his summers in Kristiansand, claimed that most people would find the thought of moving the seminars into the city, with a big C, rather worrisome. As a large number of teacher students were common peasants, they would presumably be more comfortable in a rural environment and likely troubled by most aspects of city life (cf. Jansen, 1951, p. 66). One finds a similar example in a report on the history of Kristiansand's Labour Union:

At the same time as Wergeland makes his appeal to the generous spirit of the societal elite, he exhorts working-class man to live by the four presiding virtues of purity, diligence, thrift and frugality. The idea that working-class people ever would be able to organise themselves as an intellectual, capacitated and independent social class, apparently does not seem to have crossed his mind, at least he does not speak of this—seemingly, some say, because of his connection and loyalty to King Karl Johan.

(Kummen, 1949, p. 25 [my translation])

The reported statement clearly shows that it was not just the church officials who failed to grasp the perspective of common people. This lack of insight into the realities of common people was evidenced in the labour union's working-class initiatives as well. Just as Wergeland, representatives of the Labour Union in Kristiansand, such as Løvland, Friis, Sundt, Abrahamsen, and Steen, wanted to cultivate the working-class citizens, assuming they would come running if only given a chance. Their lack of resonance with the life and work of common people would leave them with many setbacks and disappointments. When the prominent sociologist Eilert Sundt initiated an evening symposium at the labour union's residence in town (Arbeiderforeningen), only one person showed up in the audience. Later initiatives by Axel Steen, Jørgen Løvland, and August Abrahamsen did not have much greater success. The union's report quotes Steen, commenting on the attendance at Marius Nygaard's lecture on Norwegian history: 'We would have wished, for the workers' sake that more had attended than did' (Kummen, 1949, p. 154).

This does not imply, however, that the pioneers of the labour movement failed in all their initiatives. In many ways, they represented the prime movers of educational and welfare development in their wish to create a more egalitarian society and enlightened spirit in the city that could enable a move from 'rags to riches'. Before the mentioned establishment of a technical school, the Labour Union had initiated evening school provisions adapted to working-class and rural-life demands and routines (Leewy, 1956b). The evening school taught subjects such as reading, writing, English, geometry, and ship and building plan design until economic circumstances eventually forced the union to shut down the initiative. At about the same time as the evening schools were closed, the union announced their plans of initiating a higher education alternative for women. Thanks to the efforts of Steen, Jørgensen, Skjefveland, and Lømsland,<sup>54</sup> an educational programme in home economics was established in 1882, enrolling 21 women in higher education studies (Leewy, 1956b).

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<sup>54</sup> Lømsland was later honoured by a city street, and for several years during the 1980s and 1990s, the teacher education residences of University college of Agder was located in Lømsland's street for several years.

#### FROM ASYLUM TO FOLK-SCHOOL.

Parallel to the establishment of the Rasp House, a work asylum opened on July 1, 1832, in the public building: 'Kong Carl Johans Minde.' The building was formerly owned by a prominent family in the city with the name of Mørch. The work asylum was initiated to address the high unemployment and poverty rates in the city. In addition to providing work facilities, one aimed to foster children as useful members of society. The teaching provision encompassed craftsmanship, Christian upbringing, and the three Rs. At first, only two women and eight girls were hired to work for food. The following year, people were allowed to work for shelter as well. By 1833, 58 people lived at the asylum, including women, men, girls, and boys. The children received teaching lessons two to three times a day besides their working hours. The asylum was viewed as a failed project by the townsmen, mainly due to the poor living conditions of the children—being surrounded by drunken adults and moral corruption all day long. The children were said to be unruly, infested with fleas and lice, and impossible to discipline (cf. Leewy, 1956, 140). In 1850, city officials eventually agreed to shut down the asylum, and in the 1860s, the asylum was turned into a folk school (school for girls by the year 1871). Mørch's old house was restored and renamed 'Skolehaven' (The school garden). The quaint and massive architecture of the school, with its characteristic 'Patricier Villa' style and manicured garden, left no trace of its former purpose and use (Leewy, 1956a). By the time the new folk school was opened in the old 'Kong Carl Johans Minde,' the teacher seminar had been established at Holt (1839-1877), enhancing both the quality and reputation of the school.

#### FROM TEACHER SEMINARS TO TEACHERS SCHOOLS.

In 1877, the teacher seminar was moved from Holt to the city centre of Kristiansand. A voiced concern that parents would not send their children to the teacher seminar if it was located in the city centre proved highly inaccurate as there was a noticeable increase in school applications following the change of location (Jansen, 1951). By 1902, the concept of teacher seminars was left behind in favour of teacher schools. In 1914, the former three- and two-year teacher programmes of



1898 were proposed for replacement by four- and two-year programmes. The suggestion included the provision of practice schools for teacher students (Jansen, 1951).

After steady economic growth, a turn in finance led to skyrocketing unemployment ending in the crash of the Wall Street stock market in 1929. In the ensuing economic depression in the 1930s, the city school budget was severely tightened, and most people had difficulty providing food and shelter for their families. As investments in new school provisions and facilities came to a halt, there was a surplus of educated teachers in Kristiansand, resulting in poor application numbers for the teacher school (Sandvik, 1999; Aarek et al., 1964). Despite this economic downfall, a four-year programme of teacher education was initiated in 1939. A teaching practice school and four practice teachers were located nearby in Tollbodgata (Aarak et al., 1964).

#### EDUCATION AS A PROVISION OF SOCIETAL SUPPORT.

Despite the early investment in teacher seminars, the development of city and rural common schools were quite slow in Kristiansand. In 1848, 10 years after the introduction of the new school act, the county could show to only 31 permanent rural schools with 1,324 pupils. The number of ambulant schools was still extensive, counting 413 and 26,641 pupils (cf. Jansen, 1951, p. 13). This was not an uncommon situation nationwide, but many blamed the conservative city councils of unjustified policies and measures of austerity that let the pupils and the city of Kristiansand fall behind other counties in educational matters (Steen, 1948). Besides this, Kristiansand followed national tendencies in city school developments, such as urban school initiatives for common people and the erection of monumental school buildings (see Tønnessen, 2004). The most prominent examples of such welfare initiatives and symbolic makeovers during the 19th century is the story of the city Rasp House and work asylum.

#### SCHOOL PROVISIONS IN THE INTERWAR PERIOD AND WORLD WAR II.

After the establishment of two new schools at Lund and Grim in 1899, it would take 51 years before another school was built, despite the urgent need for new,

larger, and modernised school facilities in the city. At this point, nearly all children attended the unified folk school, except those belonging to particular religious cults, like 'Samfunnet' (the Society) (Sandvik, 1999; Steen, 1948).

The harsh financial situation during the 1920s reduced the city's ability to meet the educational demands. The city did, however, manage to provide a school meal for the poor in the interwar period, despite their tight budgets. The meal was stigmatically referred to as 'Swedish soup' by the locals.

The new investments in teacher education in Kristiansand came to a sudden halt on April 9th, 1940 when the German army annexed the teacher school facilities in town, after bombing the city centre. Some rented buildings at Lund (Lahelle), near the city centre, were used as temporary school facilities for a couple of months, before the school was transferred to Notodden—a small town in Telemark county, several miles from Kristiansand. The current headmaster, Håkon Wergeland, continued to run the school until he was deposed and exiled from Notodden in 1942. The remaining staff were left in a scarce situation facing hardship maintaining day-to-day school provisions (cf. Aarek et al., 1964, p. 2).

During war, the school faced great challenges. The Germans annexed several schools, and for most children, the war meant managing without a father. Several had joined the allies' marine convoys, and some fled the country to Sweden or the United Kingdom. Due to great poverty, all children were offered free meals during school—removing some of the stigma of the welfare initiative (Sandvik, 1999).

#### FREEDOM—AND THE RETURN OF TEACHER EDUCATION.

In the summer of 1944, the teacher education facilities in Notodden, referred to as Telemark's official teacher school during the war, was shut down. After having been forced by the German officials to leave his position as headmaster, Wergeland returned to his post in 1945.

Together with the teachers, Wergeland immediately started enrolling students into the programmes. Unlike in the interwar period, high investment in new school facilities was followed by an urgent need for new teachers in the municipality. This

demand was noticeable in the number of teacher school applications that year. While receiving 400 student applications, the current programme capacity was limited to 60 students and two student teacher classes (Aarak et.al, 1964). The increase in applications of highly qualified students brought about a new debate about the appropriateness and quality of the school's educational provisions. Among the issues addressed by policymakers, the teacher school's organisational approaches were prominent. As a response to the new demands and critique, Wergeland immediately initiated a renewal of the course schedules. To allow for more concentrated studies, he aimed to replace the weekly mixed-subject schedule, with a periodic subject design, narrowing the numbers of subjects taught during the week (Aarek et.al., 1964). The National Teacher School Council also addressed the critique and recommended that the Kristiansand teacher school make space in the weekly schedule for independent study time. The implementation of the new policies was not well organised at first and caused much frustration among the teaching staff. As a solution, an entire day of the week was designated for independent studies in the study course programmes (Aarek et al., 1964).

Due to the limited capacity of the then current school facilities, a new teacher school was built in Kongsgård allé at Lund, including a physical education building, a custodian residence, and a kindergarten (Aarek et al., 1964). Even though the new facilities were much larger than the former teacher school in the city, one soon realised that one had underestimated the accelerating demand for teachers as childbirth rates continued to grow. An additional facility was thus erected in 1964, and the cost of the new teacher school location reached 9.5 million Norwegian Kroner (Aarek et al., 1964; Sandvik, 1999). Compared to the previous programme capacity of two classes, the new programme allowed for 17 classes and close to 500 students. By 1964, 41 teachers worked at the school. Also, there were 12 practice teachers in the state-governed teacher practice school and 28 in the teacher-practice school run by the municipality (cf. Aarek et al., 1964).

During the 1960s, the two-year teacher programme was expanded to a three-year pilot programme to meet the demands of the new nine-year comprehensive school model and open the possibility for subject specialisations (Aarek et al., 1964). The

reform-pedagogical influence was evident in the pilot programmes. In vocational subjects, one tended more to aspects of self-expression, creativity, and art, than modelling precision and craftsmanship. One was to awaken the students 'sense of beauty' (cf. Larsen, in Aarek et al., 1964, p. 7)

#### DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL MODEL.

With continued strong growth of the child population in the 1950s, several new schools were established, as well as an upgrade of old school buildings in the city suburbs, especially Oddernes. In the city, two modern school facilities were erected at Grim and Lovisenlund, making the old city schools look old-fashioned and miserable in comparison. The difference between the schools was not only noticeable in their appearance but their teaching practice as well. The new schools were far more progressive, both in content and didactic approaches (Sandvik, 1999).

### **1.7 LATE MODERNITY**

Late modernity is here characterised by a rising infrastructure in societal affairs, where individual occupational choices, lifestyles, and rights accelerated rapidly. In Kristiansand, this is apparent from the 1960s onwards.

#### THE INITIATION OF A NINE-YEAR UNIFIED SCHOOL MODEL AND EXPLOSION OF SCHOOL FACILITIES.

Entering the 1960s, city School Inspector Olav Leirvåg was busily engaged in the reform policies of the new School Act of 1959. Due to Leirvåg's efforts, Kristiansand was the first city to implement the nine-year school model. More than 2,500 children attended school in the 1960s (Sandvik, 1999).

Between 1965 and 1975, school assets were doubled, resulting in the addition of eight new school facilities in the municipality. Karl Johans Minde was moved from the city centre to Tinnheia, and new schools were established in the city's suburbs in the areas of the former municipality of Oddernes. This, however, marked the end of school investment in the municipality for a long time. Due to a low birth rate and increasing numbers of old people in the city, the new budgets prioritised welfare

initiatives for the elderly. The only new school erected during the 1980s and 1990s was Hånes comprehensive school (cf. Sandvik, 1999, p. 557). As an ambiguous coupling of the reform-pedagogical open school, school architecture, and neoliberal emphasis on flexibility and individualisation, new schools in the late 1900s and early 2000s were characterised by the 'Trump design'.

#### GENDER EMANCIPATION AND REGRESSION IN KRISTIANSAND.

The Post-War period in Kristiansand was characterised by rapid societal change and progress. A prominent picture of the technological and industrial modernisation, was the growth in traffic, banks and finance institutions and city infrastructure. Welfare provision improved considerably, and the daily lives of families and children in the city have been characterised as harmonic and stable (Sandvik, 1999). Except for female teachers, most women stayed at home, fulfilling their expected duties as housewives. They were highly involved with their children during their first years, but as they grew older, most mothers attend more to housekeeping duties than to their children. In line with the reform pedagogical ideal of self-engagement and exploration, children were free to activate themselves freely in all over the city centre, the seaside or in the forest areas close to town.

As in the national curriculum, teaching practices in Kristiansand between 1945 and 1970 clearly reflected the societal gender ideals of the time. Boys and girls were segregated and the educational content was highly gender-biased, with clearly defined gender boundaries and roles (Sandvik, 1999). While girls predominantly were prepared for their upcoming home-keeping duties, prospects of labour or higher secondary education characterised the boys' curricula and school content. The unified and comprehensive school model introduced by the School Act of 1959 helped reduce the curricular gender gap. However, divergences in teaching content and gendered communication in classrooms were persistent long after mixed classes were introduced.

There is reason to believe that a strong hegemony of religious conservatism in Kristiansand helped to preserve the housewife ideals for a longer period of time than

elsewhere in the country (Ellingsen, 2008). An example of this is how the School of Home Economics was a preferred choice of many young women for several decades until it was closed in 1985.<sup>55</sup> In some ways, the school programme design might be said to play an important part in the preservation of gender disparity in the community. The religious-conservative alternative to female liberation in Kristiansand thus represents an odd refraction of the increasing demand for gender equality seen elsewhere in the country in the late 1960s and 1970s, pertaining the establishment of higher education and work opportunities for women.

Local research has pointed to a possible connection between the prevailing gender inequalities in the city and its religious heritage and ties (Ellingsen, 2007). The issue of gendered education still clearly remains a challenge in the local school culture and teaching practices of the city today.

## 1.8 LIQUID MODERNITY

‘Liquid modernity’ is here seen as a period in which traditional identities are left behind and become more fluid (and shallow) in character due to a rapid pace of change.

### UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION, BOTH VOCATIONAL—AND GENERAL STUDY PROGRAMMES.

The millennium school acts affected the old schools in the city, the cathedral school and the business school. Located next to each other, the two institutions represented contrasting symbols of knowledge tradition, culture, and ideology. Aiming to mend this cultural divide, the two schools were merged into one school, ‘Kristiansand Katedralskole, Gimle’ (KKG), in 2007—mixing pupils from vocational and general study programmes. The old buildings were bridged together by an architectural extension, symbolising the merge. The fusion represented a part of new policy initiatives in the city, seeking to generate more heterogeneous school environments in higher secondary education. In line with this initiative, all schools in

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<sup>55</sup> In 1985, *Kongsgård Skolesenter* (a school provision of higher secondary education) moved in to the former school facilities of the School of Home Economics.

the city responsible for upper secondary education were to provide both vocational and general study programmes. Pupils were no longer free to choose their school of preference but were assigned to a school within a certain district (Torkelsen, 2008). The new policies were strongly opposed by conservatives and representatives of the far right (Kvamme, 28.10.2008)

After substantial criticism, the regional-based school provisions of upper secondary education were up for revision in the city council in 2012. The majority of the representatives (19 to 16) voted against preservation of the current system, re-opening free school choice in the county.

#### FROM TEACHER SCHOOLS TO TEACHER EDUCATION BACHELOR PROGRAMMES.

In 1977, local teacher education was renamed 'Kristianstad Lærerhøgskole' (Teacher University College). Following the quality reforms of 2003, the programmes were adjusted to a bachelor and ECTS design. When Kristiansand University College was accredited university status in 2007, the teacher education programmes were moved into the university campus facilities at Gimlemoen and Grimstad. Until then, the teacher education facilities in Grimstad were temporarily positioned at Dømmesmoen, a rural area outside Grimstad town.

In line with the new national frameworks of teacher education of 2013, the teacher education programmes were adjusted to the new Quality Reform of Higher Education. The early childhood teaching programme was totally altered into a kindergarten teacher programme where traditional curricular subjects were abandoned for cross-disciplinary courses. This arrangement was only partially implemented in the teacher education programme, but these programmes were divided into primary and secondary education programmes with an optional fifth year. Implementation of the five-year teacher education will commence in autumn, 2017.

## THE INITIATION OF NATIONAL TESTS.

The initial rounds of the national tests gained a lot of attention in local media in Kristiansand. It was characterised by a blaming game among politicians on one side and a critique of neoliberal ideologies and austerity measures served by professionals in the field of education on the other. Roughly, it seems that people sceptical of the QAS instrument, or the subsequent initiatives in education policy, were mainly represented by primary stakeholders in education—teachers, EPCS counsellors, teacher educators and the Pupils' Union. Teacher educators warned about the amount of pressure that national and international testing might place on teachers, and children even more. In *Fædrelandsvennen*, on December 11, 2007, Associate Professor Ole Letnes at the University of Agder shared his worries in a letter to the editor. He warned that measures to increase the pressure on knowledge in schools, as was announced by the school director, Marie Føreland, might backfire at some point. Referring to the Norwegian heritage of education and ideals which seem to resonate with post-war reform-pedagogical beliefs, Letnes argues:

'Childhood is not very cost-efficient' is the ironic tone of André Bjerke's poem 'Det Haster' [It's Urgent]. The schools are in a greater hurry making adults out of children than ever before. That, by no means, serves the children right. I do not even think it serves society, not even by economic measures. The strength of the Norwegian school is that it has allowed children to be children a little longer, and placed less emphasis on memorisation and copying, by providing space for fantasy and creativity. These are facets that the national tests do not measure, but which will grow in demand in an ever-expanding globalised and distressed [rett ord?] world.

(Letnes, 11.12.07 [My translation])

Those who used the results as an image of a 'crisis' in education in Kristiansand, were mostly represented by the right-wing party 'Høyre' ('the Right'). In a similar manner as Clemet, the local representatives of Høyre accused the EPCS leader of working-class romanticism, advocating conspiratorial ideas of a neoliberal movement and marketisation behind the scenes of the national tests. In *Fædrelandsvennen* [the local newspaper], on December 21, 2007, Espen Saga, a representative of Høyre, the city council, and the Board of Upbringing, claims:

The leader of EPCS services in Kristiansand, Arvid Alsaker, brings forth a dramatic and terrifying interpretation in *Fædrelandsvennen* the 18<sup>th</sup> of December, of the reasons why the national



tests are implemented in comprehensive school. Alsaker's interpretation is sensational seeing that he believes the introduction of the national tests is staged by neoliberal conspirators, whose ultimate goal with the national tests is to ensure economic growth in Western Europe and resurrect the capitalist hegemonic power over classes. And this is terrifying because Arvid Alsaker after all is the leader of special education services to children and their caretakers in the municipality.

(Saga, 21.12.07 [My translation])

This particular incident of refraction of the Global Educational Reform Movement demonstrates how 'the fine print' of neoliberalist education was registered by school representatives shortly after Clemet's reform was introduced and after barely two rounds of national testing. The policy debates in the local media also showed how people started to question the policies of austerity—pointing at self-contradictions, like advocating cuts in library budgets, and at the same time expressing worry about the poor achievements in the national reading tests (Løvland, 08.03.2008). In an interview by Uleberg (2008b) in Fædrelandsvennen, the headmaster at Grim Lower Secondary School, comments:

After several years of downsizing, a limit is closing in. Today we are seriously approaching pure negligence. At Grim, we have to let go of six teacher positions next year. At the same time, contact teachers are going to be responsible 28-30 pupils, compared to 12-15 today. It goes without saying that quality is reduced—and this in times where everybody is demanding it to rise, says Rike.

(Uleberg, 29.02.08 [My translation])

A similar conclusion is made by the local representative of the Pupil's Union, Mikal Kvamsdal, in Fædrelandsvennen on March 5, 2008, declaring:

Of all the issues that might play a part in a knowledge decline in Norwegian schools, it is the working environment that represents the most concerning. In 40% of the schools in this country, the facility standards are so poor that they violate the law of Working Environment. The pupils develop asthma and headaches from being at school. The desks and chairs are so poor that a lot of pupils even develop serious back problems. The Pupil's Union has revealed conditions ranging from modest flaws to serious violations of the law, like uncovered asbestos. The commitment required to restore the schools in accordance with the regulation standards is so enormous that no government in recent years has managed to make it a priority.

(Kvamsdal, 05.03.08 [My translation])

Besides debating the consequences of the downsizing and poor maintenance of school facilities, critical writers also said that the foundation of teaching should reflect the human values inherent in the Core Curriculum, not assessment of acquired knowledge. In a letter to the editor of *Fædrelandsvennen*, on March 30, 2009, Johannes Sandsdalen, a local representative of Mållaget [Council of Language Preservation], made the following appeal:

The politicians have mostly been preoccupied with the outcome of the PISA-tests, national tests, and with competition. The pedagogues know the core purpose and intentions of the school curriculum, and know that the children are expected to learn something more than Norwegian, English and mathematics. Subject knowledge are tools, and the quality of human beings determines the application of the tools. We need people with self-awareness, like work capacity, creativity, solidarity, care, and courage. This is what the law and curriculums emphasises as the most important. And school is supposed to ignite pupils' cheerfulness. That part of the school mandate is far too little a subject of debate. It is vital to check how many pupils are smiling in the classroom.

(Sandsdalen, 30.03.09 [My translation])

However, after considerable improvement of the national tests between 2005 and 2010, people seemed to have accepted or grown accustomed to the assessment instrument. There is less and less engagement in the public debate on the issues of testing and its consequences. An eagerness to perform well on the tests also seems to have been ignited among school leaders and stakeholders in the municipality (*Fædrelandsvennen*, 27.11.2009). Proud of being ranked among the best schools in Norway, two pupils explained in an interview in *Agderposten* [small, local newspaper] the 'secret ingredient' of their performance:

Peter: We practice to the national test on the computer.

Timus: We practice to the national test together with our parents at home as well.

(Stavelin, 17.12.10 [My translation])

The leader of Justvik School in Kristiansand explained good results thusly: 'Taking the national test seriously this time'. Both the pupils; and the school leader's statements reflects a displacement of focus in teaching in these years, from the national curricula to the national tests. In the following years, there were few who commented on this enthusiastic turn and policy embrace within schools. However,

when the leader of the Board of Upbringing in the municipality, Mette Roth, asked the school director permission to test the teachers, Johannes Sandsdalen was, once again, not slow to reply in a letter to the editor of *Fædrelandsvennen*. On October 14, 2015, he corrects Roth on her arguments, stating:

It was said [by Roth] that the teachers must accept being tested, they, who constantly test their pupils. But there is great difference; The leader of the Board of Upbringing wants to test to trace those who can be dismissed, while the teachers test pupils to find those in need of assistance.

(Sandsdalen, 14.10.15)

Based on the media coverage, it appears that the critique mounts when issues of teacher accountability, instrumentalism, and austerity are on the table, a tendency that follows national responses that Norwegian teachers have expressed towards QAS (see Stray, 2008). Professional stakeholders seem to approve of the QAS instruments when they function as tools of development and learning, but not when they are applied as a monitoring instrument in public blame games. This might be one of the reasons why FLIK,<sup>56</sup> the new policy initiative in the municipality, seems to have generated far less resistance than the national tests—even though it involves scrutinising the quality of the learning environment in schools.

#### FLIK—A COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH AND POLICY INNOVATIONS.

In 2013, the municipality initiated the research-based innovation, ‘FLIK’, which aimed for systemic development and quality enhancement of learning environments in local schools—with an emphasis on creating inclusive, learning-friendly environments for all. As an entrance point to the innovation, research leaders Thomas Nordahl, Lars Qvortrup, Line Skov Hansen, and Ole Hansen presented the results of a systematic screening of the current conditions for learning and inclusion in the schools in Kristiansand in a public report (Nordahl et al., 2013). The screening results revealed great differences between schools when it comes to how teachers relate to the pupils, which pupils are viewed to have behavioural challenges or

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<sup>56</sup> FLIK: *‘Forskningsbasert læringsmiljø i Kristiansand’ (Research-based learning environment in Kristiansand)*

learning difficulties, and how one practices inclusion on a daily basis. There were also some worrisome trends in general, especially related to the use of special-education measures. A total of 30% of the boys were recipients of special-education provisions. Boys were also represented much more than girls in special-education activities. The report concluded:

Nearly 24% of the pupils are considered to have some sort of difficulty, diagnosis, or problems at school. We find the largest number of [those] pupils in the categories of subject-difficulties and behavioural challenges. Placed together, this might be seen to communicate a rather narrow concept and understanding of normality.

(Nordahl et al., 2013, p. 70 [My translation])

The gap between schools in Kristiansand was, according to the report findings, greater than the gap between Norway and Finland in the PISA tests. But, the differences among schools were not only large, they also tended to be stable across the measured aspects. The schools that related poorly to their pupils were also those with the highest rates of pupils receiving special education—indicating that certain schools probably practice some malfunctioning pedagogy and didactics. To improve on this situation, the researchers recommended developing pedagogical standards—not instrumental, but as general frameworks and values for teaching (Nordahl et al, 2013,). In this sense, the FLIK project seems more in line with the visions of L97 than K06—emphasising holistic perspectives and values for educational practice—and development.

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## **Appendix 3—A Cartography of Literature and Research Network Related to Studies of Policy Refraction**

The following text is a presentation of the cartographic procedures and network mapping, which serve as background to Chapter 2.



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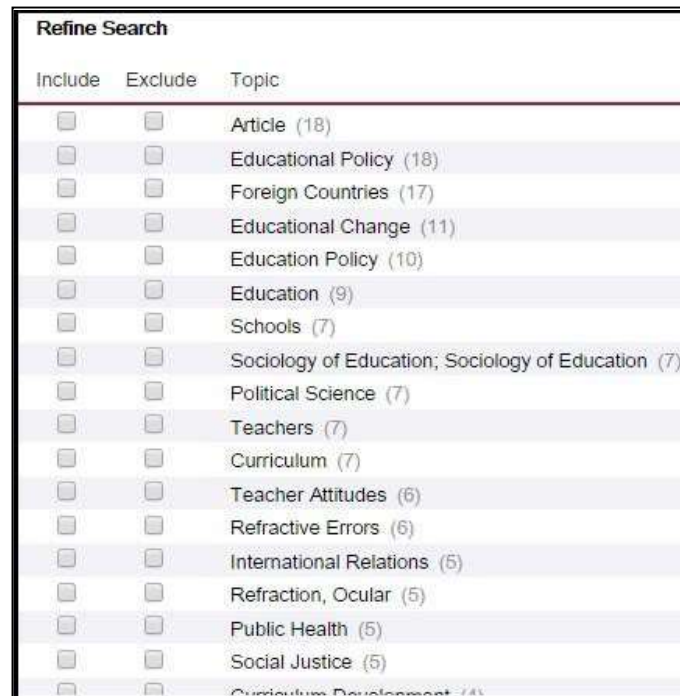
# STUDIES OF POLICY REFRACTION

## RESEARCH LITERATURE RELATED TO 'POLICY REFRACTION' IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION

### THE QUALITIES AND FEATURES OF DIFFERENT MEDIA.

To capture publications related to 'waves of policy' and not publications related to the scientific concept, the term 'policy refraction' was applied. Seeking to portray both a comprehensive and defined picture of the field, I utilised distinctive qualities and features of two different search engines, 'Oria' and 'Google Scholar', as well as information provided and generated directly on publisher and journal websites and the social research platform 'ResearchGate'.

### *ORIA—PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLES AND PRESORTED CATEGORIES.*



Refine Search		
Include	Exclude	Topic
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Article (18)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Educational Policy (18)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Foreign Countries (17)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Educational Change (11)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Education Policy (10)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Education (9)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Schools (7)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sociology of Education; Sociology of Education (7)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Political Science (7)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Teachers (7)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Curriculum (7)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Teacher Attitudes (6)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Refractive Errors (6)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	International Relations (5)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Refraction, Ocular (5)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Public Health (5)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Social Justice (5)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Curriculum Development (4)

Figure 4. Search results in Oria

The most valuable aspect of using Oria (oria.no) in the mapping process was that it automatically sorted the search results into different categories, for example, 'resource type', 'creator/contributors', 'libraries', 'collections', 'journals', 'topics', and so on. This pre-categorisation was useful in that it drafted a rough map on the main subjects and topics addressed in research occupied with the concept of 'refraction'.

According to the search results at Oria, the concept of refraction has primarily been applied within educational policy research. It has also been adopted within the field of sociology and social research. However, even within these categories, the majority of publications refer to studies focusing on educational policy. Oria's pre-sorting of the publications also highlighted major contributors to the field, and possible networks of researchers working within specific topics. Some researchers were visible in nearly every category, while other seemed to pursue a far more narrow or specialised scope of research. A disadvantage with this particular search engine was that it did not include related or similar topics that might have been relevant to get a more nuanced picture of possible research networks and similar/closely related concepts/theories describing the process of policy implementations.

Out of 98 search results, 31 peer-reviewed articles and two dissertations were clearly related to educational policy studies.

## GOOGLE SCHOLAR—DISCOVERING RELATED RESEARCH AND PROMINENT RESEARCHERS

The screenshot shows a Google Scholar search for "policy refraction teachers". The search bar at the top shows the query and a search button. Below the search bar, it indicates "Omtrent 9 320 resultater (0,08 sek)". The results are listed in a table-like format with columns for article titles, authors, and links to full texts. The first result is "Equity and the AVC pilots in Queensland: A study in policy refraction" by M Henry and S Taylor, published in "The Australian Educational Researcher" in 1995. The second result is "[PDF] Critical policy analysis: Exploring contexts, texts and consequences" by S Taylor, published in "Discourse: Studies in the cultural politics of education" in 1997. The third result is "Welfare State Restructuring in Education and its National Refractions" by J Houtsonen and M Czaplícka, published in "Current" in 2010. The fourth result is "Times of educational change: Towards an understanding of patterns of historical and cultural refraction" by IF Goodson, published in "Journal of Education Policy" in 2010. The fifth result is "Emergence of a rehabilitation medicine model for low vision service delivery".

Figure 5. Research results in Google Scholar

In some ways, Google Scholar and Oria complemented each other by balancing each other's shortcomings. Scholar included a larger number of resource types than Oria, in addition to publications closely related to the keywords in the search. Google Scholar generated far more results than Oria, but compared to Oria, the long list of publications also made it harder to estimate the quality and relevance of the various publications.

Since the number of findings still was high, I looked for publications with a high rate of citations within the first 20 listed publications to discriminate and navigate in-between the search results. I also chose to narrow my search by adding keywords in different searches, based on the findings and categories at Oria. I eventually found 25-30 publications (based on personal judgment) to be of relevance in the review, including books, journals, and blog articles. The search at Google Scholar revealed

Bob Lingard, Ivor Goodson, Mark Priestly, Karl Maton, and Stephen Ball as prominent figures within this field of research.

#### PUBLISHERS' JOURNAL WEBSITES—RECOMMENDATIONS OF SIMILAR/RELATED RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS.

After locating relevant publications, I started retrieving full-text versions of the publications from the publishers' websites. This led me to do a further navigation within the different journal websites. Several publishers provided automatically generated recommendations of interrelated articles, referring to similar topics or additional contributions by the same author(s). Publications of Stephen Ball were constantly reoccurring in the recommendations, as were research studies of Bob Lingard, Jonathan A. Supovitz, Mark Priestly, Paul Trowler, and Sandra Taylor—although not to the same degree as Ball's contributions.

#### RESEARCHGATE—REFERENCES IN THE CONTEXT OF CO-WRITERS AND BIBLIOGRAPHIES, AND A LEEWAY TO DIRECT COMMUNICATION WITH AUTHORS.

To trace the theoretical and philosophical foundation on which a concept of refraction might rest, I started to register the use of language as well as the references directly related to definitions of 'refraction'. I also linked the use of references in and between what I gradually considered as essential and reoccurring publications, revealing networks of both researchers and theoretical perspectives. To get further acquainted with the networks, I localised and followed core contributors within the field on the social research platform 'ResearchGate'.

Compared to the search engines and journal sites, I discovered that this way of tracing the field offered a way of mapping the different research networks more in context—both to locate networks of co-writers/research fellows and to place a specific article in context of an author's bibliography. Being a social media, other researchers started noticing that I followed their work, and soon people started contacting me about my activities on the platform. Some offered guidance on the matter, and others offered full-text versions of their publications.



ResearchGate provided me with an overview of the research networks and research bibliography of, for example, Stephen Ball, Ivor Goodson, Jonathan Supovitz, Bob Lingard, Parlo Sing, Shaun Rawolle, Stephen Heimans, Sandra Taylor, Paul Trowler, Mark Priestly, Kate Miller, Sara Minty, Barbra Schulte, Rosie Mulholland, Malini Mistry, and Michael Apple. The challenge of using a social platform in the review process was that the number of interrelations between publications and co-writers quickly expanded both in number and network-pattern complexity. This particular challenge, however, did not prohibit the main contributing networks from being discernible. From each new pattern of networks, the main network actually appeared more and more highlighted. On this point, contours of research networks closely related to studies of 'policy refraction' also started to show up. This was especially the case with Nordic research networks<sup>57</sup>, where different terminologies were used to describe similar processes. The network search on ResearchGate made it obvious that I was approaching a growing but also rarely mapped field of research.

#### CROSS-REFERENCES IN BETWEEN PUBLICATIONS APPLYING THE CONCEPT OF 'REFRACTION.

After getting acquainted with the field, I drew a grid of cross-references and other connective aspects in between the derived publications, resulting in an overview of major research contributors, a map of countries studied, and a network of theories. An advantage of doing a cross-reference analysis was the possibility of highlighting major contributors and the network of researchers citing them. Based on the analysis, Stephen Ball, Ivor Goodson, James Spillane, Bob Lingard, Richard Elmore,

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<sup>57</sup> Sweden: e.g., Barbra Schulte, Agneta Hult, Carola Aili, Joakim Ekman, Joakim Lindgren, Ulf Lundström, Erik Umnå, and Thomas Englund.

Denmark: e.g., Lejf Moos, Stephen Carney, Kathrin Hjort, Klaus Kasper Kofod, Peter Henrik Raae, Bent Brandt Jensen, John Krejsler, Dion Rüsselbæk Hansen · Jakob Ditlev Bøje, Arne Poulsen, Kathrine Dahl Madsen, Lone Nordina, and Venka Simovska.

Norway: e.g., Gjert Langfelt, Ilmi Willberg, Turid S. Aasebø, Jorunn Midsunnstad, Berit Karseth, Jacob Boye, Kirsten Sivesind, Guri Skedsmo, Marit Aas, Eivind Elstad, Tone Dyrdal Solbrekke, Gunn Imsen, Are Turmo, and Tobias Werler.

Mark Priestly, and Jonathan A. Supovitz—and their respective co-writers—were the most cited authors within the total selection of publications.

<b>Authors citing Ball, S.</b>	<b>Authors citing Goodson, I.</b>	<b>Authors citing Spillane, J.</b>	<b>Authors citing Lindgard, B.</b>	<b>Authors citing Elmore, R.</b>	<b>Authors citing Priestly, M.</b>	<b>Authors citing Supovitz, J.</b>
Lindgard, B. Garrick, B. Rawolle, S. Taylor, S. Singh, P.  Tang, S.  Johnson, E. Priestly, M. Miller, K. Wallace, G. Barret, L.  Meadmore, D. Symes, C.  Maclean, J. Mulholland, R. Gray, S. Horrel, A.  Goodson, I.  Boysak, R. Donkin, A. Walte, S. Lawson, H.  Bacchi, C.  Trowler, P.  Beach, D. Bagely, C.  Maguire, M. Braun, A. Hoskins, K.	Priestly, M. Minty, S.  Rudd, T.  Tang, S.  Reay, D.  Stray, I. Voreland, H.  Erss, M. Mikser, R. Löfström, E. Ugaste, A. Röuk, V. Jaani, J.  Morris, P.  Boysak, R. Donkin, A. Walte, S. Lawson, H.  Grimaldi, E. Barzano, G.  Ball, S. Maguire, M. Braun, A. Hoskins, K.  Young, M.  Beach, D. Bagely, C.	Supovitz, J. Weinbaum, E.  Priestly, M. Miller, K. Barret, I. Wallace, C.  Ball, S. Maguire, M. Braun, A. Hoskins, K.  Erss, M. Mikser, R. Löfström, E. Ugaste, A. Röuk, V. Jaani, J.	Taylor, S. Singh, P. Rawolle, S.  Johnson, E.  Grimaldi, E. Barzano, G.  Ball, S. Maguire, M. Braun, A. Hoskins, K.  Trowler, P.	Lindgard, B. Garrick, B.  Priestly, M. Miller, K. Minty, S. Wallace, C.  Supovitz, J. Weinbaum, E.  Ball, S. Maguire, M. Braun, A. Hoskins, K.	Barrel, L. Miller, K. Wallace, C. Minty, S.  Maclean, J. Mulholland, R. Grey, S. Horrel, A.  Biesta, G. Philippou, S. Robinson, S.	Priestly, M. Miller, K. Barret, I. Wallace, C.  Weinbaum, E.  Maclean, J. Mulholland, R. Grey, S. Horrel, A.

Figure 1 (repeated). A cartography of interrelated research networks related to studies of ‘policy refraction’, based on a cross-reference analysis.

In Figure 1 (repeated, see Chapter 2), I have tried to visualise the network of fellow researchers. Closely grouped names mark the intra-networks of co-authors within each of the seven flowcharts.

## Appendix 4—NSD approval

Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS  
NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA SERVICES



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Vår dato: 24.02.2015

Vår ref: 41993 / 3 / AGL

Deres dato:

Deres ref:

### TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 02.02.2015. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

41993                      *Norske læreres fortolkning og forvaltning av utdanningspolitiske diskurser*  
Behandlingsansvarlig    *Universitetet i Agder, ved institusjonens øverste leder*  
Daglig ansvarlig         *Ingunn Stray*

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger er meldepliktig i henhold til personopplysningsloven § 31. Behandlingen tilfredsstillter kravene i personopplysningsloven.

Personvernombudets vurdering forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, ombudets kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven og helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.

Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, <http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/meldeplikt/skjema.html>. Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal skje skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, <http://pvo.nsd.no/prosjekt>.

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 01.10.2017, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen

Katrine Utaaker Segadal

Audun Løvlie

Kontaktperson: Audun Løvlie tlf: 55 58 23 07

Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

*Dokumentet er elektronisk produsert og godkjent ved NSDs rutiner for elektronisk godkjenning.*

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## Personvernombudet for forskning



### Prosjektvurdering - Kommentar

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Prosjektnr: 41993

Utvalget informeres skriftlig om prosjektet og samtykker til deltakelse. Informasjonsskrivet er godt utformet.

Personvernombudet legger til grunn at forsker etterfølger Universitetet i Agder sine interne rutiner for datasikkerhet. Dersom personopplysninger skal lagres på privat pc/mobile enheter, bør opplysningene krypteres tilstrekkelig.

Forventet prosjektslutt er 01.10.2017. Ifølge prosjektmeldingen skal innsamlede opplysninger da anonymiseres. Anonymisering innebærer å bearbeide datamaterialet slik at ingen enkeltpersoner kan gjenkjennes. Det gjøres ved å:

- slette direkte personopplysninger (som navn/koblingsnøkkel)
- slette/omskrive indirekte personopplysninger (identifiserende sammenstilling av bakgrunnsopplysninger som f.eks. bosted/arbeidssted, alder og kjønn)
- slette lydopptak