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From Education Policy to Education Practice

Unpacking the Nexus

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In education, as in other fields, there are often significant gaps between research knowledge and current policy and practice. While there are many reasons for this gap, one that stands out is that policy-makers and practitioners may simply not know about important research findings because these findings are not published in forums aimed at them. Another reason is that policy-makers and educational authorities may tend to apply only those findings that agree with and legitimate their preferred policies. Yet we hear often the mantra that policy and practice should be research based and informed by evidence. This claim relates to the interplay between the social realities of science, politics and educational practice and draws attention to knowledge production and application, processes of implementation, change and innovation. However, there are often different interests involved, different knowledge domains, political and economic interests, and legitimate questions can be raised with regard to what counts as 'research', what counts as 'evidence', who should define it, what are their implications for policy, and what kind of actions should consequently be taken to improve education for children and youth.

Please contact Astrid Noordermeer at Astrid.Noordermeer@springer.com if you wish to discuss a book proposal.

Tine S. Prøitz • Petter Aasen • Wieland Wermke
Editors

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Preface

The chapters in this book are the results of several research projects and conceptual reflections presented over the last couple of years focusing on relationships between education policy and education practice. The authors of the book have been brought together by a common interest in questions on how, when and where policy intersect with practice in their respective fields and in discussions in seminars such as the annual Åsgårdstrand-seminar at the University of South-Eastern Norway that particularly focus on education policy and practice relationships, and in conferences and seminars at Uppsala University. Central research projects driving the work have been the *LOaPP-Tracing Learning Outcomes in Policy and Practice-project #254978* and the ongoing *CLASS-Comparisons of Leadership Autonomy in School districts and Schools-project #315147*, both funded by the Norwegian Research Council.

We would like to thank the authors for supporting our ambition to collect all the thought-provoking contributions from the seminars in this book. We hope the book will contribute to further developing and expanding our understanding and critical assessment of the education policy and education practice nexus.

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Contents

1	Education Policy and Education Practice Nexuses	1
	Tine S. Prøitz, Petter Aasen, and Wieland Wermke	
Part I Conceptualizations of Nexuses of Education Policy and Education Practice		
2	Rethinking Agents of Transformation: Social Mobilizations and Official Knowledge	19
	Michael W. Apple	
3	The Policy-Practice Nexus as ‘Politics of Use’: Professional Autonomy and Teacher Agency in the Classroom	39
	Barbara Schulte	
4	Understanding Education Reform Policy Trajectories by Analytical Sequencing	59
	Wieland Wermke and Eva Forsberg	
5	‘Research Use’ in Education: Conceptualising the Teaching Profession Within the Policy–Research–Practice Nexus	75
	Sølvi Mausethagen and Hege Hermansen	
Part II Nexus Formations in Time, Space and Place		
6	The Curriculum as a Standard of Public Education	93
	Stefan Hopmann	
7	Exploring Education Policy Transformations and Agency in a Postcolonial Context: The Case of Launching the Preparation Scheme in Greenland in 1961	109
	Simon Holleufer and Christian Ydesen	

8	Merging Traditions and Emerging Tensions	129
	Petter Aasen and Tine S. Prøitz	
9	Initial Teacher Education Partnership: Bureaucracy, Policy, and Professional Agency	151
	Paul Adams	
Part III The Complexity of Education Nexus Studies		
10	Fragmentation Management from Policy to Practice. Special Educational Needs Teachers (SEN Teachers) in Mainstream Schools in Germany	175
	Torsten Dietze, Lisa Marie Wolf, Vera Moser, and Jan Kuhl	
11	Conceptualisations of Extra-Curricular Cross-Sector Partnerships in the Context of The Cultural Schoolbag and Physical Activity Health Initiatives in Norwegian Schools	195
	Jorunn Spord Borgen and Bjørg Oddrun Hallås	
12	Regulatory Support Activities in the Swedish Policy and Practice Nexus: Inclusive Culture of Education Policy in Different Contexts.	227
	Gabriella Höstfält and Barbro Johansson	
13	Competing Policy Ideas in Classroom Practice: The Case of Student Group Work	247
	Christine R. Stenersen	
14	Tracing Policy in Practice. Exploring the Interactional Exercise of Oral Assessment.	265
	Astrid Camilla Wiig	
15	Actor Roles in Research–Practice Relationships: Equality in Policy–Practice Nexuses	287
	Tine S. Prøitz and Ellen Rye	
	Index	305

Chapter 1

Education Policy and Education Practice Nexus



Tine S. Prøitz , Petter Aasen, and Wieland Wermke 

Abstract This introductory chapter addresses the complex interrelations between education policy and education practice developed under new ways of governance. It highlights education nexuses as a concept of its own right and discusses what constitutes the contemporary nexuses in education of today. Based on the cases of education nexuses presented in the volume the chapter summarizes four central characteristics of education nexuses and raise the issue of the need to re-consider how we study education policy and practice in the interface between structure and agency for the future developments in education.

Keywords Education policy · Education practice · Nexus · Structure and agency

The overarching idea behind this book is to explore the relationship between education policy and education practice. The translation of policy into practice is complex and addresses several issues, different stakeholders, and radically different connotations. In the literature, we can identify various theories and reflections, principally exploring and conceptualizing the complexity of policy formulation and the relationship and connections between policy and practice. We can also detect more operative theories and explorations of the specific actions dealing with this complexity and attempt to bridge the gap between policy and practice.

Through the contributions of several scholars, the ambition of this edition is to revisit, describe, illuminate, and further develop theoretical positions and empirical approaches that have been on the agenda in various traditions within educational policy studies. This volume contributes with both theoretical and empirical studies to the interplay between policy, educational practice, and the social realities of

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science, drawing attention to knowledge production and application and the processes of implementation, change, and innovation. As such, the various book chapters not only connect well with the book series *Policy Implications of Research in Education* but also offer studies on and discuss the very relationships between policy and practice and research. The book also offers insights into more critical aspects concerning both the understanding of such relationships and policy, practice, and research relationships, focusing on the varied perspectives of these connections involving a range of interests and knowledge domains in different settings.

To stress the importance of these relationships between policy and practice, we put forward a particular term, *nexus*, which means “connection” or “link.”¹ We argue that this link holds an analytical place of its own right, and this is the edition’s contribution to the scholarship: focusing on the very relation between policy and practice. This involves an effort of identifying and scrutinizing the nexuses where policy and practice intersect, meet, and integrate but also collide, conflict, or contradict.

Central Concepts and Understandings

The aim of the book is to explore the relationship between education policy and practice from different perspectives and operationalizations to clarify the conceptual and theoretical basis of policy–practice relationships. This requires a presentation of the central concepts for this book. We start with the concepts of education policy and education practice, followed by another central concept for this book and for our understanding of the relationship between policy and practice – the political context. The selection of chapters has been guided by a search for significant cases of policy–practice relationships embedded in different educational political contexts, as they can be employed to increase our understanding of the complex nature of these nexuses. An ambition to shed light on the connection between policy and practice in different political contexts follows from this but without being concerned with the prevalence of the described relationship within the various contexts. Through the various chapters, the aim of this volume is to analyze and understand the nexus and the translation of policy into practice as phenomena across the various contexts from the Global North, with cases from the United States, China, Germany, Sweden, Greenland/Denmark, Norway, and Scotland.

In the following of this introductory we provide the reader with some operationalisations of the three central concepts relevant for the volume’s contributions: policy, practice, and political context.

Policy A policy is typically described as a principle or rule to guide decisions and achieve rational outcome(s). Policy refers to the what and why generally adopted by governance bodies within the public and private sectors. A policy can be considered

¹ See <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/nexus>. Retrieved October 2022.

a statement of intent or a commitment. Policy can further be described as basic principles for the actions of a society or an organization in general or in a certain respect, usually, but not necessarily, laid down in laws or plans.

In the literature, Ball (2021, p. 19) has pointed out how policies, as a semantic and ontological force, play a part in the construction of a “social world of meanings, of problems, causes, and effects, of relationships, of imperatives and inevitabilities,” and that by attending to language and rhetorical constructions of education policy, the histories of policies and links across and within policy fields can be studied.

Public policy, according to Rizvi and Lingard (2009), refers to the actions and positions taken by the state. A characteristic of public policy is the involvement of a range of institutions that share authority and collectivity. They underscore that although decisions are central in policy, an individual decision in isolation does not constitute policy; rather, policy “expresses patterns of decisions in the context of other decisions taken by political actors on behalf of state institutions from positions of authority” (Rizvi & Lingard, 2009, p. 4). They have also pointed out that public policies are normative—often express ends and means aiming to steer the actions and behaviors of people (Rizvi & Lingard, 2009).

However, education policy cannot be understood if we limit our interest to decisions that define ambitions, goals, and legal, financial, and pedagogical measures. To understand policy, we also need to focus on disagreements and conflicts of interest in the policymaking process and in the implementation of education reforms at the school level. Thus, policymaking processes must also be understood in terms of politics. Politics involves the processes by which groups of people make collective decisions. The term is generally applied to the art or science of running governmental or state affairs, but politics can also be observed in other group interactions and settings, including schools and academic institutions. Politics, in this broader sense, consists of social relations involving authority or power and refers to the regulation of affairs within a political unit and to the methods and tactics used to formulate and apply policy. The concept of politics draws our attention to processes that determine “who gets what, when, and how” (Aasen et al., 2014).

Practice Education practice is actions developed from the planning and systematization of the dynamics of policymaking processes and education processes to the concrete realization of learning. Thus, practice is a definite way of dealing with specific problems in local and timely configurations. In this volume, we investigate both political and professional education practices. Practice can be investigated by decision-making in certain situations. In the words of Archer (1988), what we empirically observe is always the present, situated historically:

As Markovic expresses it, both “past and future” are living in the present. Whatever human beings do in the present is decisively influenced by the past and by the future. [...] The future is not something that will come later, independently of our will. There are several possible futures and one of them has to be made. (p. xxvi)

What we investigate empirically is also always local (in a very particular space) and possible to observe as a practice. Thus, when we investigate practice in relation to

policy, we string together present, local, practical, and analytical units. Time becomes our analytical device. Each unit conditions the next. It is always the prior development of ideas (from earlier interactions) that conditions the current context of the analyses. While the selection of (national and sectorial) cases become critical, comparisons may contribute to uncovering the different layers of universality and particularity (i.e., what is broadly universal, what is possible to generalize, and what is unique to the given instance and political context).

Political Context A political context or polity is the inherent material/structural, cultural, and social settings in which policy and practice are embedded, such as a nation, local communities, or institutions. Political systems of governance and power relations, as well as political thought and behavior, constitute contexts that are crucial both for the design and understanding of both policy and practice.

The foregoing is in line with what Lingard and Rizvi (2020) emphasizes in Dale's (1999) note on the importance of understanding changes in education policy considering broader political and economic shifts. Here, the prominent example of the move from the Keynesian welfare state and bureaucratic structures and rationalities to newer ways of educational governance, where globalization and changing spatialities have become highly central.

Another well-known example of our understanding of political contexts at the nation-state level is Esping-Andersen's (1990) categorization of three types of advanced capitalist welfare state regimes and their impact on policy formation: a social-democratic, a conservative, and a liberal. The concept of welfare state regimes denotes the institutional arrangements, rules, and understandings that guide and shape concurrent social policy decisions, expenditure developments, and problem definitions. The existence of policy regimes reflects the circumstance that short-term policies, reforms, debates, and decision-making take place within frameworks of historical institutionalization that differ qualitatively between countries (Esping-Andersen, 1990).

The political contextual perspective underlines the importance of understanding nexuses for what they are within their locations. This includes an analysis of the role of the nation-state, local communities, and schools in the context of the changing spatialities and politics associated with growing globalization (Dale, 1999).

The context can further be described by situational or contingency factors, states, or conditions that are associated with the use of certain policy and practice parameters (Mintzberg, 1989). As such, the cases in this book represent various configurations of context, framing the time and space of both policy and practice and the relations between them.

The purpose of applying cases in research is to shed light on a phenomenon through the study of a particular instance of that phenomenon (Gall et al., 1996). In line with Yin's (2011) work, we apply a case-study approach in this volume as a deliberate choice because we consider contextual conditions "especially important when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident in real life" (Yin, 2011, p. 92). As the case study approach deals with a wide variety of evidence, it addresses a broader range of historical, attitudinal, and behavioral issues.

Policy–Practice Relations as Nexuses

The volume at hand aims to strengthen the perception and interpretation of nexuses within education policy research, particularly for the investigation of complex policy practice relations.

Conceptually, a nexus can be understood differently within education research; it is used in a range of studies covering many different topics. More recently, the concept has become increasingly prominent for describing the challenging area of knowledge translation between research, policy, and practice, as well as in debates on evidence and evidence use in various fields and sectors (see, e.g., Dimmock, 2016; Geschwind & Broström, 2015; de Leeuw et al., 2008; Locke, 2009; Ohi, 2008; Segerholm et al., 2019). The term nexus has been used to describe the ambivalence between perspectives of education traditions in higher education (Simons & Elen, 2007), the challenges in varied types of partnerships in education (Levin, 2003), integration and inclusion issues (Connor & Ferri, 2005), and the theory–practice relationship in teacher education (la Velle, 2019).

A general characteristic in this stream of literature is that the nexus is seldom described in depth; first and foremost, it represents an idea, a theoretical place, a meeting point, or an intersection where different fields, actor groups, practices, or theoretical constructs are ideally supposed to meet and integrate or where something does not meet, thus creating an area of tension, challenges, and difficulties. As such, the nexus concept is often used to name a situation or arena where different worlds of different kinds ideally should, do, or do not come together.

However, in higher education research, the term teaching–research nexus has a longer tradition (Henkel, 2004; Neumann, 1994; Tight, 2016²). Neumann (1994), one of the earliest to coin the term, identified a set of teaching–research nexuses and presented them in a framework for studying these matters. She distinguished between the following three levels of nexus: “-tangible: the transmission of knowledge and skills, -intangible: the transmission of approaches and attitudes to knowledge and -global: the direction given to course offerings by departmental research” (Neumann, 1994, p. 324). According to Neumann (1994), a nexus can exist at each level independently, as well as at several levels, simultaneously. The framework also allows for consideration of the degrees of intensity in the connections between the teaching–research roles. The nexus debate in higher education of today often refers to how, to a larger degree, modern universities seem to separate more strongly between those who teach and those who research as part of the specialization and differentiation of higher education, which contrasts earlier conceptions of what it means to be an academic.

²Tight (2016) describes this in detail in his review article: “By using the term ‘research/teaching nexus,’ authors are implying that the linkage between research and teaching – as the two major functions of higher education – is close, essential and undeniable. For them, a university is not worthy of the title unless it engages in both teaching and research (for an early discussion, see Flood Page 1972)”. (p. 294)

Another and more recent elaboration of the nexus as an analytical and useful concept can be found in policy history studies that emphasize the multisidedness of nexus(es). For example, in how political discourses are moving in time and space, a nexus is defined as “a meeting point of different historical trajectories of discourses, people, action, practices and material objects” (Ihalainen & Saarinen, 2019, p. 6). Here, a nexus is understood as an intersection of discourses in place, interaction order, and historical body—emphasizing both the contingent and intentional relations between material political contexts and historical continuities and different actors and events. Ihalainen and Saarinen (2019) have pointed out how such an approach can help to decide on the method, data material, and analysis, exemplified by how “the (verbal) debates and the (physical) political activities come together in a parliamentary situation as a nexus ...” (p. 504) and provided a tool to, for example, study the challenging micro–macro relations.

Consequently, speaking about relations as a nexus is not new in the field of education; some researchers have worked more in-depth with the concept than others and have done so more recently. However, so far, we can conclude the following: beyond the semantic meaning of the nexus as a link, a theorization of it as a concept is rather rare. Moreover, the application of “nexuses” in educational scholarship in the field is rather fragmented. There is apparently potential for the fruitful applicability of the investigation of places where practices or arenas encounter. Drawing on our interest in the relationship between policy and practice, we aim to contribute to a further elaboration by conceptual discussion and empirical examples of the nexus conception.

Elaborating on the Nature of Policy–Practice Nexuses

This volume aims to explain the nature of policy–practice nexuses through empirical and conceptual chapters. Next, we present how the various cases in the chapters contribute to a nexus picture. We explore policy and practice relationships through three dimensions organized in the following sections:

- Conceptualizations of nexuses of education policy and education practice
- Nexus formations in time, space, and place
- The complexity of education nexus studies

Conceptualizations of Nexuses of Education Policy and Education Practice

As shown earlier in this chapter, the limited literature on education policy and education practice nexuses calls for stronger conceptual clarity and a theoretical basis in the discussions of varied forms of policy–practice relationships, as well as in

nexuses where policy and practice are both related and unrelated. Therefore, the contributions selected for the first section of the book, *Conceptualisations of nexuses of education policy and education practice*, discuss conceptual and theoretical aspects of the policy–practice nexus. The authors investigate agentic work in the classroom, education change, teacher agency in classrooms, education reform and sequencing and conceptions of research use that inform teachers’ roles as professionals from conceptual and theoretical positions. Central to all contributions here are conceptual elaborations on the education policy and practice nexus, which also prepare for the two empirical book sections to come.

In the first chapter of this section, Michael Apple provides a critical examination of examples of agentic work. Each has its basis in successful struggles over knowledge, over what is “legitimate” or official understanding, and over the educational mechanisms that make these understandings available. The chapter directs our attention to students as political or epistemological actors and demonstrates the importance of understanding the nature of collective alliance-building and the creation of activist identities to promote change in educational practice. Barbara Schulte, in her chapter, approaches the policy–practice nexus by scrutinizing the relationship between teacher agency and professional autonomy. She questions the conflation of professional autonomy with teacher agency in the research literature. Drawing on the concept of “politics of use” and findings from fieldwork in China, she proposes a framework for conceptualizing autonomy and agency as they operate in and between systems, involving and producing different types of agents. In the next chapter, Wieland Wermke and Eva Forsberg continue with a discussion of the policy and practice nexus by exemplifying a strategy for understanding and examining policy and practice nexuses in relation to education reform trajectories. Education policymaking is an increasingly complex process—for the most part, it is neither linear and rational nor unidirectional. For the sake of understanding these processes, the authors advocate for complexity reduction through analytical distinctions, sequencing, and entity–relationship thinking. In the last chapter in this section, Sølvi Mausethagen and Hege Hermansen examine “research use” as a concept that informs the role of the teaching profession in the policy–research–practice nexus. As a policy construct, “research use” has gained significant attention over the past decade. However, the concept, particularly its translation into practice, is often left undefined regarding both the meaning of “research” and the meaning of “use.” The authors examine how the specification of these terms contributes to producing manifestations of the policy–research–practice nexus.

Nexus Formations in Time, Space, and Place

This next section presents cases that exemplify significant policy and practice nexuses in education. As described earlier, nexuses are contextualized in timely and spatial configurations. Accordingly, Section II, *Nexus formations in time, space, and place*, presents empirical studies that aim to understand structure and agency

complexity in different political contexts. The contributions stress the relational aspects between structure and agency in education grounded in varied approaches and at different times, such as in different cases of curriculum formation, student preparation schemes, and development of teacher professionalism and in supportive local authority, higher education and school partnerships.

The cases are anchored in varied country contexts comparatively and internationally Germany and Norway and the United States of America, Denmark and Greenland, Norway, and Scotland. The chapters also consider different parts of education systems, teacher education in schools and of varied actor groups, including civil servants, students, parents, and headmasters in schools. The topic of time and space for policy–practice relationships are highlighted as important variables for understanding the complex and multilayered nexus between policy and practice in this section, first brought forward by the reprint of an article by Stefan Hopmann published in 1999. This chapter reminds us of the importance of understanding the contexts of curriculum formation in which various discursive and loosely coupled levels in public education are connected. In relation to the theme of this book, the republishing of this more than 20-year-old article illustrates that research on nexus phenomena is also a cumulative endeavor. Following the aspect of investigating nexuses as cases bound in time and space, the contribution of Simon Holleufer and Christian Ydesen shows how different actors in different arenas of the Danish–Greenlandic education system have struggled to shape and develop nexuses between policy and practice in relation to the pupil selection process in the preparation scheme in 1961. The postcolonial setting of Greenlandic education in the 1960s displays the complexities of education policy formation and the inherent political dimension of policies and practices. The inherent political dimensions in politics and practices in time and space are also studied in Petter Aasen’s and Tine S. Prøitz’s chapter on how educational policy and reforms have influenced the development of the teaching profession in Norway. The study presents three analytical policy–practice lenses for the analysis of professional development: policies influencing the arenas for professional development; the steering, management, and organization of the professional field; and the content of professional development. The study emphasizes how different knowledge regimes in educational policy and both historical and new forms of differentiation have influenced the construction of the teaching profession. Another approach for studying teacher education and the development of professionalism is brought forward by the timely study of the developments of the Scottish initial teacher education supportive local authority and higher education school partnerships by Paul Adams. He underscores the importance of agency in professional development, as a key part of professional development and that partnership, subsequently should be reconceptualized as ‘existing’ in the overlaps ‘between’ theory and practice.

While this second section has a particular focus on the contextual nature of nexuses, the ambition of the third and final section of the volume is to closely explore situations when policy meets practice, as it happens in the professional work of teachers, special educators, or principals.

The Complexity of Education Nexus Studies

The third section of the studies presented in this book highlights, *The complexity of education nexuses*, by bringing forward empirical studies of/on/in defined nexuses. The contributions here are in-depth empirical studies on how the involved actor groups work, interact, and develop in varied and intended policy and practice relationships and nexus contexts. The cases presented go deeper into the nexuses by studying the actions and experiences of individuals in everyday settings of schools, classrooms, administration, and policy, such as special educators in Germany, extra-curricular cross-sector partnerships in Norwegian schools, inclusive cultures in policy documents and school practice in Sweden, student group work trajectories in Norwegian classrooms, interactions of students and teachers in oral assessment in schools in Norway, and, finally, actor roles in research practice partnerships in Swedish municipalities and schools.

This section offers insights into real-life nexuses in which policy and practice both set the premises for and contribute to the developments, and the results illustrate how policy and practice are highly intertwined and complex matters. The contributions further raise consciousness of the issues of how we go about to study the nexuses when going deep into the everyday settings of education, both theoretically and methodologically. The studies display how policy and practice nexuses can be studied in varied ways but also how these studies require comprehensive, rigorous, and highly careful approaches to embrace the elements of both policy and practice.

The study of Torsten Dietze, Lisa Marie Wolf, Vera Moser, and Jan Kuhl shows the responsibility for daily inclusive education is shifted to the individual school, largely to the special needs teachers themselves, who are pushed into the role of fragmentation managers. Jorunn Spord Borgen and Bjørg Oddrun Hallås show how extra-curricular cross-sector partnerships of cultural schoolbag and physical activity health initiatives in Norwegian schools require restructuring of content, how those involved in the cross-sector partnerships negotiate the knowledge basis for extra-curricular content, and how practices are influenced by the context-dependent relationships within the research–policy–practice nexus.

The importance of understanding context in policy practice nexuses of the day-to-day life of schools is further emphasized by Gabriella Höstfält's and Barbro Johansson's study of how regulated support activities are theoretically designed in governance, interpreted in policy documents, and put into practice in the classroom must be understood in the context where they appear to create meaningful content for each actor in the policy and practice nexus of inclusion. Christine R. Stenersen's study highlights the apparent dilemma between national policies of developing student collaboration skills and contemporary education focusing on the measurement of the learning outcomes of individual students. She displays how the political and pedagogical ambitions related to the desired outcomes of student group work contrast with the empirical actualization of authentic student group work.

Following the aspect of interaction between students and teachers, Astrid Camilla Wiig show how oral assessment practices through the organization of social groups

go beyond assessing students in terms of assessment criteria or scales. The findings raise questions about understanding educational policy when certain educational practices seem to be in front of policy uptake in policy and practice nexuses. The very last chapter of the book by Tine S. Prøitz and Ellen Rye brings forward the education policy–practice nexus operationalized in research–practice relationships in education. The study highlights challenges in policy practice nexuses through the identification of physical, linguistic, work-related, financial, and cultural distances that characterize and separate central actors in education. This chapter nuances previous research on the requirements for research practice partnerships between academia, municipalities, and schools by empirical investigations of what well-functioning partnerships are recognized by.

In sum, this section brings forward an interesting display of how the ambitions and hopes of policy turn out in practice, not necessarily as something completely different or other but mostly adjusted, adapted, and sometimes as rather transformed versions of what was initially intended. The empirical studies presented here thereby add to and extend the policy and practice knowledge base by displaying how policy in practice very often brings unintended consequences—sometimes for the bad and sometimes for the good—and, by that, it also feeds back into the policy practice debate on education and further education development.

The Contribution of this Volume

In this last part of this introductory, we present some overall observations and reflections regarding the policy and practice nexus, drawing on the chapters of this book. Our first observation relates to how all the chapters revisit the structure–agency dualism debated in the 1980s in varied political contexts. A second observation is that studies of education policy and practice raise our awareness of education complexity and bring forward issues of how to handle such complexity in education research. A third observation is how the education policy and practice nexus is to be understood as plural rather than singular; it is contingent and reflects knowledge production logics, and valuations.

Revisiting the Structure–Agency Dualism

With the conceptual and empirical work presented in the volume at hand, we have had the ambition to answer the following questions: What is to be explored in a nexus study? What happens in the nexus, and how is the nexus consequently operationalized? Who and what takes part, in what roles or functions, and for what reasons? Asking questions like these will give us answers that relate to both structure and agency and that often evoke questions regarding the limitations of research traditions, theoretical frameworks, and methods in education research and also open

both broader and deeper insights into the elements and factors that constitute the education policy and education practice nexus.

A nexus focus in education research does not aim to or necessarily reduce education complexity, but the studies presented in this book display how a nexus can bring attention to both the elements of structure and agency in education research on policy and practice. Accordingly, the structure–agency duality debate in education that occurred in the 1990s is revisited (see, e.g., McFadden, 1995; Shilling, 1992; Willmott, 1999). Education change and reform in the last couple of centuries has called for renewed explorations and insights into the interrelations between policy and practice, as observed in new ways of education governance and governance technologies, with consequences for how education is structured today.

Recent developments in practitioner roles, professionalization in education, and newer expectations of actor involvement, responsibilities, and agency further challenge older perspectives on policy–practitioner relationships in education. Education systems have become more complex, with greater involvement of a range of actors and stronger and more varied types of government influences (Fuller et al., 2007; Labaree, 1997; Rowan & Miller, 2007; Sun et al., 2013). Consequently, educational organizations encompass more actors, and newer and older structures shape policy and the everyday work of teaching, learning, and leading (Rigby et al., 2016). In addition, globalization has an increasing effect on national policy (Rizvi & Lingard, 2009). Changes in the historical, political, and spatial relations of policy and practice and the different actors involved necessitate renewed and alternative approaches in how we understand policymaking and the study of the interface between education policy and education practice (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2014).

Understanding and Describing the Complexity of Education Systems

Policy is often pictured as a linear system in which decisions, directives, and value messages constructed at a higher system level are communicated to the practice levels below to be implemented. Structurally speaking, this image of linearity, where organization, hierarchy, the distribution of responsibilities, and regulation of division of labor are defined, provides conceptual frameworks for our understanding of systems and their predictability. These structures can secure individual rights and societal needs but may also lead to oppression and skewed distribution of societal goods. Furthermore, it has been well established that the relational aspects of those inhabiting the education systems at all levels produce meanings, norms, and values that are dynamic and unstable and that travel between and across the different contexts in multidirectional ways, thereby challenging such a linear understanding of the policy and practice nexus. Research has shown how the actors in schools realize and frame education policies in classrooms through their individual practices (Coburn, 2006). Varied perceptions of policy affect teachers' understanding of

education through the systems and procedures supplied by policy (Schulte, 2018; Spillane & Anderson, 2019). Research has also emphasized how certain structural, organizational, and professional issues regarding powerful trends in education direct our attention in very particular ways, for example, toward testing, league tables, numbers and data, accountability, and standardization (Martens et al., 2010; Mintrop, 2018; Ozga et al., 2011).

Other influential tendencies that further complicate the study of education policy and practice relationships today are the focus on collaboration between policy and practice, in which both the common understandings and knowledge of the field are characterized as shared, co-developed, and co-constructed (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2022). Governments and universities have introduced initiatives aimed at strengthening relationships among the many actors in education. In a range of countries, we can see variations in such initiatives, for example, in the varied types of partnership agreements between universities and schools, as well as with local authorities and government-initiated funding schemes for both research and development projects that require collaboration between local governments, academia, and practitioners in schools.

These initiatives have interesting potential for the further development of relationships between policy practice and research, but they also represent more complexity through the blurring of structures that traditionally have distributed power and responsibility between policy and practice. How students, teachers, leaders, administrators, and policymakers are framed in such policy and practice relationships and what potential structure and agency tensions can be observed between the various political contexts explored have been central questions for this book.

Understanding and Describing Policy and Practice Nexuses in Education

As shown above, this book's contribution to the study of the policy practice nexus involves revisiting and nuancing the literature on structure–agency dualism in the exploration of education policy and practice. Starting with a broad and open understanding of the three central terms—policy, practice, and political context—illuminated through cases/empirical illustrations and findings from various countries, we have situated and investigated dualism in the complexity of education systems. Based on the questions we are exploring and discussing in this book, we can summarize the chapters' overall main contribution in the following four points:

1. The exploration of the education policy–practice nexus in this book suggests that it is not very fruitful to search for the one and only essentialist understanding of the policy–practice nexus in education. The studies presented explore several forms of education nexuses, such as physical arenas in which people and artifacts exist side by side and interact, and conceptual, ideational, and material arenas and nexuses of temporal and spatial character. Based on the studies

presented here, we suggest that the nexus should be recognized as something characterized by plurality. Discussing the nexuses of each study in this book shows how education as a phenomenon very often holds multiple nexuses at the same time, and sometimes, it can be difficult to identify the primary nexus of the studies.

2. Nexus formations are contingent. Nexuses can change over time and differ in space and place. In this sense, contingency means that something could have happened differently or be otherwise (Luhmann, 2002). However, contingency means not simply infinite possibilities but a specified finite range in which something is neither necessary nor impossible but is a real alternative (Makropoulos, 2004). Contingency is essentially about understanding the available alternatives, facilitating an understanding of complex possibility structures, and organizing the fluid construction of this reasoning, which, here, is based on political and legal conditions. Thus, contingency becomes visible through an awareness of other possibilities that are genuine alternatives. In line with this understanding, action is not the realization of a possibility that removes all other possibilities by excluding selection and the constitution of definition; rather, it is the realization of a possibility in relation to other possibilities that exist but have not been chosen. Therefore, nexuses and their formations must be understood in their particular contexts, time, space, and place.
3. A decisive prerequisite for analyzing the relationship between education policy and practice is reflecting on the logic and knowledge-generation strategies that underpin policy formulation. Therefore, the connection between research, policy formation, and policy is also a central dimension in the nexus between policy and practice. Weiss (1979, 1998, 1999) has, for example, described six models for how knowledge and evidence are used in political decision-making. *The knowledge-driven model* assumes that new knowledge will lead to new applications and, thus, new policies. In *the problem-solving model*, the research findings are actively sought and used for pending decisions. In *the interactive model*, incremental policy change is interactively driven back and forth by emerging research outcomes. In *the tactical model*, the fact that research is being undertaken may be an excuse for delaying decisions or deflecting criticism. The point of departure for *the enlightenment model* is that the concepts and theoretical perspectives that social science research has engendered permeate the policymaking process, rather than single studies or research programs having a discernible impact on policy priorities.
4. This leads us to the fourth point: The translation of knowledge into policy is not an unambiguous and a value-free process. To better understand both the circulation of national policy documents and technical and administrative plans, and the situation of those involved in education practice, one must start from the fact that education at all levels, from policy formulation to practice, is inherently a political act. There are built-in priority tensions and contradictions in education policy and reforms. These contradictions in education policy also work within education practice—at the school and classroom levels. To understand the policy practice nexus, we must also acknowledge the tensions that may arise between, for

example, political reasoning, accountability regimes, and assessment criteria, on the one hand, and teachers' professional reasoning, assessments, and professional validity criteria, on the other hand. The questions of the "what," the "how," the "where," and the "when" in education, policy formation, and education procedures and practices will always draw upon a selection of knowledge that underpins policy and practice. The priorities, decisions, and assumptions determine the answer to questions about who ultimately gains the most from the ways in which schools, the curriculum, and practices are organized and operated.

The chapters of this book show that scholars in the field of educational policy studies should pay significant attention to the complex systems and environments in which policy is made and implemented and in which the policy is perceived, interpreted, and operationalized in educational practice. Special attention should also be paid to conflicting interests that are often at play when actors interact in policy–practice nexuses.

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Part I
Conceptualizations of Nexuses of
Education Policy and Education Practice

Chapter 2

Rethinking Agents of Transformation: Social Mobilizations and Official Knowledge



Michael W. Apple

Abstract Questions of structures and agency are significant in any serious considerations of the possibilities, limits, and effects of educational reforms. But the interrelations between educational policy and practice cannot be answered unless we deal directly with a number of issues: Who are the agents and what are the structures, movements, and identities that might lead to actions that support or resist dominant educational policies and practices. In this chapter, I critically examine three examples of agentic work. Each has its basis in successful struggles over knowledge, over what are considered to be “legitimate” or official understandings, and over the educational mechanisms that make these understandings available. The first two examples direct our attention to a set of agents who are not talked about enough—students as political/epistemological actors. The third asks whether tactical “hybrid” alliances between ideologically different movements can successfully challenge dominant structures and policies. All of them demonstrate the importance of our understanding the nature of collective alliance building and the creation of activist identities. Each of them contributes to the larger questions that I raised above.

Keywords Student activism · Politics of knowledge · Hybrid alliances · Neoliberalism

Introduction

Questions of structure and agency are significant in any serious considerations of the possibilities, limits, and effects of educational reforms. But the interrelations between educational policy and practice cannot be answered unless we deal directly with a number of issues: *Who* are the agents; and *what* are the structures,

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movements, and identities that might lead to actions that support or resist dominant educational policies and practices.

In this chapter, I critically examine three examples of agentic work. Each has its basis in successful struggles over knowledge, over what are considered to be “legitimate” or official understandings, and over the educational mechanisms that make these understandings available. The first two examples direct our attention to a set of agents who are not talked about enough—students as political/epistemological actors. The third asks whether tactical “hybrid” alliances between ideologically different movements can successfully challenge dominant structures and policies. All of them demonstrate the importance of our understanding the nature of collective alliance building and the creation of activist identities. Each of them contributes to the larger questions that I raised above. Let us begin by situating them within the struggles over knowledge.

Whose Culture, Whose Knowledge?

From the early 1970s onwards, the issues surrounding the politics of knowledge have been a major concern of the sociology of curriculum and to the critical analyses of educational policy and practice. Central to the development of this tradition both theoretically and empirically were the analyses of people such as Bernstein (1977), Bourdieu (1984), Young (1971), Whitty (1986; Whitty & Young, 1977) and myself (Apple, 2019). At the very core of this work is the commitment to the idea that interrogating what counts as “legitimate” or “high status” culture, and making visible the struggles over transforming it, are essential to building thick democratic educational institutions both in the content of what is taught and how it is taught, as well in who makes the decisions about these issues. In many ways, it connects directly to both a Gramscian argument that in a “war of position” cultural struggles count in crucial ways (Gramsci, 1971; see also Apple, 2013) and Nancy Fraser’s arguments about the significance of a politics of recognition as well as a politics of redistribution (Fraser, 1997) in significant movements toward social change.

Few words in the English language are more complex than *culture*. Its history is interesting. It derives from “coulter,” a word originally used to name the blade of a plow. Thus, it has its roots literally in the concept of farming—or better yet, “cultivation” (Eagleton, 2000: 1). The British cultural scholar Raymond Williams reminded us that “culture is ordinary.” By this, he meant that there was a danger that by restricting the idea of culture to intellectual life, the arts, and “refinement,” we risk excluding the working class, the poor, the culturally disenfranchised, the racialized “Other,” and diasporic populations from the category of cultured (Williams, 1958; see also Williams, 1976, 1982; Hall, 2016).

However, even with Williams’ caution, and even with its broader farming roots, culture has very often been associated with a particular kind of cultivation—that of refined pursuits, a kind of specialness that needs to be honed. And it is seen to be best found in those populations that already possess the dispositions and values that

make them more able to appreciate what is considered to be the best that society has to offer. Culture then is what is found in the more pristine appreciations and values of those above the rest of us. Those lower can be taught such appreciations, but it is very hard and at times expensive work both on the part of those who seek to impart this to society's Others and even harder work for those "not yet worthy" people who are to be taught such refined dispositions, values, and appreciations. This sense of culture then carries with it something of an imperialist project (Eagleton, 2000: 46). As many readers may know, this project has a long history in museums, in science and the arts, and definitely in schools and their curricula.

Given this history, as you might imagine the very idea of culture has been a source of considerable and continuing controversy over its assumptions, its cultural politics, its view of the differential worth of various people in society, and over who has the right to name something as "culture" in the first place. As you might also imagine, there is an equally long history of resistance to dominant understandings of "legitimate" culture and an extensive literature in cultural studies, in social science, and in critical education that has taken these issues seriously (see, e.g., Apple et al., 2009; Apple, 2013; Eagleton, 2000; Clarke et al., 1979; Nelson & Grossberg, 1988; Said, 1993, 1994). The critical sociology of curriculum is both a stimulus to and a product of this history. Indeed, it is hard to fully understand the nature of these debates within education without also connecting it to these larger issues.

One of the most significant advances that have been made in education is the transformation of the question of "What knowledge is of most worth?" into "Whose knowledge is of most worth?" This rewording is not simply a linguistic issue. While we need to be careful in not assuming that there is always a one-to-one correspondence between "legitimate" knowledge and groups in power, in changing the focus the question asks that we engage in a radical transformation of our ways of thinking about the connections between what counts as important knowledge in educational institutions and in the larger society and the existing relations of domination and subordination and struggles against these relations. As I have documented, because it is a site of conflict and struggle, "legitimate" or "official" knowledge is often a compromise, not simply an imposition of dominant knowledge, values, and dispositions. Indeed, hegemonic blocs are often required to compromise in order to generate consent and exert leadership (Apple, 2014). All of this has crucial implications for understanding what we choose to teach, how we teach it, and what values and identities underpin such choices (Apple, 2014).

Just as importantly, the question also demands that one word in the final sentence be problematized—the word *we*. Who is the "we"? What groups arrogate the center to themselves, thereby seeing another group as The Other? That word—"we"—often symbolizes the manner in which ideological forces and assumptions work inside and outside of education. Especially when employed by dominant groups, "we" functions as a mechanism not only of inclusion, but powerfully of exclusion as well. It is a verb that masquerades as a noun, in a manner similar to the word "minority" or "slave." No one is a "minority." Someone must *make* another a minority; someone or some group must *minoritize* another person and group, in the same

way that no one can be fully known as a slave. Someone or some group must *enslave* someone else.

Ignoring this understanding cuts us off from seeing the often ugly realities of a society and its history. Perhaps even more crucially, it also cuts us off from the immensely valuable historical and current struggles against the gendered/sexed, classed, and raced processes of dehumanization. By severing the connections between nouns and verbs, it makes invisible the actions and actors that make dominance seem normal. It creates a vacant space that is all too often filled with dominant meanings and identities.

These points may seem too abstract. But behind them is something that lies at the heart of being critically democratic educators. A major role they must play is to articulate both a vision and the reality of the fully engaged critical scholar and educator, someone who refuses to accept an education that doesn't simultaneously challenge the unreflective "we" and also illuminates the path to a new politics of voice and recognition in education. The task is to give embodied examples of critical analyses and of a more robust sense of socially informed educational action as it is actually lived out by real people, including committed educators and cultural workers in the complex politics at multiple levels of education, even when there predictably are tensions and contradictions. The critical traditions that have evolved have always been deeply concerned with these complex politics at multiple levels, especially but not only in terms of the issues surrounding policies involved in what should be taught, what counts as successful teaching, how is it assessed, and who should decide.

Of course, these concerns are not new. Teachers, social activists, and scholars in multiple disciplines have spent years challenging the boundaries of that usually unexamined space of the "we" and resisting the knowledge, perspectives, epistemological assumptions, and accepted voices that underpin them. There was no time when resistance, both overt and covert, was not present (Berrey, 2015). This is especially the case in education, a field where the issues surrounding what and whose knowledge should be taught and how it should be taught are taken very seriously, especially by those people who are not included in the ways in which dominant groups define that oh-so-dangerous word of "we" (Apple, 2013; Apple & Au, 2014; Au et al., 2016; Warmington, 2014).

Yet, there is another reason that the issues surrounding the curriculum are central here. For all of the well-deserved attention that is given to neoliberal agendas and policies, to privatization and choice plans, to audit cultures and standardization, we must continue to pay just as much attention to the actual stuff that is taught—and the "absent presences" (Macherey, 2006) of what is not taught—in schools, as well as to the concrete experiences of those who live and work in those buildings called schools. Documenting and understanding these lived realities are crucial to an interruptive strategy and to making connections between these experiences and the possibilities of building and defending something so much better. They are also crucial in building counter-hegemonic alliances that create and defend alternatives to dominant assumptions, policies, and practices in education and the larger society. This is not a utopian vision. There are very real instances of the successful building of such

alliances, of constructing a more inclusive “we,” ones that show the power of connecting multiple groups of teachers, students, parents, and community members around an issue that they share. The conflicts over school knowledge often play a key role here. And that is a major focus of the three examples I give in the later sections of this chapter.

Knowledge and Progressive Mobilizations

First, let me make some general points. One of the most significant areas that remain understudied is the complex role of struggles over what counts as “legitimate knowledge” in the formation of social mobilizations. Yet this phenomenon is crucial to the debates over whether education has a role to play in social transformation (see, e.g., Apple, 2013; Apple et al., 2018). In the next section of this chapter, I examine the place of conflicts over official knowledge in the formation of counter-hegemonic movements. I pay particular attention to some examples of student and community mobilizations in the United States to defend progressive curricula and to build alliances that counter rightist gains. After that I turn my attention to the building of *hybrid alliances* across ideological divides and raise the question about whether these temporary tactical alliances can create important interruptions of dominant policies and practices.

It is worth stressing again that these examples of the politics of culture and identity surrounding schooling document the significance of curriculum struggles in the formation of both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic movements. As I noted above, the fact that there is all too often an absence of in-depth analyses of what is and is not actually taught, of the politics of “official knowledge,” (Apple, 2014) in so many critical discussions of the role of neoliberalism in education is notable. We simply cannot grasp the reasons why so many people are convinced to come under the ideological leadership of dominant groups—or act to resist such leadership—if we don’t give a prime place to the struggle over meanings in the formation of identity.

Social movements—both progressive and retrogressive—often form around issues that are central to people’s identities, cultures, and histories (Giugi et al., 1999; Apple, 2013; see also Binder, 2002). More attention theoretically, historically, and empirically to the centrality of such struggles could provide more nuanced approaches to the reasons various aspects of conservative modernizing positions are found compelling, and just as importantly to the ways in which movements that interrupt neoliberal agendas have been and can be built (Apple, 2013).

The importance of this is clearly visible in the two analyses of mobilizations against rightist efforts to move the content of the curriculum in very conservative and often racist directions that follow. The first alliance was built in response to the conservative takeover of a local elected school board in the western part of the United States. It galvanized students, teachers, parents, and other community groups to not only overturn some very conservative curricular decisions, but also resulted in the election of a more progressive school board. Both neoliberal and

neoconservative policies were challenged successfully, in spite of the fact that the conservative majority of the school board had received a large amount of financial and ideological support by the Koch brothers' backed group American for Prosperity,¹ one of the most powerful and well-funded rightist organizations in the United States (see, e.g., Schirmer & Apple, 2016).

The second example focuses on the role of students in the struggle over racist policies of incarceration and funding cuts in education. Here the students employed what is usually seen as "elite knowledge" to interrupt dominant policies and to build a larger alliance. At the same time, they successfully challenged not only educational decisions, but the normalization of the racializing underpinnings of the "carceral state" (Foucault, 1977; Alexander, 2012). Let us now turn to the examples.

Students in the Lead²

In the United States, conservative organizations have increasingly focused their efforts on the local state. In late summer of 2015, field organizers for the well-funded and powerful right-wing group Americans for Prosperity marched through the streets of Jefferson County, Colorado (known as Jeffco), knocking on doors and leafleting voters about the upcoming school board recall election. Jeffco had become deeply tangled in political battles, and the school board became a key site for these struggles. Jeffco had a mix of conservative and liberal tendencies. This mix was important outside as well as inside the town. In such a political context, skirmishes between conservative and progressive forces were considered predictive for the rest of the state. As one political analyst told news reporters, "As Jefferson County goes so goes the state of Colorado, that's why the stakes are so high here is because it is a leading indicator or a bellwether ...it is ground zero for all kinds of political wars but at the moment that political war is over the public education system" ("In 'Purple District,' Jeffco School Board Recall Could Have Big Influence", 2015).

In 2013, three conservative school board members gained control of the Jeffco school board, and immediately pushed forward a series of controversial educational policies. First, the school board recruited and hired a new superintendent, whose starting salary of \$280,000 a year – one of the highest education employees in the state – provoked public consternation (Garcia, 2014b). Second, the conservative school board and superintendent expanded school choice models by increasing funding for additional charter schools and requiring that private and public charter schools receive equal per-pupil funding as public schools (Garcia, 2014a). Third, the school board disbanded the union-approved teacher pay salary scale and instead implemented a highly controversial performance-based pay compensation model.

¹ The Koch brothers are among the wealthiest people in the US. They are major leaders and funders of rightist movements and organizations.

² Much of the material in this section is drawn from Apple et al. (2018).

The final straw in the school district, however, was when the newly conservative board ordered changes to the school district's Advanced Placement U.S. History curriculum to promote more "positive" aspects of national heritage by eliminating histories of U.S. social movements. The curriculum changes were designed to "promote citizenship, patriotism, essentials and benefits of the free-market system, respect for authority and respect for individual rights" while minimizing and discouraging the role "civil disorder, social strife or disregard of the law" ("High schoolers protest conservative proposal", 2014). This kind of ideological pressure is increasingly visible not only in the United States, but in multiple nations (See, for example, Verma & Apple, 2021).

This last "reform"—the attack on more progressive elements in the curriculum—provided the spark that turned into a fire that could not be controlled by the Right. In response to the curriculum changes, hundreds of students walked out of six high schools in the district in protest. Marching and carrying signs that read slogans such as, "There is nothing more patriotic than protest", "People didn't die so we could erase them", and "My education is not your political agenda", "I got 99 problems and the B.O.E. [Board of Education] is all of them," the students' demonstrations caught national attention.

The effects of this spread not only to an increasing number of students, but also to the district's teachers and the community. The students' willingness to mobilize inspired teachers to conduct a two-day sick-out in protest of the changes to their pay scales, which would now implement performance-pay for teachers based on students' standardized test performance. This change frustrated many teachers, who believed such compensation models were not only disproved by research, but also damaged the collaboration and mentorship necessary for effective teaching (Robles, 2015). Parents also began to organize, creating an online petition which garnered tens of thousands of signatures from around the country.

Deeply distressed with not only the curricular changes, but also a lack of investment in important school programs, like defunding an all-day kindergarten for "at-risk" students, a group of parents, teachers, and community members organized a recall election of the three conservative school board members. The grassroots recall election triggered the interest of Americans for Prosperity. Determined to support the conservative candidates and defeat the community recall effort, Americans for Prosperity spent over \$180,000 (a very large amount for a local school board race) on their opposition campaign, paying for flyers, door knocking, and a \$70,000 television ad. As the Colorado state director of Americans for Prosperity candidly declared, "We advocate competition. Education shouldn't be different," Fields says. "Competition really raises the quality of education. ... Where you get the best solutions is through free market principles" (Robles, 2015). Despite their heavily-financed campaign to protect the conservative school board, the efforts of Americans for Prosperity were not successful. In November 2015, all three of the conservative candidates were recalled. This defeat became a symbol of progressive potential for many other communities throughout the nation.

While this seems like simply a small "local" defeat, in many ways Jeffco constitutes a test case for the conservative movements' focus not only on national and

state-wide rightist elections, but increasingly on local mobilizations. Jeffco was a politically mixed school district that faced neoliberal education reform agendas: high-paid administrators, expanding school choice policies at the expense of educational equity, changes to teachers' employment rights, and diminished community morale. In the district, progressives mounted opposition campaigns to the conservative policy regime of the school board. In response to organized progressive activism, Americans for Prosperity poured more funds into the conservative campaigns in the district. Yet, unlike a number of other high profile school districts, progressives in Jeffco successfully defeated the conservatives (see Schirmer & Apple, 2016; Apple et al., 2018). Why did such a well-funded rightist campaign lose in Jeffco?

Three key elements exist in the struggles in Jeffco. First, conservative forces in Jeffco not only focused their vision on key educational policy forms—such as teachers' contracts and school choice proposals—but as well on such issues as *educational content* itself—the knowledge, values, and stories that get taught in schools. This recognition of the cultural struggles at stake in educational policy signaled their engagement in a deeper level of ideological reformation. By overtly restricting the curriculum to supposed “patriotic” narratives and excluding histories of protest and injustice, the conservative school board majority attempted to exercise their power to create ideological dominance. Yet, despite the school board's attempt to control the social narratives of meaning, they missed a key component of ideological formation: meaning is neither necessarily objective nor intrinsic, and therefore cannot simply be delivered by school boards or other powers, no matter the amount of campaign financings. Rather, meaning is constantly being constructed and co-constructed, determined by its social surroundings.

In the case of Jeffco, this meant that students' response to the curricular changes became very significant. Students' organized resistance became a leading and highly visible cause. One of its major effects was that it also encouraged teachers to mobilize against the school board. This is the second key element in Jeffco. In Jeffco, *both* students and teachers alike engaged in direct actions of protest and, importantly, exit. Students walked out of school; teachers withheld their labor in coordinated sick-outs. As social movement scholars inform us, the most significant impacts of social movements are often not immediate changes to social policy or programs, but rather the personal consequences of participating in activism. Once engaged with networks of other activists, participants have both attitudinal willingness and structural resources and skills to again participate in other activist efforts (e.g., McAdam, 1989). Organizing and participating in a series of effective walk-outs created activist identities for Jeffco high schoolers. Cultural struggles over what should be taught, struggles that were close to home for students and parents, galvanized action. This has important implications for how we think about what kinds of struggles can generate progressive transformations. As I noted earlier, and as Nancy Fraser reminds us, a politics of recognition as well as a politics of redistribution is crucial (Fraser, 1997; see also Apple, 2013).

Finally, supporters of public education in Jeffco were able to develop a coalition around multiple issues: curricula, teachers' compensation models, and school

choice. This mobilized a coalition that had sufficient popular support and power to successfully recall the conservative candidates. Thus, progressives in Jeffco were able to form a powerful alliance that addressed multiple registers of the impending conservative reforms. This is truly significant since in other similar places it was conservatives who formed such alliances (Schirmer & Apple, 2016). The creation of what I have elsewhere called “decentered unities” (Apple, 2013) provided the social glue and cooperative forms of support that countered rightist money.

The failure of the Right in Jeffco reveals some key lessons in the strategies of rightist movements. As I pointed out, the Right has shown a growing commitment to small political spaces, and the political persistence necessary to take control of them. There are now many examples where the Right has successfully occupied micro political spaces by waging lawsuits against the liberal school boards, running political candidates to take over local school boards, and providing large amounts of financial support for these candidates. We also know that conservative movements offer identities that provide attractive forms of agency to many people. In the process, these movements engage in a form of social pedagogy, creating a hegemonic umbrella that effectively combine multiple ideological elements to form a more unified movement (Schirmer & Apple, 2016; Apple, 2006).

But as the example of Jeffco demonstrates, the Right is not alone in understanding this. In Jeffco, this creative stitching together of new activist identities into a united movement was crucial. Stimulated by student protests against the attacks on progressive elements within the curriculum, a series of issues that could have divided people into separate constituencies instead united students with parents and teachers around curricular changes, anti-school choice plans, and against merit pay for teachers. Whether this alliance can last is an open question. But there can be no doubt that the initiatives taken by students to challenge conservative attempts to redefine “official knowledge” played a crucial role creating new more activist identities not only for students but for others as well. The leadership of students was a key.

Elite Knowledge, Racialization, and the (In)Justice System

The above example of Jeffco directs our attention to the local level and to issues internal to schools. However, there are other examples of how progressive alliances can be built that start out with a focus on school knowledge, but extend their effects well beyond the school system to the larger society. These alliances may start with educational action and then spread out to other institutions and groups in important ways. And once again, students have often been at the center. The movement by students in Baltimore to interrupt the all too visible school-to-prison pipeline is a significant example here (see Alexander, 2012).

Baltimore is one of the poorest cities in the United States. It is highly segregated by race, and not only has extremely high rates of impoverishment and unemployment among minoritized communities, but also among the highest rates of incarceration of people of color in the nation. The city and state were faced with

predictable economic turmoil due to the fiscal crisis of the state in a time of capital flight and the racial specificities of capital's evacuation of its social responsibilities to the urban core (See also Mills, 1997). As very necessary social programs were being cut, money that would have gone to such programs was in essence being transferred to what is best thought of as the (in)justice system. In this case, a large amount of public money was to be spent on the construction of a new detention facility for "juvenile offenders." The unstated choice was "jail" or social and educational programs. And the choice increasingly seemed to be jail.

This meant that educational funding for the development of innovative and more culturally responsive school programs, teachers, community outreach, building maintenance—the entire range of things that make schooling an investment in poor youth in particular—were under even more threat than usual. In this example again, youth mobilization was a central driving force in acting against this neoliberal and racializing agenda (Farooq, 2012).

Student activists within minoritized communities in that city pressed forward with a campaign to block the construction of the youth detention facility. A key here is a curriculum project—the Algebra Project—that was created as an effort to equip marginalized poor youth of color with "academic" knowledge that is usually denied to them, especially high status mathematical knowledge such as algebra and similar subjects (Moses & Cobb, 2002). The Algebra Project has developed a national reputation for its hard work in pressing for responsive models of curriculum and teaching in a subject—mathematics—that has been a very real sorting device that actively marginalizes and segregates all too many youth of color. While the Project is controversial within some segments of oppressed communities, there can be no doubt about its fundamental commitment to providing a transformative education to youth of color (Moses & Cobb, 2002). The similarities between the goals of this approach and Antonio Gramsci's position that oppressed people must have both the right and the means to reappropriate elite knowledge are very visible (see Apple, 1996).

When public funding for the Algebra Project in which the students participated was threatened, the leaders of the project urged students to "advocate on their own behalf." This continued a vital tradition in which the Algebra Project itself had aggressively (and appropriately and creatively) pushed state lawmakers "to release about \$1 billion in court mandated education funding, engaging in civil disobedience, student strikes and street theater to drive home its message: 'No education, no life'" (Farooq, 2012: 5).

Beginning in 2010, the students engaged in a campaign to block the building of the detention center. They were all too familiar with the tragic and strikingly unequal rates of arrests and incarcerations within black and brown communities compared to dominant populations. They knew first-hand about the nature of police violence, about what happened in such juvenile "jails," and the implications of such rates of arrest and violence on their own and their community's and family's futures.

Using their mathematical skills and understanding that had been developed in the Project, they engaged in activist oriented research demonstrating that youth crime had actually dropped precipitously in Baltimore. Thus, these and other facts were on their side. Coalitions against the detention center were formed, including an alliance with community groups, with critical journalists, and with the Occupy

Baltimore movement. The proposed construction site was occupied. And even with dispersals and arrests, “daily civil disobedience and teach-ins persisted.” All of this generated a good deal of public attention and had the additional effect of undercutting the all too common and persistent racist stereotypes of youth of color as uncaring, irresponsible, unknowledgeable, and as uninvolved in their education. The coalition’s persistence paid off. The 2013 state budget did not include funding for yet another youth prison (Farooq, 2012: 5). But the activist identities developed by the students remained.

The implications of this example are clear. The campaign grew from the Algebra Project and its program of reconstituting knowledge, what it means to know, and who are seen as knowers. It then led to enhanced understandings of oppressive realities and misplaced budget priorities, to activist identities, to committed action, to alliance building, recursively back to even more committed action, and then to success. Like the previous example from Jeffco, it was students who took control of their own lives and their lived experiences, this time with an oppressive (in)justice system that incarcerated large numbers of the community’s youth.

Once again, among the most important actors were the students. Their mobilization and leadership was based not only on the larger concerns with the claims of neoliberalism. Rather the radical changes that the conservatives wanted to make that would limit the possibilities of serious and progressive engagement with important and often denied subject matter also drove the students to act. Clearly, then, the curriculum itself can be and is a primary focus of educational struggles, and is exactly what can be seen in the struggle by the youth of color involved in the Algebra Project in Baltimore when they employed that project and its knowledge to create alliances and to successfully stop the building of a new juvenile prison there. A form of knowledge that was usually seen as “useless” and simply the knowledge of elites was connected to the lived realities of youth in a manner that enabled them to become activists of their own lives (Apple, 2013).

Hybrid Alliances and Agentic Possibilities

In the previous sections of this chapter, I have focused on the agency of groups of people—particularly students—who take on active roles in defending and extending thick democratic policies and practices. They seek to challenge the epistemological and political common-sense of dominant groups and exert leadership in the process of interrupting neoliberal and neoconservative agendas. Conflicts over social and cultural understandings played a major role in each of these examples.

These movements were constituted by largely progressive groups and basically dealt with people whose political positions were largely liberal to left in orientation. This kind of analysis opens up our sense of who the agents of social transformation are to a larger array of actors, in these cases students. The Baltimore example also places race inside and outside of school as a fundamental dynamic, something I have repeatedly stressed as a constitutive dynamic both nationally and internationally (Apple, 2013).

But such an analysis also has weaknesses. It too often ignores the agency of conservative groups and movements and it ignores the power of religious identities in the struggles over culture and meaning. I now want to turn to this issue and ask an increasingly significant set of questions. Is it possible to form alliances with *ideologically conservative* and often religious movements to also interrupt aspects of neoliberal and neoconservative agendas, policies, and practices? My focus here will be on religiously conservative groups.

In order to deal with some of the issues that are raised by these question, in this section I must be somewhat more personal. There are a number of reasons for this. First, these are not simply academic and theoretical questions for me. I am an actor in mobilizations around them. Second, because this involves personal political/educational praxis, where theory and action are merged in a dialectical relationship for me, my answers to these important question are contingent and contextual. I do not have any certainly about them. Because of this, this section of the paper is more suggestive both analytically and politically.

Give this, let me begin this section with an honest personal statement. I have been struggling for years with the question of what role religious understandings and commitments should play in public education and in the larger society—and especially in both limiting and enhancing progressive mobilizations. Part of this is perhaps due to my search for my own religious roots as a secular and politically progressive “public intellectual” (Apple, 2019). And part of it is connected to my quite strong ethical and educational disagreements with the increasingly influential role that what I have called “authoritarian populist” religious conservatives are playing in educational policy around privatization, educational finance, home schooling, curriculum politics, teacher certification, and a number of other areas (see Apple, 2006; Hall, 2017).

Yet at the same time as I worry about the effects of religious authoritarian populism, I also applaud and support more progressive religious groups that have served as a counter to some of the more conservative (and at times racist) religious mobilizations that have grown in influence over the past decades in the US and elsewhere. Thus, I remain hopeful that these groups and actions can serve as a corrective to the ways in which religious groups are often portrayed in the media and in the narratives of a large number of progressive critics and critical educators. Conservative evangelicals are primarily focused upon in these narratives, while much more socially and culturally critically oriented religious groups are less often included except perhaps in passing. I recognize that these narratives have an effect on how I try to deal with my contradictory feelings about the place of religious understandings and commitments in education in the larger society.

Of course, in saying this, there is no doubt in my mind that we must not ignore the fact that many conservative religious groups play a key role in the “hegemonic bloc” that supports much of the damaging neoliberal and neoconservative agenda in education and so much else. Indeed this is one of the reasons I have devoted a good deal of attention to them elsewhere (see Apple, 2006, 2014). However, in the United States and in many other nations, religious support for critical democracy,

for anti-racist, non-homophobic, and more robust thick participatory forms of public institutions including schools, and similar things have been essential to building and defending more progressive policies and in cementing alliances to defend them (Apple et al., 2018). Much of the motivation behind these actions is inspired by deeply religious convictions.

Let me again give a personal example. I am often asked to work in many countries where authoritarian tendencies have been institutionalized. This has meant that I am faced with a choice: Either remain largely publicly “neutral” or speak out against oppressive relations. My choice has almost always been to act in solidarity with marginalized groups and to speak out publicly in support of their demands, sometimes with results that are predictable. Interestingly, these are just as often profoundly transformative experiences in challenging my presuppositions about religion and other relations. Thus, when I was arrested in South Korea for speaking out against the military dictatorship in power at that time, a number of the people who were arrested with me were also deeply religious, guided by an understanding that “Jesus spent his life working for the poor and oppressed. I will commit myself to this myself no matter what the risks.” This is a powerful sentiment, one I believe needs to be supported (see Apple, 2013).

There are lessons to be learned here, both for me and for many people within the critical educational community who are suspicious of religion or who automatically assume that it is by its very nature deeply politically conservative. It raises clear questions about the tendency among some factions of the secular Left inside and outside of education to dismiss religious understandings. It raises strategic questions as well about whether religious and secular groups can find common ground, even when there are deep divisions among (and at times within) them.

In saying this, as I noted above I do not at all wish to ignore the growing power of ultra-conservative and repressive religious movements and ideologies in many nations such as Myanmar, India, Pakistan, Brazil, Hungary, Poland, Israel/Palestine—and yes in parts of the United States. Indeed, I have written very critically about them in *Educating the “Right” Way* and elsewhere (see, e.g., Apple, 2006). However, I fear that many progressive activists and scholars who are struggling to build and defend more thickly democratic institutions and social relations may be pushing away a considerable number of people who are religiously motivated. This is a very real limitation of a number of the critical positions that the Left in education has taken over the years. Too often many advocates for radical egalitarian positions have been overly dismissive of religious motivations and understandings. This is more than a little unwise tactically and also forgets the history that a number of religious movements have played in the ongoing struggles for social justice in so many societies, especially but not only with racialized and minoritized oppressed groups (see, for example, West, 2002). Indeed, this act of historical amnesia can be a performance of “whiteness.” It is also more than a little odd in another way. One of the guiding figures in the development of critical education internationally was Paulo Freire, someone who himself was strongly influenced by liberation theology.

In countering this overly dismissive attitude, we need to think more subtly about how we should understand the complexities of religious movements and thereby open up other possibilities. Let me take the belief that the divide that separates authoritarian populist religious advocates and secular progressive groups is so wide that it is impossible to find common ground. To begin, rather than assuming that religious conservatism is based on a totally rightist sensibility about everything we may hold dear, it would be wiser to look at what I call the elements of “good sense” as well as bad sense in people’s anger about current policies inside and outside of education and how they are convinced to follow the leadership of more neoliberal and neoconservative groups (Hochschild, 2016). This is a wise position not only theoretically, but strategically as well. People are not “puppets.” They have real reasons for their worries—and it is not automatic that they move to the right rather than toward more progressive politics. It takes hard ideological work, what I have called a vast social/pedagogic project, for people to agree with rightist “solutions.” Discursive politics are crucial elements here, both in responding to religious sentiments, but also in other areas of social life (Apple, 2006).

But the fact that dominant groups have been successful in moving many people to the right by connecting to people’s partly accurate understandings of their daily lives, means that progressives must also do a much better job of making connections to the core meanings of their lives and to the real problems people experience (Hochschild, 2016; Apple, 2013). A politics based on better attempts to understand the realities of people’s lives has a much greater chance of having them listen more carefully to our arguments.

Do not misunderstand me. There is of course a very real danger here. People’s commonsense may already be articulated around racist nativist understandings, by unarticulated assumptions grounded in possessive individualism and selfishness rather than a concern for a more robust sense of the common good. Thus, while I agree that there is a definite need to listen carefully and to talk across our ideological differences, not only do *both* sides have to be willing to do this, but we must not do it in a manner that somehow legitimates things such as anti-immigrant racism and other profoundly racist positions,³ educational visions of children as simply future workers, the attacks on women’s control of their bodies, an arrogance in assuming that “God only talks to me,” and similar ethically problematic positions. This will be difficult. Obviously we need to go into these dialogues with respect for real people’s concerns and a greater knowledge of the local. But we also need to realize that respect must come from both sides and that we will have to think very carefully about what compromises are worth making in order for the dialogue to go further and lead perhaps to joint understandings and joint actions.

This is something I’ve given a good deal of thought to and have tried to embody in personal and professional actions. For example, in books such as *Educating the*

³There is a complex historical connection between conservative religious forms in the United States and racist understandings and positions. See for example Heyrman (1997), Kintz (1997), Noll (2002), and Goerge (2015).

“Right” Way and Can Education Change Society? (Apple, 2006, 2013), I have previously called for “hybrid alliances” between what are usually very different ideological and religious allegiances. A prime example in education in the United States was the case of Channel One, a for-profit television station that was broadcast in a very large number of public and private schools and that, thankfully, for many economic and political reasons is no longer in operation (see Apple, 2014).

Channel One provided 10 minutes of “news” accompanied by 2 minutes of well-designed commercials. Many schools agreed to have Channel One in their schools not only because it was slickly marketed as a “solution” to real school problems about making our students “more knowledgeable about current affairs,” but also because it gave the school equipment such as a satellite dish, TV monitors, and other things that can add up to many tens of thousands of dollars. The catch is that, as a captive audience, students were required to watch the commercials. Teachers and students were given no choice about this. Not to do this meant that Channel One would sever the contract and the equipment would be removed. This connected then and now to the growing concern about the increased uses of schools as sites of profit (Apple, 2014; Burch, 2021).

In response to this, I and others formed an alliance with conservative religious groups to remove Channel One from schools. For the conservative evangelicals, “children are created in God’s image” and it is “ungodly” for them to be bought and sold as commodities for profit in schools. For me and other progressives, we may not have agreed with the specific theological position taken by the conservative religious advocates, but we too were and continue to be deeply concerned about commodifying children as a captive audience for corporate profits. Thus, these two usually diametrically opposed ideological positions were unified around a specific educational project, stopping the selling of children for profit. This alliance enabled the removal of Channel One from a number of school districts. But it has also led to the reduction of stereotypes on both sides and to keeping open a space for further dialogue.

This focus on things that bind us together, not pull us apart, can also be seen outside the United States. A prime example can be found in Porto Alegre in Brazil where religiously inspired movements played a very large role in the growth of progressive mobilizations there—and of keeping them together. This was especially the case in education where critical democratic educational institutions, policies, and practices that drew on a rich combination of progressive religious understandings and equally progressive more secular educational theories and politics were combined. These gains are under threat currently with the growth in power of rightist movements, including very conservative and powerful evangelical movements that receive considerable amounts of funding from similar movements in the United States. But the defense of the continued existence of such critically democratic schools, curricula, and teaching practices still stands as a remarkable achievement (Apple et al., 2018).

Of course, the United States is not Brazil. But if too many progressives in the United States and elsewhere tend to automatically mistrust groups who find meaning in religious understandings, in the process this risks marginalizing religious

motivations and traditions that could underpin alliances over crucial elements of agreement. These alliances are visible in such growing grassroots populist movements surrounding the “Moral Monday” actions that have been stimulated by important religious leaders such as the Rev Dr William J. Barber and others. They are visible as well in the pro-immigrant sanctuary commitments advanced by multiple churches, mosques, synagogues, and other formal and informal religious institutions and meeting grounds found among multiple populations here. They are also visible in the growing pro-environmental worries among a number of evangelical movements. It is well worth considering whether “hybrid” alliances across our differences that advance specific progressive projects inside and outside of education can be built.

But, and it is an important but, in even considering this I again do not want to minimize my original worries. It remains very important to recognize that the continuing growth of “authoritarian populist” conservative religious movements who are actively defending existing and even more radical and at times anti-democratic policies may still make this difficult in education and other areas. These movements are among the fastest growing advocates for particular kinds of educational reform throughout the US and many other nations (see, e.g., Verma & Apple, 2021). Take as one example the growth of homeschooling, one in which millions of children are engaged. In some ways, the home schooling phenomenon is partly a reaction to the attention being given to the ways in which the “crisis in public schools” is portrayed in the media. Much of it is also part of a larger reaction to the perceived dominance of secular values in schools, to the feelings that conservative religious knowledge and ways of understanding the world are not given equal weight in the curriculum. Yet, just as importantly, while the homeschooling movement is varied, in all too many cases it functions as the creation of ideological “gated communities” in which the culture and body of the Other are seen as forms of pollution that must be avoided at all costs (Apple, 2006; see also Kintz, 1997). Struggles over culture, over identities, and over Whiteness and the feeling that one is part of the “new oppressed” are core parts of the emerging politics of education on the right and within the religious right in particular.

While we should want to be respectful of diversity, it is important to understand that in many parts of this movement, issues of Biblical authority intersect with long histories of racial fear, of the loss of “our” God-given roles as men and women, and of a government that actively takes away “liberty” (Apple, 2006, 1996; MacLean, 2017). It will not be easy to find dialogic space when faced with these kinds of positions.⁴ Thus, there will be dangers as well as possibilities and any attempts to engage cooperatively with such groups should be approached with honesty and the maintenance of a deep commitment to justifiably held anti-racist, anti-homophobic, and social justice values about this. These are not things that should be sacrificed as we try to build a broader we.

⁴There is a growing population of Black homeschoolers, however. This is a group with whom I have a good deal of sympathy. The lamentable conditions within which large numbers of minoritized students have to somehow survive in all too many schools are too painful to recount once again.

There are still fundamental differences between the larger agendas of the groups involved in these debates. Dialogue across ideological boundaries and a focus on the elements of good sense among people who disagree are necessary and can engender more respect and understanding. Therefore it should (very cautiously) be sought after. However, let us again be honest. As I noted above, such dialogue can give legitimacy to positions which we justifiably find homophobic, sexist, racist, and anti-immigrant. We need to constantly reflect on whether these dialogues, possible hybrid alliances, and the policies and practices that might evolve from them are leading in more critically democratic directions in the long term.

Conclusion

As you know, like me, many people have consistently grounded their work in the belief that it is absolutely crucial to understand the social realities of schooling (see, e.g., Whitty, 2002). What is happening today makes these analyses even more significant. As I have shown, it is not neoliberalism and its attendant policy initiatives alone that are changing our commonsense about education. Indeed it is a major error to reduce our critical analyses of education to simply being a reflection of one set of tendencies within a dominant hegemonic bloc (Apple, 2006, 2014; Apple et al., 2018)).

In expanding our focus, I have taken insights about the role of curriculum conflicts and the creation of identities and alliances, and have focused on struggles over “culture,” over what counts as “official knowledge” in schools and over its uses not only inside the school but in assisting and generating mobilizations against dominant policies and practices. All this is grounded in a strong ethical/political position that we have an obligation to challenge these dominant policies and practices and that it is crucial to defend a robust education that is based on human flourishing.

But for those of us engaged in critical social and cultural research, one other question has stood behind each of these other issues. It is the central organizing question that gives meaning to these others. Indeed, it is the basic issue that guides any critical education and especially the critical sociology of education. Can schools change society? This is the fundamental question that has guided almost all of my books and much of the political and educational action many critical educators throughout the world. However, I do not think that we can fully deal with this question unless we connect it another one. Who are the actors individually and collectively who now and in the future will be agents of such substantive changes? Dealing honestly with what this means—and honestly facing the dilemmas and contradictions involved—is fundamental to a more robust understanding of critical educational theory, research, policy, and practice.

The three examples I gave in this chapter signify the continuing search to answer the first of these questions in the affirmative. As I argue in *Can Education Change Society?* (Apple, 2013), schools are key parts of society, not something that stand outside of it. Struggling over “legitimate” culture, over educators’ labor processes,

over privatization, over identities, and so much more *is* struggling over society. Anything less risks accepting cynicism and despair.

But, in taking this position, we should not be “romantic.” Indeed, as Geoff Whitty warned us early on, we need to recognize that there are persistent dangers of what he called the “romantic possibilitarian” tendencies of the Left (Whitty, 1974). Instead, in Raymond Williams’ wise words, our “journey of hope” (Williams, 1989) must be grounded in our own continual development of serious knowledge of the concrete ways in which our individual and collective attempts to build a more socially critical and responsive education always occurs in a social and cultural field whose traditions and realities offer both limits and possibilities (See Wright, 2010, 2019). Continuing on this journey requires that we ask and answer the questions surrounding the politics of knowledge inside and outside of education.

Just importantly as I have stressed throughout this chapter we must ask and answer the question of who are the agents of transformation—again individually and collectively—in these politics. As I have shown here, among these agents nationally and internationally are students. But is it sufficient to simply add them to a list of progressive actors? Are there complex and contradictory possibilities involved in tactically “temporary” hybrid alliances as well? This too has crucial implications for our collective mobilizations against dominant policies and practices in education and the larger society.

Let me end this chapter with a final set of crucial questions, many of which are raised in *The Struggle for Democracy in Education: Lessons From Social Realities* (See Apple et al., 2018). Each of the examples I have discussed here has led to a victory. Such victories should of course be celebrated. But will they last? Will the activist identities that have been formed out of these conflicts be maintained? Will the hybrid alliances that cut across what are substantial ideological and religious differences open a space for the further joint actions that both challenge dominant agendas and policies? Can they also lead to shifts toward more progressive understandings on the part of more conservative ideological movements that partially weaken their previous ideological affiliations?

Only long-term research and long-term socially committed actions can answer these questions. There’s work to be done.

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Chapter 3

The Policy-Practice Nexus as ‘Politics of Use’: Professional Autonomy and Teacher Agency in the Classroom



Barbara Schulte

Abstract This chapter approaches the policy-practice nexus by scrutinizing the relationship between teacher agency and professional autonomy. Teacher agency has usually been researched from two different perspectives. On one side, scholars are concerned with questions of professional autonomy vis-à-vis specific accountability regimes, and apply, in the broadest sense, a governance framework. On the other, there is a more normatively grounded discussion of professional autonomy, emphasizing how teachers, due to various new forms of (neo-liberal) governance, become increasingly de-professionalized. While acknowledging both perspectives, this chapter questions the conflation of professional autonomy with teacher agency. Drawing on the concept of the ‘politics of use’ and findings from fieldwork in China, the chapter proposes a framework for conceptualizing autonomy and agency as they operate in and between systems, involving and producing different types of agents. The chapter’s findings suggest that the ways in which policy implementation processes have been conceptualized need to be reconsidered. Particular attention must be paid to the political-ideological and normative specificities of both the investigated policy system and of the investigator’s own research traditions, to ensure that policy implementation processes can be compared across a broad variety of cases.

Introduction

In a history lesson at a middle school in Beijing, the 13-year-old students get to learn about China’s “new democracy”. As a case in point, they study some details of the battle between the communist Red Army and the nationalist Guomindang in the 1930s. Zhu, the young teacher, lectures on the various Communist heroes, with the students acting as fill-ins on the heroes’ specific character qualities, at times reading

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passages from the textbook. As a highlight, Zhu then shows them a clip from a movie which features gruesome and very noise-intensive battle scenes, with hardly any words spoken (except for deafening death screams), and with many combatants left wounded or dead. She stops the movie towards the end of the lesson, when a Guomindang soldier is shot fatally, accompanied by appreciative grunts from the students. In the ensuing interview, I ask Zhu about her choice of material. She tells me how in her teacher training, she had learned about student-centered approaches in the classroom and the importance of developing social and emotional skills. She then reflects upon the lack of such learning approaches in China's exam-oriented schools, and adds that by selecting this movie, she sought to transfer some of the pedagogical spirit from her teacher training into the classroom.

What does this story – which I have encountered in multiple variations during two decades of doing fieldwork – tell us? First, it illustrates the importance of observing practices. Analyzing policy and curriculum documents, textbooks, or even interviews cannot reveal how teachers realize (or resist) the curriculum on the ground. Desk research can tell us a lot about the intended curriculum, producing valuable insights into the agendas of various stakeholders, such as international organizations (e.g. OECD or UNESCO reports), governments (e.g. laws, regulations, white papers), ministries and local educational authorities (e.g. curricular specifications, guidelines), and schools (e.g. school programs); but it discloses very little about how the curriculum is enacted: the movie shown by this teacher is not included in any database of teaching material, let alone the pedagogical approaches utilized during the lesson.

This leads us, second, to the much-discussed question of policy-practice divergence, or with reference to this edited volume's theoretical focus, to the fruitful concept of the policy-practice nexus (see e.g. Ohi, 2008; Schulte, 2018): How is policy transformed when being filtered by teacher professionalism (Evetts, 2003), and how is policy negotiated and appropriated within the micropolitics of school environments (Kelchtermans & Vanassche, 2017)? Such questions direct our attention, on one side, to the complexities and layeredness of educational practices (Wermke & Prøitz, 2022), as they need to respond to multiple and at times contradictory expectations (e.g. from parents, colleagues), norms (e.g. in the institutional or political realm), and traditions (e.g. in the form of pedagogical or professional knowledge). On the other side, these multiple processes of filtering and appropriation reveal how we need to think of 'nexus' in the plural: policy meets practice not just once, as for example when Teacher Zhu does her lesson planning; but practices dock onto policies both vertically (as for example when researchers, textbook authors, or school principals engage in policy translation at different levels of policy implementation) and horizontally (as for example when policy is enacted across different settings at the same level, such as at the level of the classroom).

Third, and most importantly for this chapter, this story can help us reassess the intricacies of teacher agency. On the surface, Zhu takes the liberty to digress from the textbook and teach the subject in her own way. She can thus be seen as gaining agency in designing her lessons, which especially in the Chinese context has not always been the case. But are her choices autonomous, from a pedagogical point of view?

The movie she has chosen would most likely not have been included in an officially sanctioned list of teaching materials, screened and accredited by educational authorities. In that sense, her approach could be considered autonomous vis-à-vis crucial control mechanisms within the education system. Looking more closely, however, we can argue that her choice to emotionalize her history lesson in the way she did is severely compromised by her ideological-political environment. To teach and display love of the Chinese Communist Party is a constant expectation from the central government, and this expectation has recently been rendered more intrusive in the Ministry of Education’s decree of integrating Xi Jinping thought – an ideology named after the current president – at all educational levels (MOE, 2021). Thus, ironically, what looks like an increase in teacher agency does not translate into greater professional autonomy. Again, with regard to policy-practice relations, we can locate various nexuses where certain workings and enactments of policy are produced, involving agents and forces both internal and external to the education system.

Teacher agency and professional autonomy are usually researched from two different perspectives. On the one hand, scholars are concerned with questions of professional autonomy vis-à-vis specific management forms and accountability regimes, and apply, in the broadest sense, a governance framework in order to analyze their cases (see e.g. Wermke et al., 2019). On the other hand, we can observe a more passionate discussion of professional autonomy, emphasizing how teachers, due to various new forms of (neo-liberal) governance and governmentalities, become increasingly de-professionalized (see e.g. Priestley et al., 2013). In a sense, these two strands of research can be regarded as two sides of the same coin, in that the latter is a normative response to the findings from the former. This chapter acknowledges both approaches – governance analysis and normatively framed responses – but twists both perspectives by asking the following two questions. Firstly: If we assume a weakly institutionalized education system that is vulnerable to infringements from other systems (such as from the political system) and thus can be said to possess limited autonomy – how does that impact the agency of teachers? Will their agency diminish, along with their system’s autonomy, or can it actually also increase? Secondly, and perhaps provocatively: is teacher agency always good?

The first question hence attempts to destabilize our own thinking about how education systems (and their subsystems) interact with other systems, by including socio-political contexts which deviate from what could be called the ‘prototypical’ education system of the Global North. Such a perspective can help discern policy-practice nexuses that are often hidden in ‘prototypical’ scenarios, such as the nexus linking individual teacher practices and political ideologies, as can be seen with the example of Teacher Zhu. The second question intends to make more explicit the normative connotations surrounding the concept of teacher agency. Academic discussions of ‘teacher agency’ are often framed within the emancipatory tradition of pedagogy, idealizing teacher agency as something inherently good (see e.g. Cloonan et al., 2019; Samoukovic, 2015). Rather than arguing for a removal of these underlying normative biases, this chapter aims to look into the workings of norms and values more systematically, in order to understand how norms and values co-produce the ‘agentic teacher’.

The following section will address the potential interactions between teacher agency, professional autonomy, the education system, and what I call the wider environment, including e. g. the political and economic realms. In an ensuing section, I will then zoom in on the interrelations of autonomy and agency and present a nested model of these two concepts, which takes into account both systemic and agents-based interactions. In a fourth section, and based on the approach of the ‘politics of use’ which I have discussed elsewhere (Schulte, 2018), I will address the question of whether teachers, as street-level agents of the state, can actually gain more agency when the autonomy of their schools and of the wider education system becomes restricted. I have called this process ‘side-stepping’, since the state establishes new ways to form direct alliances with teachers and circumvents their professional environments, thereby bypassing acknowledged mechanisms of quality control and accreditation. By looking more closely at the nature of agency that teachers can develop within their given contexts, I am proposing different ‘ideal types’ of teachers linked to the specific relationships between educational and political systems. In conclusion, the chapter suggests that we need to reconsider the ways in which we have conceptualized policy implementation processes. If we eclipse the political-ideological specificities of both the investigated policy system and of our own research traditions, we may unnecessarily limit our capability to compare policy implementation processes across a broad variety of cases.

Teachers, Schools, the Education System, and the State: A Complicated Ménagement à Quatre

Teachers, schools, the education system, and the state are usually conceived as being embedded in a hierarchically structured system: the state sets the parameters and boundaries for the education system, which in turn produces and shapes the conditions for schools to operate, including the specifics of teacher education and training, examination and assessment procedures, school inspection etc. At the bottom of this hierarchical system, schools define the range within which teachers can meaningfully act. Depending then on the respective legal, political, and financial structures of governance, we tend to think about the entities of teachers, schools, and the education system as possessing more or less autonomy vis-à-vis the (hierarchically higher placed) entity that has the power to exert constraints.

But is autonomy merely the left-over space that is untouched by constraints? As Dworkin (2015) has pointed out, to define ‘autonomy’ entails the dilemma of reducing the concept’s complexity to the extent that it loses its theoretical power – which however has rendered ‘autonomy’ a crucial concept in the first place. Still, Dworkin convincingly argues that ‘autonomy’ cannot be simply equated with ‘freedom’ or ‘liberty’. He proposes that the concept must instead be understood as the “second-order capacity of persons to reflect critically upon their first-order preferences, desires, wishes and so forth and the capacity to accept or attempt to change these in

light of higher-order preferences and values.” (Dworkin, 2015, p. 14) By redirecting the focus from the mere question of whether or not there is a constraint on freedom, to the question of *capacity*, we move away from an understanding of autonomy as mainly something measurable – such as having more or less autonomy – and instead link ‘autonomy’ to the extent and the ways in which people can make sense of and navigate their options, freedoms, and constraints.

However, the understanding of autonomy as the capacity for second-order, critical reflection has its practical limitations: From what vantage point can we assess a reflection to be ‘critical’, when the nature of critical thinking is itself highly dependent on the context in which an individual has been socialized? Can the reflections by Teacher Zhu, who was introduced at the beginning of this chapter, be considered ‘critical’, since she calls into question teaching and testing practices, and adapts her teaching accordingly? Also, can first and second-order thinking be clearly distinguished from one another in empirical reality? The latter question is particularly relevant with regard to teachers: If reflection is a deeply engrained as well as widely expected part of teachers’ everyday activities, can this activity then still be considered higher-order, or would we rather have to add a third-order level of reflection – namely a level from which individuals such as teachers can reflect upon the very figure of the ‘reflective practitioner’ (in the sense of Schön, 1983)? Moreover, if we think of individuals as being embedded in multiple ways – socially, emotionally, politically, professionally – how can such a capacity for higher-order reflection develop independently, despite the many interdependencies that characterize social and professional lives?

The answer to these questions lies in incorporating, rather than ignoring, these interdependencies. Second- (or third-) order reflection does not take place in a vacuum but is bound by norms, which again are produced by (and in turn keep alive) social-cultural, emotional, political, professional, etc. normative systems. This means that the capacity for reflection does not develop in spite of, but because of these system’s interactions with individuals (and groups of individuals). Depending on whose and what kind of autonomy we have in mind, these interactions will then be categorized on a spectrum between (illegitimate) interference and (welcome) support. To return to the case of teachers: If we see teachers primarily as professional facilitators of learning, teachers’ capacity for second-order reflection would then be expected to take place with reference to professional norms (developed within the education system). Any interference that suggests or prescribes other primary references (such as to cultural or political norms) would consequently be labeled as a breach of autonomy. If, however, we were to consider teachers primarily as, say, political or religious agents, the contrary would be the case: Reflection oriented towards political or religious norms would be the autonomous default situation, whereas reference to other norms would mean encroachment.

These latter, so far hypothetical cases – teachers as political or religious agents – highlight the importance of environment, including the question of which environment serves as primary reference for conceptions of autonomy. From this perspective, autonomy has little to do with pure freedom, or the “comparative absence of regulation”, as claimed by Priestley et al. (2015, p. 144), even though this might be the

perception of involved agents (e.g., regarding the so-called ‘freedom of teaching’). On the contrary, autonomy usually entails densely regulated systems (such as that of education or teaching), whose agents do not just endure, but engage in mechanisms of self-governance and (internal) control (cf. Mausethagen & Mølsted, 2015).

Inside these systems, autonomy within the professional work of teachers can assume different shapes. As has been shown in empirical studies, teachers can be autonomous in relation to different aspects of their work, such as lesson planning, choice of teaching methods, learning assessment etc. (Dieudé & Prøitz, 2022), as well as in relation to different domains (such as educational, social, developmental, administrative) and different levels (classroom, school, profession) (Wermke et al., 2019). Autonomy thus becomes a concept that is highly practice-related, and develops in relation to (sub-)systems of regulation. These system-specific regulations do not simply constrain autonomy, but they actually enable autonomy to emerge: Strictly speaking, there would be no teacher autonomy if it wasn’t for an educational system that defines and refines the rules, and hence creates the space for teachers that then comes to be understood as ‘autonomy’. Archer comes to a similar conclusion when she notes that low autonomy entails the difficulty

to pursue goals which have been arrived at within that sphere; instead, institutional operations are defined externally by the party which constrains its services. *It is not interdependence as such which results in loss of autonomy but rather [...] the emerging capacity of one part to direct and organize the other in accordance with its own operations.* (Archer, 1979, p. 62; my emphasis)

Following Archer’s explication, we can place the organization of the education system on a scale between ‘heteronomy’ and ‘autonomy’: On one end of the scale, all organization is determined by the rules, norms, and laws of the ‘other’ (*hetero*); empirically, it would be very difficult to find a pure heteronomous education system, since the mere existence of a system already entails a certain extent of autonomy. On the other end of the scale, organization is completely driven by the laws of the ‘self’ (*auto*), molding the respective system into a distinct system with specific tasks and rules. It is from this vantage point – autonomy through specialization, or differentiation – that also Luhmann (2017, p. 114; emphasis in original) has approached the concept of autonomy:¹

Autonomy is grounded in the *specifics* of system-building operations and their structural condensates. [...] The dependence on environment cannot be eliminated, on the contrary [the environment] needs to be seen as the precondition for these systems to exist, and it determines the direction of potential differentiations. We therefore define autonomy as the operative closure of the system, and [we define] operative closure of the system as the auto-poietic reproduction of the system’s elements through the network of precisely these elements. Therefore, we can understand the school as a social system, but not [...] as a “micro-cosmos” of society within society. [...] This [perspective] is absolutely compatible with legal regulations and financial dependencies as long as these are not used as sources of power in order to oppress pedagogical intentions and replace them by something else.

¹This and all subsequent translations into English have been done by the author.

Simply put, such an understanding of autonomy proposes that autonomy exists when the system can do its own thing – ‘its own thing’ consisting e.g. of this system’s rules, norms, rationales, and routines; while the system’s legitimacy and, hence, existence derives from its capacity to produce such rules, and generate a sufficient extent of specificity, in relation to other systems, in order to be recognized as a distinct system. While we may intuitively think of ‘autonomy’ as a right or entitlement, a systemic perspective highlights how ‘autonomy’ is also a “burden [...] simply because no other functional system can fulfill the function of another [system]. The state can introduce compulsory education and cover the costs of schools and universities through tax revenues; as an organization of the political system, it cannot itself educate” (Luhmann, 2017, p. 116).

This dialectical approach towards autonomy makes also sense in light of professionalization, such as teacher training: ‘autonomous’ teachers are certainly not those who have *not* undergone any professional training, but who on the contrary are able to enact their professionally acquired skills and competences within the protected but regulated space of the educational system. To be sure, more recent calls for ‘decolonializing’ education and thereby ‘unlearning’ established ways to teach and learn may suggest otherwise (cf. Caruso & Maul, 2020). However, from a Luhmannian perspective, such developments hardly mean that teachers step out of the system; but rather that, through a partial opening of the system to the outside world, some rules are changed in such a way that autonomy can be exercised in new and different ways. Why systems open up is an essential question for understanding change, and will be taken up in the following section, when addressing the interrelations between autonomy and agency.

Autonomy and Agency: Same, Same, But Different?

If we take this dialectic approach towards autonomy seriously, we need to dismiss the antagonistic conception of autonomy (i.e., schools/teachers versus the state) that has been pervading much of the literature surrounding the pros and cons of neoliberalization, auditing, managerial control, and so on (Forrester, 2000; Helgøy et al., 2007). Likewise, to define autonomy as the scope of decision-making (vis-à-vis control mechanisms; cf. Wermke et al., 2019) does not do full justice to the multiple (potential and actualized) relationships between agents and their environments.² This section of the chapter therefore intends to pick up where Wermke et al. (2019, p. 310) have left, who explicitly concede that their conceptualization takes place “at the price of complexity reduction [...] and] excludes other themes related to the question, such as teacher empowerment, the structure of teacher agency and also issues of teacher self-determination”.

²See however the more elaborated discussion of autonomy in Wermke and Salokangas (2021).

How is agency related to autonomy – and how does this make a difference for teachers? Existing attempts at capturing ‘teacher agency’ are problematic for several reasons. Firstly, and frequently, professional autonomy and teacher agency are used interchangeably, with no clear distinction between the two concepts, at times outright conflating the two terms (e.g. Lundström, 2015). Secondly, many definitions of teacher agency are normative and somewhat instrumentalist, clarifying what and how a teacher should be, and how this can be achieved, such as in the definition by Toom et al. (2021, p. 2):

[P]rofessional agency [...] in addition to being a teacher’s core capability in the sense that it offers a key for active and skilful teacher learning, also provides understanding of the dynamics of the preconditions for such learning in their work. Yet, professional agency embodies a capacity that allows teachers to learn actively and skilfully, regulate their own learning, learning competencies needed in their work, develop professionally, promote students’ and colleagues’ learning, as well as innovate and promote change in schools.

A third approach turns against this instrumentalization of teacher agency, and instead views agency as “an emergent ‘ecological’ phenomenon dependent upon the quality of individuals’ engagement with their environments” (Priestley et al., 2015, p. 136).³ Environments, in turn, consist of “a configuration of influences from the past, orientations towards the future and engagement with the present” (ibid., p. 137), which individual teachers, due to their diverse life histories, expectations, and actual choices, navigate differently. Interestingly, Priestley et al. note that teachers’ self-perception of agency is not necessarily congruent with actual agency: teachers may feel to possess agency when “they simply go with the flow” (ibid., p. 144).

This observation points to a weak spot in Priestley’s et al. conceptualization: From what vantage point can it be assessed whether agency is real or not, if the relationships between agents and environment are only insufficiently defined, and if autonomy is simply conceptualized as the absence of regulation? Scrutinizing these diverging measurements of agency, Moore (2016, p. 1) distinguishes, on the one hand, between a “feeling of agency” as a “lower level non-conceptual feeling of being an agent”, and, on the other, a “judgment of agency” as a “higher level conceptual judgment of agency” which uses background beliefs and contextual knowledge when assessing an action. While this compensates for the somewhat lacking clarity of Priestley et al. regarding (internally) perceived and (externally) observed agency, it does not solve the problem of the contextual embeddedness of judgment, as noted above with reference to critical higher-order reflection: Depending on the context in which agent and observer are located, both the content and extent of agency can be interpreted very differently. Moore attempts to escape this relativism by assuming an “objective reality” from which “the sense of agency can be quite divorced” (ibid., p. 2). But who is to draw the line between an objective and a subjective reality of a teacher who is then observed to develop either a real or a false

³Note however that Priestley’s et al. definition reads in parts tautological, by defining agency as the “individual capacity of teachers to act agentially” (Priestley et al., 2015, p. 136).

sense of agency? Has Teacher Zhu, from the beginning of this chapter, developed a real or a false sense of agency when diversifying her teaching methods? One can easily fall prey to circular reasoning when addressing this question.

A possible way out of this circular argument is to adopt a nested model of agency (see Fig. 3.1), which places both individual and collective agency within the context of professional autonomy, which again interacts with the educational system, the latter embedded in a wider environment consisting of other systems, such as the political, economic etc. Each of these embeddings, or interfaces, can be considered a potential nexus in which policy-practice relations are being negotiated and enacted. While (individual/collective) agency is most closely connected to professional autonomy, as this is where professional and personal identities are being formed, the nested model also allows for other relationships, visualized by the darker and lighter links in Fig. 3.1, which represent stronger, routinized relations and weaker, shifting relations, respectively. Accordingly, teacher agency forms nexuses with organizational arrangements within the education system, as well as with political, religious etc. requirements and narratives.

System approaches such as the one developed by Luhmann have not been particularly interested in the workings of agency, since they view agents mainly as communicative elements executing the logics of a system. However, drawing on feminist studies (e.g. Abrams, 1999), there might be a way to bring a systems-based perspective on autonomy and an agent-based concept of agency together. Feminists in particular have been concerned with questions of individual agency and

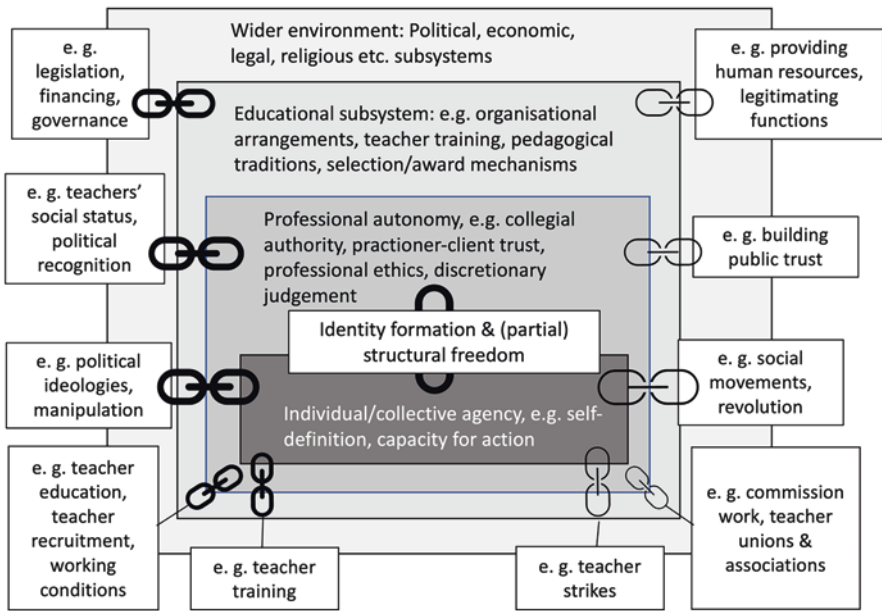


Fig. 3.1 Interdependency relations between teacher agency, professional autonomy, the educational system, and other systems

empowerment on the one side and structural constraints on the other. Similar to Sen's (2003) development of the capability approach, feminists have been struggling with the dilemma of choice: namely, with the fact that there is no free choice, since there are always mechanisms (cultures, beliefs, upbringing etc.) that pre-structure our seemingly "free" choices.

Agency, against this background, implies the power of self-definition (as opposed to structure and pre-definition) and, based on this self-definition, the capacity for action; or according to Sherwin et al. (1998, p. 12), it captures the "ideal of informed choice". Autonomy, they continue, constitutes something more than "actively choosing": It denotes "a more comprehensive notion of freedom where not only is the immediate choice uncoerced but the circumstances that structure that choice are also free of the coercive dimension of oppression." To be sure, feminist literature, as a body of theories for social change, and system theory, which is mainly oriented towards accurately describing and explaining processes of systemic interaction, are positioned very differently when it comes to conceptualizing oppression. Empowerment and freedom from oppression are moral imperatives in feminist research; while Luhmann's (2017, p. 114) "sources of power in order to oppress pedagogical intentions" only call into question the autonomy of the education system, without however passing a moral judgment on how such an encroachment is to be related to values. The closest Luhmann comes to connecting inter-system interaction with questions of legitimacy, is when he raises the question of "which possibilities of intervention the owner [i.e., the state, which provides infrastructure and resources to the education system; BS] has. Under older (and more small-scale) conditions, a pietist king such as Christian VI of Denmark could result in a pietist orientation of school-based instruction. Nowadays such developments are conceivable, if at all, only under an ideologically oriented one-party regime." (Luhmann, 2017, p. 118) Hence, from a Luhmannian perspective, the state as a pedagogue is an interesting exception to the rule.

As different as these responses to 'oppression' may look, they share the view on autonomy as an interconnected concept: in contrast to notions of autonomy in the liberal tradition, which references the disconnected, authentic, proactive autonomous self, both system and feminist theorizing propose a relational, situated, reactive autonomous entity (see e. g. the discussion in Abrams, 1999). In a sense, the feminists' entangled woman is the equivalent to system theory's networked element; both are marked by social reproduction or, in Luhmann's terms, autopoiesis. Despite these overlaps in thinking about autonomy, the differences regarding agency are pronounced and important: While feminist theory works towards raising individual and collective awareness of one's own situatedness in order to override (parts of) the system's workings, system theory reduces individual agency largely to "the attribution of decision rights to the communication roles of alter and ego" (Blaschke, 2015, p. 466), resulting in proxy agency (that of the system) rather than individual and/or group-based agency.

Both perspectives, however, can be used to draw a distinction between autonomy and agency. As exemplified in Fig. 3.1, a relational, nested approach allows for diverging types of interaction between, on the one side, agency and different

environments, and, on the other, autonomy and its environments. For example, while the relationship between professional autonomy and the wider environment (beyond the educational system) may impact on teachers’ social status or entail forms of political recognition, this environment’s relationship with individual or collective agency may assume forms of ideological influence or moral engagement. Since agency is embedded within professional autonomy, it is within this nexus of agency and autonomy that identities are formed and spaces are created for enacting these identities. Consequently, such a differentiated approach towards agency and autonomy also opens up for diverging directions of agency and autonomy: a high amount of agency (whether perceived or observed) does not necessarily translate into extensive autonomy; conversely, strong autonomy does not automatically lead to high levels of agency. To return to the case of history teacher Zhu at the beginning of this chapter: Zhu may have developed a considerable extent of agency when designing her history lessons by using quasi-propaganda films not sanctioned by the education system. However, this agency has emerged within a space that decreasingly operates according to the rules and norms of professional autonomy (cf. e.g. Evetts, 2009). Zhu could be considered, as we will discuss in the next section, a ‘zealous teacher’, marked by high agency, low professional autonomy, and located in a weak educational system with an intrusive state.

Less State Equals More Agency: Does It, and for Whom?

From the perspective of this nested approach, teachers can be considered agents with potentially multiple roles and connections. Depending on how the education system interacts with other systems, autonomy and agency can unfold differently within these interactions. Since agents do not mechanically execute predefined tasks but imbue their actions with meaning and values, their agency is tightly connected to their political, socio-cultural, economic etc. environments. Elsewhere, I have called this enactment (of e. g. the curriculum) the ‘politics of use’. ‘Politics’, in this concept, means a very broad practice determining “which and whose political values will be put into use when implementing policy” (Schulte, 2018, p. 634):

When policies, reforms, and new curricula are put into use in the classroom, they become necessarily imbued with normative conceptions and values. Whose values the politics of use mobilizes depends both on the teachers’ previous training and socialization, and on the school’s/ subsystem’s autonomy vis-à-vis other sectors, including the state. It can be assumed that the more teacher education is aligned with the objectives of the state, and the more in-service teachers are directly and continuously exposed to state narratives, the less likely it is that organizational levels and actors in between will interfere in the process of policy implementation. Thus, in the case of minimal autonomy of the subsystem and maximum exposure to state narratives, teachers will try to align policy implementation with what they perceive to be the state’s interests. This results in an implementation short-cut in which centrally released policies can jump various levels of implementation: intermediary actors and organizations are being side-stepped. (ibid., p. 630)

However, a strong state and a weak education system are not the sole determinants for teacher actions but need to be related to these teachers' spaces of autonomy and agency. If teachers were simply agents of the state (or partisans challenging the state), we would again get caught in a dichotomous and rather one-sided approach that we have already criticized above. Instead, teachers, when implementing the curriculum, are differently positioned to resort to norms and rules on which they can base their actions (see Fig. 3.2): At a higher level, with regard to the interrelations between educational and other systems, spaces of autonomy and possibilities of agency depend on the extent to which the education system as a whole can assert itself against other systems, such as the political one (strong vs. weak educational systems). At an organizational and institutional level, these spaces and possibilities are shaped by the extent to which, on the one hand, educational environments such as the school can define and prescribe their own professional rules and norms (autonomy vs. heteronomy); and on the other hand, to which self-definitions (including e. g. ideas about professional ethos or teaching philosophies) harmonize with the organizational and institutional environments (agency vs. proxy-agency).

Correspondingly, in Fig. 3.2, we can identify different ideal types of teachers as they emerge in a field between the poles of autonomy/heteronomy and agency/proxy-agency.⁴ In the upper right quadrant, we can locate teachers who both possess a considerable amount of agency and can rely on an environment (such as the school) that operates according to the rules of the specific system (the education system in this case). As Fig. 3.2 shows, the relative educational autonomy of the organizational environment can be found in two different settings: On the left side, we would assume the organizational environment to be embedded in an education system that acts autonomously, with little political interference, and educational norms and rules as primary reference; on the right side, the education system as such is subject to political interference which attempts to replace educational norms by political ones, but as a system it still generates environments that can operate by

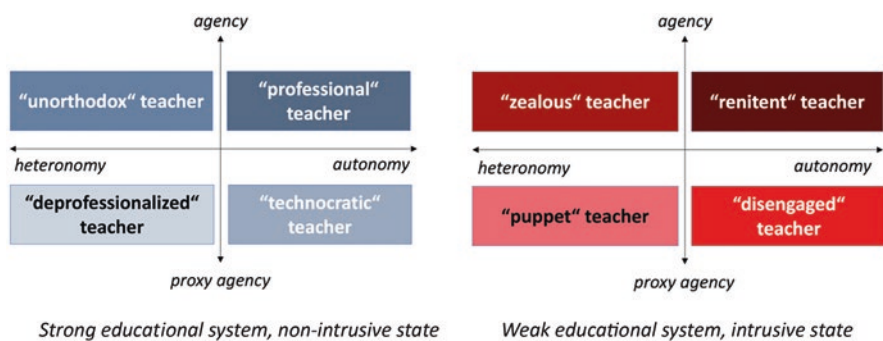


Fig. 3.2 Teachers in a strong vs. weak educational system (with non-intrusive vs. intrusive state)

⁴I am using the term 'ideal types' in the Weberian sense, i.e., as an analytical construction and not as a true reflection of empirical reality (cf. Weber, 1984).

their own rules. Agentic teachers emerge differently within the two settings: In the setting to the left, the ‘professional teacher’ denotes the maximum overlap between self-definition and professional norms, within an environment that strongly protects these norms. In contrast, the ‘renitent teacher’ on the right side, while equally aligning self-understanding with professional norms, is forced to act in an environment that is vulnerable to forces that attempt to dismantle precisely these norms and replace them by political ideologies.

The teacher types in the lower left quadrants constitute the exact opposites: Their agency is severely limited, meaning that they have no self-determination in developing their identities as teachers; and they lack the support of an autonomous environment, resulting in constant exposure to infringements from outside the education system. In the setting to the left, the policy and practice of ‘scripted lessons’, i. e. ready-made lessons that can be taught in a copy-and-paste fashion, are a good example of low autonomy/low agency. In politically intrusive settings (setting to the right), teachers can be easily degraded to puppet agents, with the state pulling the strings. The remaining quadrants – lower right and upper left – are marked by divergent extents of autonomy/agency. A highly autonomous, strongly protected educational environment which however grants little agency to its teachers (lower right quadrant) reduces them to mere executors of the logics of the system: to technocrats. If the system of which the environment is part is not even able to assert itself against political encroachment (setting to the left), these technocrats become disengaged proxy-agents. Finally, as represented in the upper left quadrant, teachers can develop a high amount of agency even when their educational environment is not facilitating these teachers’ alignments with professional norms and values. In strong educational systems, these agents without routinized links to professional norms can be called ‘unorthodox teachers’; while in weak educational systems with an intrusive state, these agents connect to values and ideologies outside their system, becoming ‘zealous teachers’ – like Teacher Zhu from the beginning of this chapter.

Such a conceptualization can explain why teachers, within one and the same socio-political system, can develop highly different identities – that is, develop different ways of calibrating their self-definitions with spaces for agency and autonomy. This contradicts conceptualizations of teachers as exclusively professional educationists. But it also calls into question an overly politicized view of the educational system as the state’s stooge, in contrast to much of the critical literature on education. For example, Apple (2003, p. 1) writes that the educational system, “as inherently part of a set of political institutions, [...] will constantly be in the middle of crucial struggles over the meaning of democracy, over definitions of legitimate authority and culture, and over who should benefit the most from government policies and practices.” Empirically, and in contrast to these claims, most present-day societies, even autocratic ones, have become sufficiently differentiated to also feature education systems with distinct rationales and routines. Only in the case of a complete overlap between political and educational system – which arguably is the case merely in totalitarian societies – would teachers act as direct agents of the state.

Yet, as the example of Teacher Zhu and other fieldwork observations show, politics does matter, and it matters to a particularly large extent in the education system.

The reason for this is to be found in the nature of the different subsystems within the education system: Apart from the legal and administrative management of education in the form of laws and regulations, education, on the one hand, materializes in a school system, and is implemented, on the other hand, in the form of an instructional system. While school systems are strongly intertwined with both legal and administrative systems and have thus been displaying considerable inertia when responding to changes, instructional systems are much more dependent on ad hoc, face-to-face communication and interaction, and are hence more prone to change (Vanderstraeten, 2003). This means that teachers, despite their reliance on teacher training and their knowledge of regulations, need to decide rather spontaneously what kind of class interaction is pedagogical, or ‘good’, and what is unacceptable, or ‘bad’. Mostly, these daily operations occur unproblematically, and contribute to the (partial) independence of classroom instruction. What is expected of the system and how its agents actually operate constitutes, to a certain extent, a process of “loose coupling” (Gaus & Drieschner, 2014).

How are processes of loose coupling to be understood when related to spaces and enactments of autonomy and agency? To answer this question, we need to be able to distinguish ‘loose coupling’, which would be situated *within* the education system (or instructional subsystem), from ‘interference’, which would point to a larger degree of porousness, or weakness, of the education system. ‘Loose coupling’ occurs when teachers make active choices, in congruence both with their self-understanding as teachers and with the constraints and options that characterize the specific situations in which they need to act; it thus happens within the reflection processes typical of the instructional situation. ‘Interference’, in contrast, constitutes a situation in which this reflection process is interrupted by forces that are external to the education-instructional system *and that are beyond the control of educational agents (such as teachers)*. In a different context – namely with regard to inter-national rather than inter-system interactions – Schriewer (2014, p. 92), drawing upon a system-theory approach, has pointed to the centrality of “interruptions in relations of interdependence” and “externalization” when it comes to breaking up, and to some extent, disturbing processes of reflection and self-reference:

Such interruptions typically take the form of the reflection and communication process opening itself to its external environment, however selectively this may be done, for it is through the incorporation of “supplemental meaning”, as extractable from external points of reference, that circular self-reference becomes amenable to specification (Luhmann 1995a, 466). (Schriewer, 2014, p. 93)

Externalization is a powerful concept to account for change: If the education system (and the instructional sub-system) were a forever self-referential, autopoietic system, any change would be an impossibility. Hence, a certain degree of porousness is necessary for a system to undergo any kind of change. This becomes the case when existing modes of reflection are no longer considered sufficient to handle educational/instructional situations, and “supplemental meaning” needs to be fetched from outside the indigenous system in order to find adequate solutions elsewhere. For example, Teacher Zhu, perceiving the present-day, exclusive focus on exams to be detrimental to educational and pedagogical objectives, externalized to

ideologies outside the education system in order to restore what she conceives as the pedagogical spirit.

However, as pointed out in the previous section, system theory is interested in intra-/inter-system communication, not in questions of autonomy/agency from the perspective of these systems’ agents. Connecting the very useful concept of ‘externalization’ with those of autonomy and agency as developed above, we can establish that pure instances of ‘loose coupling’, without any kind of ‘interference’, are located in the upper right quadrants of Fig. 3.2, as these denote the cases in which teachers can retain both their professional autonomy and their agency. While in a strong educational system, without an intrusive state, such a teacher may (perhaps tautologically) be called ‘professional’, in societies such as the Chinese one, ‘renitent’ teachers would fulfill an equivalent function, as they would enact their self-defined teacher identities by drawing on professional norms and routines, however threatened these norms and routines might be. In all the other quadrants, teachers inadvertently experience some form of infringement: Either other systems (such as the political) override the distinctive rules of the educational profession; or these rules are in fact enforced, but at the expense of the teachers’ self-defined identities.

Such a differentiated approach towards autonomy and agency, as they operate in different contexts and draw on different strategies of externalization (or change), is also useful for distinguishing ‘agency’ from ‘empowerment’, or even from some sort of positive force contributing to grassroots democracy in favor of students. In some cases, and depending on the respective norms and values of the interacting systems, teacher agency may be conducive for student empowerment. For example, the “renitent” and “unorthodox” teachers in Fig. 3.2 may be imagined as agents who, sometimes in spite of all odds, nourish a sense of democracy or civic awareness amongst students. In many other cases, teacher agency may just as well exacerbate practices of disempowerment and oppression. As also Imants and Van der Wal observe, agency “should not be treated *a priori* as a positive factor for reform and development” but can instead result in (to the external observer) “inadequate teaching practices or beliefs about teaching” (Imants & Van der Wal, 2020, p. 4). Even though Imants and Van der Wal have in mind teachers who resist educational reforms and development, their observation is equally valid regarding teachers who overzealously respond to political (or other) ideologies.

Conclusion: The political in Policy Implementation – And Policy Implementation Research?

This chapter has presented a nested approach towards autonomy and agency, taking into consideration, on the one hand, the interaction between different, distinct systems when spaces of autonomy and enactments of agency become operative, and, on the other, paying attention to how different degrees of autonomy/agency, when contextualized in specific educational and political environments, allow for different types of teachers and different forms of (non-)interference. It thus attempts to

reconcile a systemic perspective with that of individual and collective agency. It also relativizes, on one side, the view that processes of policy implementation are to be seen as hierarchical mechanisms of policies ‘trickling down’ from the top to the bottom; and, on the other, the perspective that policy implementation is to be understood as largely a process of appropriation and indigenization on the ground. While the latter approach is in a sense a truism – there can be no policy implementation without some sort of local processing of the respective policy – it has so far been insufficiently conceptualized, since policy appropriation has been mainly subsumed under the rather generic concept of local agency, without however clarifying how the concept of agency can be understood in relation to different systemic and agentic constellations.

This chapter has argued that such a differentiated approach is necessary in order to better understand, and assess, the ramifications of teacher agency and professional autonomy in diverse contexts. Contrary to an understanding of autonomy as the absence of regulation, in which teachers then develop real or false agency – as maintained by Priestley et al. (2015) – the chapter emphasizes the highly regulated and specialized nature of autonomous spaces, where rules and norms are the prerequisites for building and maintaining autonomy, and for creating spaces for agency in alignment with professional norms. Depending on how sharply demarcated the borders are between the education system and other systems, and on how subsystems such as the school are able to operate according to the educational system’s principles of autonomy, teachers have different options for developing various forms of agency, which in turn are fed by different norms and values. The chapter hence attempts to complement Wermke et al.’s (2019) conception of autonomy as emerging between decision-making and control, by systematically addressing the question of whose rules, norms, and values are being enacted in processes of decision-making and control.

Ultimately, the policy-practice nexus is deeply political, if we understand politics – in line with our argument above, with reference to the politics of use – as a practice of signaling and enacting particular norms and values. Norms and values are (co-)produced both individually/collectively, in processes of social interaction and (self-)definition, and systemically, in processes of specialization and differentiation. Therefore, any kind of (inter-)action, including that of teachers, will need to resort to those norms and values that are, firstly, compatible with the respective agents’ environments; secondly, available to these agents as resources in specific (long-term and short-term) situations; and, thirdly, desirable to agents as meaningful instruments of legitimizing their actions.

In conclusion, we may pose the question of why much of the literature on teacher agency and professional autonomy has tended to neglect this political dimension. A straightforward answer could be that empirical research on teachers and school systems in less democratic contexts has not (yet) succeeded in theory-building: While adding to our knowledge about what is happening in these contexts, findings from these studies have not been sufficiently brought into a conversation with concepts and theories developed elsewhere. As a tentative and perhaps provocative conclusion, I would like to put forward a different explanation: part of the reason for this

neglect may also lie in our own ideological blindfoldedness regarding conceptions of agency and autonomy. As already critically noted by Abrams (1999), autonomy as a concept has been largely developed within the liberal tradition, treating relative values such as authenticity and freedom as if they were absolute truths. Likewise, it may be argued that ideas revolving around ‘agency’ have been blended largely with normative conceptions, fed by the (latent or explicit) conviction that agency is a desirable objective in itself. Much of the normatively framed debates on education today are deeply entrenched in the emancipatory tradition of pedagogy (see e.g. Cloonan et al., 2019; Samoukovic, 2015). In this tradition, teacher agency is often conflated with learner autonomy (Benson, 2007), and is therefore considered inherently good. However, research on cultural and political contexts characterized by traditions and rationales that contrast starkly with, or have moved away from, the emancipatory perspective reveals that more agency for teachers, or even more ‘participation’ for students, can result in increased indoctrination, rather than more autonomy or empowerment (Schulte, 2019). Therefore, an analytical, rather than normative, approach towards agency and its interrelationship with autonomy in diverse systems can help denormalize our own ways of thinking about agency and autonomy, and it can enhance our capability to compare policy implementation processes across a broad variety of cases.

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Chapter 4

Understanding Education Reform Policy Trajectories by Analytical Sequencing



Wieland Wermke  and Eva Forsberg

Abstract This chapter exemplifies a strategy for understanding and examining Policy and Practice Nexuses concerning education reform trajectories. Education policy-making is an increasingly complex process, mostly neither linear and rational nor unidirectional. However, to understand such processes, we advocate complexity reduction through analytical distinctions, sequencing, and entity-relationship-thinking. While policy-practice nexuses are conflated in the reality of public education, our analytical approach must produce a somewhat linear, sequential understanding. Drawing on this argument, we propose a model which displays education reform trajectories and explore the model in terms of empirical objects. With the distinction between entities and relationships, we facilitate analytical definitions in Policy-Practice Research regarding what affects what and how it does so. Relationships are units of re-contextualization, process, and transfer, which demand the presence of at least two entities. Moreover, Time becomes an analytical device. Each unit conditions the next. The prior development of ideas always conditions the current context of the analyses. Finally, we advocate comparative education reform policy analyses. While selecting (national and sectorial), cases become critical. Comparisons may uncover the different layers of universality and particularity.

Keywords Education policy · Education practice · Policy-practice nexus · Reform trajectories

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Introduction

This chapter stems from an ambition to describe and explain education reform policy trajectories (henceforth reform trajectories): namely the path from policy text production (henceforth policy) to policy enactment at different levels in the complex system of public education (Cheng, 2005). The term reform comes from the Latin “reformatio”, meaning renewal, and is defined by Merriam Webster as a “change into an improved form or condition”. Due to the multidimensional, dynamic and value-based nature of reform policy processes and the complexity of public education systems, this area of study is challenging, ambiguous and full of pitfalls (Capano, 2009). The chapter aims to contribute to a further understanding of the complex nature of Policy and Practice Nexuses, the focus of this book volume. We aim to present conceptual considerations concerning how we can display various relations between the multiple arenas in which policy might be negotiated and translated. We also argue that, from policy to practice, several nexuses might exist.

We will construct and describe a model that can provide guidance for knowledge accumulation within the research field of education policy. Our work on depicting reform trajectories is conceptual and relational. We argue that analytical distinctions and complexity reduction will enable us to be as specific as possible in each analytical unit and in the analyses of the relations between different units. As a complex system, education is open, recursive, organic, non-linear and emergent (Gough et al., 2012). Complexity reduction provides an educational ontology that enables us to think productively about the drivers for educational change and improvement, as well as for processes of stability and stagnation or decline. Initially, scholars approached policy-making as a rational and linear process characterised by chronological stages. Later, there was a shift from the idea of stages to cyclical policy models, comprising e.g. problem definition/agenda-setting, policy formulation, decision-making, implementation, change and evaluation. Over time, scholars also came to emphasise feedback and the impact on various target groups and sectors as well as unintended consequences and side-effects. However, most studies have been concerned with particular stages rather than the whole cycle, and, frequently, policy has been approached as a top down and unidirectional phenomenon. In addition, many studies have been context-insensitive and generic rather than domain specific. Strong criticism has been put forward of epistemic assumptions of order, structure, function, cause and effect. Further, failure to capture the realities of influence, pressure, conflict and compromise in the policy-making process has been noted.

Scholars of education policy have shown that reform trajectories are, for the most part, neither linear (Lindensjö & Lundgren, 2000) nor unidirectional. Moreover, policy enactment is highly affected by contextual factors (Schulte & Wermke, 2019). In order to explain the complexity, non-linearity and non-causality of reform policies, several approaches have been developed (Schriewer, 1999). Some focus on narratives of success and failure, as a result, characterised education reforms as processes of borrowing and lending (Kauko & Wermke, 2018). Others have considered policy-making as an endless trial and error of reform endeavours, leading to

changes (or not) constituting a “tinkering towards utopia” (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). It has been stated that such reform stories are mostly important for politics and the input side of reforms. As artefacts of the political system, reforms are only loosely coupled to the pragmatic levels in schools and classrooms (Weick, 1976). Historically, reform processes oscillate or circulate mostly between only very particular alternatives, such as form versus content or decentralisation versus centralisation (Broadfoot, 1996). Education reforms can also be seen as instruments of disciplining (Foucault, 1972), operating to remind the “practice” about what is significant in the contemporary society (Ingersoll, 2003). Moreover, what is seen as significant is dynamic and differs across time and space (Pinar, 2003).

Public education has first and foremost been a national endeavour, with curriculum as the ‘program of the school’ (Fries et al., 2013), by which the state aims to plan what is to be taught to, and learnt by, a nation’s youth in order to secure the continuation of the society (Hopmann, 1999). Thus, the nation state has been the overall frame of the curriculum, and a clear-cut reference. During the last decades, we can see an increased complexity in public education due to processes of globalisation, digitalization and marketisation. These processes impact both the production and enactment of education reforms, and thus the complexity of the relation between policy and practice. Today, the powerful process of globalisation challenges the borders of the nation-state and the framing of curriculum requires a rescaling of what can be considered national, global or local (Lingard & Rawolle, 2010). In a similar way, digitalisation and marketisation have impacted the way time and space, and public and private appear in policy-making. Related to globalisation, this added complexity has been described in terms of policy spaces (ibid.), policyscapes (Carney, 2012), spaces conceived of as fluid scales (Robertson et al., 2002), glocalisation and glonacalisation (Marginson & Rhoades, 2002), cosmopolitanism (Popkewitz, 2003), and so forth. While these terms are indeed useful, they may actually complicate in-depth analyses of what happens with reforms on the road from policy production to enactment. In the end, everything might relate to everything else.

Like Ball (2012), we approach reform trajectories as historically and culturally embedded policy-making comprising policy text production and policy enactment. Trajectories relate to policy as a social entity, which moves through space and changes as it moves, and also changes the spaces it moves through. The model we put forward enables us to explore processes of interpretation and translation through which agents enact policy. Policy-making highlights not only the context of text production and the context of practice, but also the context of influence.

Against this backdrop, in this chapter we present and explore reform trajectories as historically embedded policy-making, which, while interrelated can analytically be neatly distinguished into conceptual maps, in which each entity can be examined as a unit in its own right, but above all as a discrete process focused on relationships between different entities. Such maps can be used to plan complex research designs of policy-making. Moreover, the maps provide an analytical structure for research syntheses and thus the production of cumulative knowledge in the field of education policy.

First, we develop the idea of analytical distinction and theoretical complexity reduction by drawing on the work of Margaret Archer and Henry Mintzberg. Next, we present the graphical form of the so-called entity-relationship models (ERM), in order to map complex reform trajectories in a comprehensive way. Then, we give an example of such a model, employing insights from relevant policy studies. Following this, the model is employed to systematically organise studies of reform trajectories focusing different empirical objects. Further, consequences of different epistemological approaches for the structure-agency duality are discussed. The model exemplifies a strategy for cumulative knowledge building through analytical distinctions and entity relationships.

Complexity Reduction Through Analytical Distinctions, Sequencing and Relationships

The organisation theorist, Mintzberg (1979), argues that, in a sense, structural configurations do not exist at all, but rather constitute a theory, and every theory necessarily simplifies and distorts reality. However, this should not lead to a rejection of the configuration. The choice is not between theory and reality, so much as between alternative theories, and the

choice of theory is normally based on two criteria: How rich is the description, that is, how powerfully it reflects the reality (or, alternatively, how little it distorts the reality), and how simple it is to comprehend. The most useful theories are simple when stated yet powerful when applied, like $E=MC^2$. (Mintzberg, 1979, p. 469).

Coming from a similar perspective on theorizing, Archer (1988) warns against the fallacy of conflation: Fundamentally, what is wrong with conflationary theorizing is that it prevents clear cut analysis of the interplay between structure and agency. This is because mixing up the two elements withdraws any autonomy or independence from one, if not from both of them. In many theories, structure and agency are intertwined, and both parts without autonomy. Archer's suggestion is to analytically separate structure from agency, chronologically, as they relate sequentially to each other. This is further explored in her idea on morphogenesis (change) and morphostasis (stability) of social systems.

As a process morphogenesis refers to the complex interchanges that produce change in a system's given form, structure or state (morphostasis is the reverse), the end product being termed "elaboration". Of course, action is ceaseless and essential to both the stable continuation or the further elaboration of the system. However, when morphogenesis results, then subsequent interaction will be different from earlier action precisely because it is now conditioned by the elaborated consequences of that prior action. Hence, the morphogenetic is not only dualistic but sequential. (Archer, 1988, p. xxii)

While recognising the nonlinearity of reform trajectories, as well as direct and indirect interactions between units, we argue for the benefit of analysing trajectories sequentially. For the sake of understanding the different nexuses, analytical devices

must have a certain linearity - one “step” follows another. Reforms can result in change (morphogenesis) or stability (morphostasis). In order to analyse such processes, we must analytically decide, when and where we start our investigation. In doing so, it is not necessary to state whether we believe that change processes are bottom-up or top-down, or some combination of both. Instead, we decide analytically for a starting point, e.g. the formal introduction of a reform. From this starting point, the reform can be tracked on its way to a potential teacher practice in order to improve educational outcomes. Time and space can be included in each unit/entity of our model. In our reform tracking, we have an analytical time dimension, the sequence of structures and agency, and structure again. Consequently, new structures (change) or the confirmation of old structures (stability) are the results of present agency in the trajectory of a reform.

Still, there are various logical perspectives on how agency relates to structures given and structures created. We put forward three main conceptualisations of how agency may draw on different epistemological ideas in social science: An *interactionist approach* which argues that meaning and structure are produced through the interactions of individuals; A *structural-functional (also functionalist) approach*, which assumes society is a complex system whose parts work together regarding a particular function. This function results in both structure and agency among the system’s parts. Both units relate to each other in a complementary or sequential way. Finally, there is the *cognitive epistemological approach*, which focuses on mental (cognitive) activities such as thinking, planning, or learning. To clarify, we suggest an openness to various epistemologies, enabling different ways of conceiving of the relation between structure and agency.

Entity Relationship Models: Mapping Education Reform Trajectories

To clarify analytical units and relationships, we employ a so-called *entity-relationship-model (ERM)*, originally developed to sketch out the design of a database and show the relationships between entities and entity sets stored in it.¹ In our context, an entity is a key object or component of fundamental data within the research field of education policy. Entities, in turn, have attributes that define their properties. The advantage of employing the ERM is that we can distinguish analytically between entities (objects of what) from relationships (objects of how), while retaining the ability to relate objects to each other in a conceptual map. Moreover, the use of commonly shared symbols makes collaboration between scholars easier, and increases the potential for cumulative knowledge production within a field of research. Figure 4.1 shows a generic ERM which depicts the sequential format of

¹<https://www.smartdraw.com/entity-relationship-diagram/>. ER models have for example been used in education by social network scholars (see Roldan & Schupp, 2005).

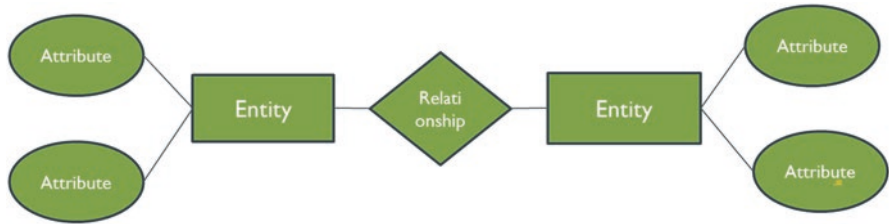


Fig. 4.1 Generic Entity Relationship Model (ERM)



Fig. 4.2 An education reform trajectory map using ERM symbols

the model and various elements of the model, i.e. entities and their attributes, and the relationships between entities.

In Fig. 4.2, a reform trajectory using ERM symbols is presented. Following the rationale of ER modelling, by depicting entities connected to each other by relationships and defined by attributes, this provides a common space for exploring and analysing various trajectories. In addition, the database enables comparisons over time and in different contexts. Below, the generic model is employed to explore a policy reform trajectory, i.e. policy-making in terms of policy text production and policy enactment within the context of a public education system. Even though the analytical model starts with the introduction of a new formal policy, we recognise that reforms are indeed often inspired by practical problems. Thus, there are no arrows in the model, which would indicate bottom-up or top-down rationales. Rather, the relationship represents the way a reform is re-contextualised (Bernstein, 1977). Thus, the relationships are the nexuses in the map, the mediating devices. Here, entities meet and policy is enacted, negotiated, and at times, contested.

As stated, starting on the left-hand side of the map with the entity *Policy* does not imply a unidirectional or linear and rational direction of reform trajectories. Policies are made through negotiations, affected by national and international trends, cultures, ideologies and public opinions. Key attributes of policy as text production are e.g. *Agenda setting* and *Policy formulation*. These attributes are related to the employment

of specific policy instruments, such as regulation through law, ideology, economy, organisation and evaluation (see e.g. Forsberg & Nordzell, 2013). Policy agents at different spatial levels and arenas are involved, but, analytically, they occur within the entity. In other words, in this entity, agenda setting or policy formulation, as in our conceptual example, might indeed occur through the intersection of various spatial levels. These can be of a local, national or international character.

Policies made in public education condition two basic pillars that make public education practice possible: the entity labelled *Organisation* and the entity labelled *Profession* (Vanderstraeten, 2007; Luhmann, 2002). The public education systems constitute what Vanderstraeten (2001) calls organisationally framed interactions, interactions that to a certain extent are plannable. The education system is primarily characterised by social, face-to-face meetings, which open up particular forms of interaction within the system (ibid.). Inside every school, for example, the teaching profession is responsible for facilitating interaction with students, other teachers, parents and the school principal in different aspects of the school's everyday functioning. However, there is always an element of surprise in interaction, which takes on a life of its own depending on the participants and the context in which the interaction takes place (ibid.).

Consequently, there are organisational frames, which reduce the complexity of possible reactions in interaction and there is a certain professional scope of action for teachers which allows them to respond to different reactions from their students. Simply put, the public education system itself cannot handle the social interaction of education, but needs specially trained people to undertake this task: teachers, who can communicate educational objectives. Teachers, in turn, need the school organisation to reduce the complexity of practice. For example, teachers do not need to search for students every morning, but due to the organisation of schools they can regularly meet the same students of the same age group, who are to be educated on a given subject, which is regulated by the curriculum (Luhmann, 2002).

For sure, the organizational setting can be used to increase the freedom of professionals: the effective freedom to choose one's special line of work, to have access to the appropriate clients and equipment, to organize one's time and effort in accordance with one's plans and goals, to engage in conversations with competent colleagues that will sharpen one's knowledge and skill, and so on. But it is also well known that professionals frequently develop a critical, if not hostile, attitude vis-à-vis the 'bureaucratic' structures and methods of large organizations. To employed professionals, the organizational bureaucracy often appears as a *Fremdkörper* whose routine rules and hierarchical structures are at odds with the exigencies of intimate face-to-face contact [...]. They have difficulty coming to terms with organizational requirements or expectations. (Vanderstraeten, 2007, p. 629).

However, when analysing reform trajectories, it is critical to address the entities of both organisation and profession. Thus, the map has a bifurcation: It is possible to address mainly the professions in education, i.e. the groups who are responsible for the interactions of teaching and learning. Policies address, also, the organisations of education that refer to the structure or framework of schooling, for example the sequenced structuring of student cohorts by age, school buildings, behavioral codes, forms of co-operation and arenas of teachers, or local manifestations of school laws,

or the content of schooling laid down by curriculum. Included also is the organisation of home-school relations. Potential attributes of this entity can be *School structures* or *School culture* (Berg et al., 1999). Considering our example attributes here, we must clarify again that the trajectory followed in our chapter is just one example. In the organisation, we also see leadership practices both in schools and school districts as they might be constitutive of school structures and school cultures.

The *relationship* between *Policy* and *Organisation* can be described as a set of processes of *Administration*, which is the legal creation and enactment of curricula and other policies, e.g. related to inclusion or pandemic crises. Even if the ERM does not comprise variables of time and space, each unit (entity or relationship) is historically embedded in particular contexts. This can be illustrated by the example of the relationship labelled *Administration*, which connects policy and organisation. School administration has developed over time, and the emergence of compulsory schooling made it necessary to organise schools for all, where a certain subject matter is taught to a great number of students (Hopmann, 1988). Forms of organisation and curriculum had to be established. Mass schooling does not only mean a great number of individual schools; it means the existence of a public school *system*, in which various schools also are related to each other. Mass schooling systems emerged after developments of state, society and bureaucracy formation. These developments relate to negotiations of interests and focal ideas around necessary structures, such as mandatory schooling, years, subjects etc. (Ohlhaber, 2005). The creation of the organisation of public schooling institutionalised certain arenas, and processes and roles emerged.

This process has been called functional differentiation, manifested in chains of decisions in which one decision leads to the next (Luhmann, 2002; Stichweh, 2016). In order to make the task of public mass education possible, school administration historically underwent several processes: It was didacticised, i.e. the school administration came to be exercised by persons with a schooling background, educated in the science of teaching and instructional planning, didactics. A relation to academic disciplines was established, i.e. the school administration came to be differentiated in terms of school forms and curricula. A differentiation of various tasks in the administration was executed, i.e. school administration today comprises various departments with a particular expertise, such as curriculum making, school inspection, hygiene, examinations, and so forth (Ohlhaber, 2005).

Education reforms can also aim to affect the other pillar of public education: the entity called *Profession*. Significant attributes of *Profession* are *Professional standards* and *Professional culture* (e.g. needs, duties and status), often collected under the conceptual term “professionalism” (Evetts, 2003). Critical to professional work are prominent societal values such as health, justice, good education, and, today, also technical innovation (Pfadenhauer, 2003). Problems which professions are assumed to resolve, cannot, for the most part, be managed by technical knowledge alone. Professional knowledge builds on rules and regulation, but also on a certain number of complex (experience-based) routines to which specific problems can be adjusted. Such routines are foundational to professional action. They reduce risks and provide security, but they are also dynamic as well as learnable. Professions are also attached to a set of universal values which guide their orientation, such as an

interest in the public good. Professions are expected to be virtuous and prudent (Luhmann, 2002). Taking the example of the teaching profession: teaching started to professionalise in many parts of Europe in the second half of the eighteenth century, becoming a life-long, primary occupation, not only a side occupation for individuals attached to the church. Responsibility for school administration was given to individuals from the same group (teachers). The practice of teaching was expected to be professionally autonomous and, through increased salary and status, the occupation became attractive to the appropriate people.

To characterise the *relationship* between *Policy* and *Profession*, we suggest *Teacher education and teacher professional development*. Here it is possible to examine how education reforms affect the issue of who is allowed to become a teacher, what characteristics are preferred among teachers, what teacher expertise is, and how teachers should (be) develop(ed) for educational practice. In teacher education and development, academic and practice training merges, and this has various consequences for teachers' professional knowledge and identity formation. More generally, over time, teacher education and development might be characterised by oscillations between emphases on either generic knowledge of schooling (e.g. meta-cognitive knowledge), or on subject and more specific expertise knowledge (e.g. subject knowledge) (Luhmann, 2002).

From the entity labelled *Organisation* and the entity labelled *Profession*, the trajectory continues towards the entity labelled *Practice*. "Practice" is indeed a broad term, referring to what happens in and around classroom instruction. Potential attributes include *Teaching*, *Student composition* and *Professional expertise*. Teaching is the core activity of education and involves the didactic triangle of student body, teacher and content as well as interaction and assessment. Student composition refers to the grouping of students and relates to issues of tracking, streaming and ability grouping, which are critical to students' learning, performance and educational outcomes. These questions are directly linked to educational differentiation. Differentiation is the management of heterogeneity and complexity reduction in schooling: It can be done by providing different settings for different kinds of learners (Bönsch, 1995). The *Professional expertise* attribute relates to the practice of teaching which draws upon specific knowledge, applied planning, teaching and evaluation of classroom practice. Professional expertise is applied to describe individuals who exert a particular occupational practice, for which, in order to successfully solve various problems, long educational and practical experience is necessary (Bromme, 1992). Bromme (ibid.) sees expertise as the core (and content) of professionalism in a certain occupation.

The *Organisational differentiation* relationship, which occurs between *Organisation* and *Practice*, points on the one hand to the organisational framing of teaching, student composition and professional expertise, and on the other hand to the way in which the practice may set the conditions for school organisation at different levels. Teachers arrange their work within given structures that are partly negotiable with their direct colleagues and superiors at their school. Both school organisation and collegial cooperation are necessary to enabling equality and equity between the various classrooms and schools in a public education system (Wermke & Salokangas, 2021). As Wermke and Salokangas (2021) have argued, this is a

delicate balance which can be examined by focusing autonomy in education. There are many examples of how schooling professionals in different contexts negotiate with school management, defined as representatives of the school organisation: school internal curricula, end of term examinations, final grading, timetabling, disciplinary policies, allocation of resources etc. involve both individual teachers, the teacher collegium and school management at the school and school district level.

In a similar way, the *Educational differentiation* relationship, connecting Profession and Practice, emphasises how professional standards and culture are foundational to the teacher's didactical classroom decisions on subject matter, interaction and assessment. Likewise, the practice, through its various attributes, frames the development of both professional standards and culture. With Pfadenhauer (2003), we argue that professionalism can be seen as the institutionalised expertise of an occupation. In the words of Luckmann and Sprondel (1972, p. 15 cited in Pfadenhauer, 2003, p. 30):

Professionalization means the process of the social stabilisation of vocational roles through the systematisation of a knowledge domain, the length and complexity of an institutionally specialised education and training, the confirmation of vocational categories (licenses) and a mesh of special knowledge related typologies of the own and other's occupations. And such vocations, which as result of historical professionalization processes – have gained an extended autonomy in the building of such issues, will be called professions (Our translation).

As stated above, in the entity labelled *Practice*, policy enactment links various attributes such as teaching, student composition and professional expertise. Moreover, it is in the practice that the core activity of education takes place. Thus, this is where all the other entities and relationships intersect in both direct and indirect ways (see Fig. 4.3 as an example). This does increase the complexity of the model, but also makes it possible to grasp the whole policy-making process. At the same time, entities and relations can be individually investigated, or various parts of the trajectory can be examined separately. Ultimately, the approach of policy enactment, in combination with the sequential ERM, enables scholars to study and analyse whether education policy reforms do indeed develop and become components of the

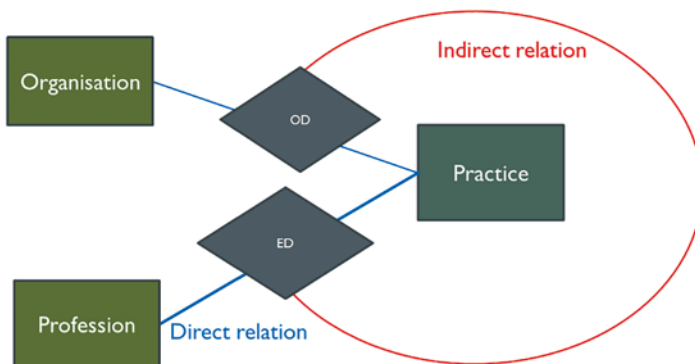


Fig. 4.3 Direct and indirect relations in the reform trajectory

knowledge, identity and practice of education and whether this feeds back into new policies, teacher education and research on teaching.

Re-Assembling Analytical Units and Relationships, and Conclusion

In this final section, we delineate briefly how reform trajectory maps may be used to organise and synthesise previous research in a cumulative way. We link a partial and illustrative rather than comprehensive and systematic selection of empirical objects to the various units in the above developed ERM. These objects are in turn based on different ways to make sense of structure-agency in research on policy-making. Frequently, *interactionist*, and *structuralist-functional* approaches are used in the reform trajectories. More infrequently, and mainly in relation to teacher professionalisation, *cognitivist* approaches are used. The contingency of how structure-agency can be understood opens up discussions on eclecticism in education policy research. With Gilberto Capano (2009), we would emphasise the importance of coherence in frameworks and awareness of epistemological choices and their consequences. We argue that the employment of the sequential ERM, with its analytical distinctions and relationships, may increase scholars' ability to manage such problematic issues in the design of reform trajectory research.

In Table 4.1, the headings represent entities, relationships and specific empirical objects which it is possible to study within the different analytical units. Together, they depict a selection of potential empirical objects which can be linked to the overall process of reform trajectories. The empirical objects represent sites, organisations, activities, agents and interests that influence and at the same time are influenced by reforms. A conceptual map such as we have suggested, facilitates the design of empirical work, also taking epistemological issues into account. This would increase the validity of the research methodology.

An overall depiction of the entities and relationships enables the planning of studies in terms of which results will be possible to combine with each other to illustrate a specific reform trajectory. Moreover, this supports an understanding of what can actually be explained by what. In the words of Capano (2009, p. 8):

The explanandum (change) is too frequently defined in an ambiguous manner, or its complexity is played down (when the contents of law or policy programmes are employed as a proxy for policy change). Too often the explanans (the independent variable or set of non-causal factors) is chosen in the biased belief that what really matters is that "theory must be validated". Too often we do what we are supposed to do without really reflecting on "what we are actually doing". The truth is that when designing a theory (or theoretical framework) of social, political, and policy change, we first need to solve (or decide on) certain structural epistemological and theoretical (and sometimes methodological) puzzles.

To put this in a statistical language. The categories can be employed in analyses of variance, i.e. the comparisons of which category can be associated with certain values. Categories at different levels can, with non-parametric measures such as Phi or

Table 4.1 Entities and relationships in reform trajectories linked to empirical objects

Entity	Relationship/nexus	Potential empirical objects
Policy		(1) Examination of policy production via bureaucratic, rational processes (driven by legality and legitimacy); or (2) policy production via negotiations and relations of various actors in time and space (locally, nationally, internationally)
	Policy to profession	(1) Examination of necessary competences to be learned and taught in relation to existing and new policies in teacher education and teacher professional development; (2) examination of negotiation of valid knowledge for teachers; (3) examination of cognitive learning opportunities in teacher education and development
Profession		(1) Examination of professionalisation as the creation of professional standards and culture, maintaining professional autonomy and status in relation to existing and new policies in public (mass) education; or (2) examination of negotiations by the educational professions with others on their status, autonomy and duties
	Policy to organisation	(1) Examination of school and curriculum administration as the structuring of public (mass) education; or (2) examination of negotiations of what knowledge is most valuable in public education, and thereby represented in curricula
Organisation		(1) Examination of schools as organisations and their particular organisational purpose and bureaucratic structure; or (2) examination of schools as micro-political configurations of various actors and their power relations
	Profession to practice	(1) Examination of educational differentiation in schools via the transfer of expertise to teacher education and curriculum; or (2) examination of the negotiations among various actors around what knowledge counts in teacher practice
	Organisation to practice	(1) Examination of the differentiation of organisational and professional standards in relation to each other in the practice of public education; or (2) examination of micro-political configurations of various actors and power relations in organisations
Practice		(1) Examination of instruction as core of the functional system of education; or (2) examination of negotiations of good/best practice in instruction; or (3) the examination of professional expertise in instruction

Rho, be related to each other. A statistical approach can indeed help to plan reform trajectory research in particular, since, in a quantitative research paradigm, it is absolutely necessary to decide beforehand which independent and dependent variables should be used in the analytical models. Furthermore, the entity-relationship models for the design of databases forces the researcher to make such considerations, since databases do not function with ambiguous, poorly defined relationships.

In conclusion, we have argued and illustrated a sequential and relational logic of Policy and Practice Nexuses as individual entities and relationships. With the distinction between entities and relationships we have facilitated analytical definitions in Policy-Practice Research, in terms of what actually affects what and how it does so. Relationships are units of re = contextualisation, process and transfer, which demand the presence of at least two entities.

Moreover, we have made decisions considering time and space. In the words of Archer (1988), what we observe empirically, both in entities and relationships, is always the present, situated historically.

However, this present time is peculiarly pivotal in the morphogenetic approach. As Markovic expresses it, both “past and future” are living in the present. Whatever human beings do in the present is decisively influenced by the past and by the future. [...] The future is not something that will come later, independently of our will. There are several possible futures and one of them has to be made. (Archer, 1988, p. xxvi)

What we investigate empirically is always local (in a very particular space) and possible to observe as a practice. Thus, when we investigate trajectories, we string together present, local, practical and analytical units. Time becomes our analytical device. Each unit conditions the next. In other words, while the reality is non-linear and complex, our analysis must possess a certain linearity. It is always the prior development of ideas (from earlier interaction) that conditions the current context of the analyses. Finally, we advocate comparative education reform policy analyses. While the selection of (national, sectorial) cases becomes critical, comparisons may uncover the different layers of universality and particularity, i.e. what is broadly universal, what is possible to generalise and what is unique to the given instance and context. The search for universals is indeed only made possible by attending to the details of the concrete case at hand (Erickson, 1986). Only in the particular case, i.e. the very particular practices, and their development over time, may we see change or stability. As researchers working in education policy, we draw on a comment made by Diane Arbus, the iconographic twentieth-century photographer, that “the more specific you are, the more general it’ll be.”

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Chapter 5

‘Research Use’ in Education: Conceptualising the Teaching Profession Within the Policy–Research–Practice Nexus



Sølvi Mausethagen and Hege Hermansen

Abstract In this chapter, we examine ‘research use’ as a concept that informs the role of the teaching profession in the policy–research–practice nexus. As a policy construct, research use has gained significant attention over the past decade. However, the concept and particularly its translation to practice are often left undefined, both regarding the meaning of ‘research’ and of ‘use’. In this chapter, we examine how the specification of these terms contributes to producing particular manifestations of the policy–research–practice nexus. We pursue two lines of argument. The first line of argument is that the approaches to defining, operationalising, and discussing research use have implications for the construction of the policy–research–practice nexus. The second line of argument is that the characteristics of this nexus will inform the understanding of the role of the profession in simultaneously relating to education policy, researchers, and the development of professional practice. Finally, we present an analytical framework that aims to advance a multi-dimensional approach to studies on research use, which provides opportunities for developing more profession-sensitive understandings of research use. The framework also facilitates analytically unpacking relations between policy, research, and practice.

Keywords Research use · Teaching profession · Policy-research-practice nexus

In this chapter, we use the notion of ‘research use’ as an analytical entry point for exploring manifestations of the policy–research–practice nexus. Education policy in the past two decades has seen an increased emphasis on the development of research-based teacher education and the use of research to strengthen relationships

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between research knowledge and teachers' professional practice (Burn & Mutton, 2015; Cordingley, 2015; Kvernbekk, 2014; Winch et al., 2015). A general assumption underlying policy initiatives and considerable research is that research use is important for strengthening educational quality in schools and improving educational outcomes. Many policy initiatives have also aimed to strengthen teachers' performance and legitimacy. These policy initiatives have comprised attempts to increasingly hold teachers accountable for their performance and professional development efforts and an intensification of the production and use of research. While the teaching profession often resists accountability measures, strengthening teachers' use of research-based knowledge—and thus the scientific knowledge base for teaching—has been a better fit for the profession's agenda for professionalisation (Mausestagen, 2013). However, the kinds of knowledge that teachers should prioritise and utilise remain contested (Biesta, 2007; Bridges & Watts, 2008; Slavin, 2008). The call for 'research-based knowledge' also challenges the more traditional notion of teacher knowledge as primarily experience-based and contextual (Larsen, 2016). A key debate has been whether professional autonomy decreases with the use of evidence-based programmes and standardised teaching methods (e.g. Prøitz & Aasen, 2018).

These policy developments and their contested nature make the notion of research use a fruitful empirical entry point for exploring manifestations of the teaching profession in the policy–research–practice nexus. In policy documents, descriptions of the notions of research and evidence are typically in rather general terms, often offering impressions of alignment and transfer between educational research and professional practice. In existing research on the use of evidence and data on student performance, there are great variations in the approaches to describing and discussing this relation (e.g. Penuel et al., 2017; Schildkamp et al., 2017). For example, an evaluation paradigm and empirical studies on improvement and effectiveness have tended to dominate research in the Anglo-American context, while research in the continental European context has adopted a more critical stance (Prøitz et al., 2017). Such differences are related to different research traditions but also to different educational systems, including different positions for the profession within the systems.

Rational-linear conceptions that envisage research use as a one-way process from production (researchers) to use (policy and practice) have characterised both policy discourse and research over time (e.g. Weiss, 1979). Such conceptualisations are problematic because they do not sufficiently account for the heterogeneity of teachers' knowledge base and the need for teachers to integrate different kinds of knowledge sources in their everyday work (e.g. Grimen, 2008; Shulman, 1987). Such linear conceptions also tend to downplay the complexities of both educational policymaking and professional practice, as outlined in the introductory chapter to this volume.

In summary, debates surrounding research use trigger fundamental questions regarding the knowledge base, autonomy, and responsibilities of the teaching profession and the interrelationship between educational policies and professional practice. The concept of research use therefore represents a fruitful entry point for

unpacking the complexities of the policy–practice nexus. We are particularly concerned about how the notion of research use acts as a mediator between policy and practice and how this concept contributes to legitimising certain perspectives on professionals and professional work. This analytical focal point recognises that expressions of the policy–practice nexus are often constitutive of the teaching profession itself, for example, by highlighting particular forms of agency or the formation of the profession through specific policy initiatives. At the same time, researchers themselves play a mediating role in the formation of relationships between policy and practice through the ways in which the researchers theoretically and empirically frame such relations. As we proceed with our argument by analysing existing research on the phenomenon of research use, we find it fruitful to expand the notion of the policy–practice nexus to the *policy–research–practice nexus*.

We pursue our argument as follows. We start by reviewing some existing perspectives on research use in policy and practice. We then proceed to examine, using three illustrative studies, how the conceptualisation and operationalisation of research use legitimise particular perspectives on professionals and professional work. Finally, we aim to expand existing analytical perspectives on research use by introducing a multidimensional framework for analysing research use and analytically unpacking the role assigned to professionals in this particular expression of the policy–research–practice nexus.

Generations of Research on Research Use in Policy and Practice

Taking a historical view, Boaz and Nutley (2019) outlined three generations of thinking on evidence use and research use. The first generation emphasises rational-linear models and one-way processes from production (researchers) to use (policy and practice). The second generation emphasises relational approaches, examining interactions between people in networks and partnerships as they create and use evidence. However, the second generation also incorporates rational-linear principles of dissemination and diffusion. Third-generation thinking highlights systems-wide approaches, acknowledging that the diffusion and dissemination processes and relationships are shaped by and embedded in structures that mediate the ongoing interaction. The developments that Boaz and Nutley described are also illustrative of how the field of education has addressed research use. Despite the movement towards a third-generation thinking, an ongoing systematic review of research on research use in education shows that there remain significant amounts of first- and second-generation thinking: Several recent publications have adopted a rational-linear view and several have focused on research use in partnerships (Niederberger et al., 2022). This indicates that it might be more precise to describe the field in terms of parallel developments rather than sequential generations.

These contributions provide a solid foundation for thinking about research use with a specific focus on research use in public policy and governance. We can also employ a complementary perspective from the sociology of professions to describe policy initiatives to increase research use as ‘professionalisation from above’ (Evetts, 2003). Professionalisation from above describes government initiatives aimed at convincing professionals to perform in ways seen as appropriate and effective. In the Nordic and German contexts, however, researchers have characterised professionalisation by an interconnectedness of impetuses from above—that is, from the state—and from within the professions themselves (Larsen, 2016; McClelland, 1990). Professionalisation from within describes initiatives within the profession to develop and construct an identity in ways that can secure and maintain its autonomy and discretionary power.

It is possible to also make an analytical distinction between performative and organisational dimensions of research use. Research use in education arguably has two different aims: to strengthen students’ learning and to strengthen teachers’ professionalism. These two aims are interrelated but also distinct: while research use directed towards improving teachers’ practice—thereby having an impact on student learning—has a primarily performative focus, research use directed towards developing teacher professionalism has a more organisational emphasis. While the performative dimensions of professions concern professional practice, the organisational dimensions involve the ways in which the profession maintains and develops its autonomy and trust in society. A contested aspect of the organisational dimension, from both historical and contemporary perspectives, has been whether, and how, to strengthen the scientific knowledge base of the profession.

Positioning the Teaching Profession in Research on Research Use

So far, we have demonstrated why and how research use, both as a political construct and as a concept discussed in educational research, remains contested. An underlying reason for this contestation is that policymakers (and researchers) use the notion of research use to initiate changes within the profession. Such changes will typically be associated with a normative understanding of what the profession should be and how teachers should develop their professional practice. Analytically, we have shown how such research use can relate to different understandings of the role of research (e.g. instrumental, conceptual, or symbolic) and different approaches to constituting the phenomenon of research use (rational-linear, relational, or systems approaches). Other conceptualisations relate more explicitly to the profession itself, including the notions of professionalisation from ‘above’ and ‘within’ and the performative and organisational dimensions of the profession. We will now employ these analytical categories to explore contestations related to research use in more depth, emphasising the implications of constructions of research use for

perspectives on the profession and professional work. We examine three published studies to illustrate variations in how notions of research use can inform conceptualisations of the teaching profession.

We selected these studies on the basis of a preliminary analysis of an ongoing systematic review on research use in education (Niederberger et al., 2022). The studies exemplify three distinct ways of positioning the teaching profession as a consequence of particular conceptualisations and operationalisations of research use: (a) research use as representing the closing of a deficit among professionals, (b) research use as representing the 'maturation' of the profession, and (c) research use as a communicative endeavour between professionals and researchers.

Research Use as a Means to Close a Deficit in the Profession

The framing of several studies on research use highlights what can be described as a 'deficit': Professionals in education are not using enough research. For example, Lysenko et al. (2014) adopted a deficit framing in their study of the predictors of Canadian school practitioners' ($N = 2425$) use of educational research. They argued that despite considerable efforts, unsystematic use or non-use of educational research in professional practice still deters the progress and success of educational development efforts, with references to Hattie (2009) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. They presented a model examining practitioners' limited use of educational research in relation to four factors. Out of these, 'opinions about research' had the most explanatory power and 'research expertise' was the second most important determinant of use. Such expertise includes the abilities to read, understand, and assess the quality of research; to use information technology to access research; and to translate research into practice. They found that practitioners had used research of any sort an average of only once or twice in the previous year. Overall, the authors described the results of the survey as challenging.

Lysenko et al.'s (2014) study primarily foregrounded individual factors through an analytical focus on teachers' perceptions and practices related to research use. An implication is that to address the identified deficit in the profession, there must be changes in individual perceptions and practices. However, the authors concluded by also calling for a more systemic approach involving teacher education, knowledge brokering institutions, and the improved dissemination of research findings. Academics working in teacher education have particular responsibilities for supporting the teaching profession to address challenges with research use. The article is mainly related to the second and the third generations of research on research use. Although the conclusions and recommendations highlighted some organisational factors, the study design clearly had a performative focus, and the authors advocated professionalisation from above is critical to increase teachers' use of research and the role of researchers in this endeavour.

Research Use as the Maturation of a Profession

A framing that we term ‘maturation’ was also prominent in several studies, particularly in the early contributions on research use. The term maturation denotes that the profession has not yet realised its full potential in terms of research use. In some studies, the authors accomplished this by means of comparing different professions. For example, Hemsley-Brown and Sharp (2003) asked if medical practitioners make greater use of research findings than practitioners in the teaching profession and what the reasons might be for discrepancies between the two professions. In this much-cited, early contribution to the field, they took as a starting point a well-known call from Hargreaves, who in a keynote address to the Teacher Training Agency Annual Conference in 1996 suggested that teaching could become an evidence-based profession if educational researchers were more accountable to teachers. The authors’ concern with examining what existing research says about improving the impact of research on education aligns somewhat with Hargreaves’ call to develop the profession.

Hemsley-Brown and Sharp (2003) concluded that there appear to be common barriers to research use in medicine and education and that creating cultures in the public sector that support and value research is a general challenge. They argued, however, that several factors seem specific to education due to the approach to constructing research knowledge in the social sciences, particularly concerning the context, generalisability, and validity of the research. For these reasons, the authors argued, the development of communication networks, links between researchers and practitioners, and greater practitioner involvement in the research process have emerged as important strategies for improving the impact of research. While the starting point for this study, in particular the reference to Hargreaves’ lecture, places the study within the first generation of research on research use, the authors’ main argument can be related to the second generation of research.

This study, and the notion of maturation more generally, reflected an idea of research use as a matter of historical development, in which the authors—either through a comparison between education and other fields or from a historical perspective—asserted that the teaching profession is on a path to mature as a profession. The study emphasised the organisational dimension by highlighting the importance of establishing networks and links between researchers and practitioners, and on professionalisation from above by emphasising the need to create cultures in the educational sector which greatly supports and values research.

Research Use as a Communicative Endeavour Between Professionals and Researchers

In a review article, Coburn and Penuel (2016) analysed so-called research-practice partnerships, defined as long-term collaborations between professionals and researchers organised around problems and solutions relating to educational

practice in schools and school districts. Their main interest in the study was to investigate existing knowledge of the degree to which such partnerships foster research use among professionals and thus support educational improvement. The review suggested that many interventions developed in the context of partnerships had shown positive outcomes in this regard. However, while several studies have provided evidence that participation in partnerships is associated with greater access to research, there is mixed evidence to support whether participation in partnerships is associated with increased use of research for decision-making: Some studies have shown extensive use, others have shown limited use, while still others have shown that research use varies within and between school districts.

Although building capacity within educational systems to engage in research-informed development work is a key goal of partnerships, the authors noted that existing research has investigated to a limited extent whether participation builds a deeper understanding of the research process or the research findings, an appreciation for the value of research to inform decision-making, the capacity to engage in research-informed practices and policies, or the use of research as a part of continuous development work in collaboration with researchers.

This way of conceptualising research use relates to both the second and third generations of research use. It addresses both organisational and performative dimensions, and although there is a focus on professionalisation from above in terms of the role of researchers in the partnerships, the direction of 'use' is somewhat different than in the first two examined articles: While the first two evinced somewhat more linear conceptions of research use, the latter represents a more nonlinear relationship in terms of roles, responsibilities, and respect for various knowledge forms—at least in theory.

Across and Beyond Deficit, Maturation, and Communicative Endeavours

We do not intend for our notions of deficit, maturation, and communicative endeavours to be definite or exhaustive categories. Rather, they illustrate the more general point that constructions of research use matter to the conceptualisation of the teaching profession's role. For example, whether a study relates to a particular generation (as per Boaz & Nutley, 2019) informs whether the framing of research use is as a one-way or bidirectional process, or whether the analytical emphasis is on individual teachers or the broader networks and systems of which they are a part. Such distinctions have implications for the positioning of professionals either as receivers or implementers of research or as agentic participants that co-create research use within broader social and organisational structures.

The studies differ in terms of their emphasis on performative and organisational aspects. This has implications for whether the ascribed responsibility for improved research use mainly falls upon teachers, in either their individual or collective

capacities, or upon the organisational, political, and epistemic support structures that surround them. Finally, we find variations in whether the studies recognised research use as professionalisation from above or below. Such nuances have implications for the agency and autonomy of the teaching profession in the development of their knowledge base and professional practice.

In summary, the overall framing and analytical and methodological operationalisation of research use emerged as an important mediator of the conceptualisation of the teaching profession in existing research. These studies often positioned researchers as performing the important role of improving the state of research use in the school sector. These findings have motivated our suggestion that we can fruitfully expand the notion of the policy–practice nexus to the policy–research–practice nexus. Put briefly, researchers inform the construction of policy–practice relationships both through the research they produce about research use and the role that they themselves play in developing teachers' research use.

These findings imply that there are different conceptions of the profession among researchers depending upon both what research tradition they adhere to and their national and local contexts. For example, the three articles discussed above differed in whether, and how, they included a conception of the profession. Such differences might also reflect how the researchers themselves view the policy–research–practice nexus itself. These findings lead us to ask how we can address this variation analytically. As the 'use' in research use directs attention to processes in which the profession plays a key role, there is a need for more in-depth analysis of studies on use, including identifying how the researchers frame, analyse, and discuss research use in education. Moreover, we argue that there is a need for a more nuanced and multidimensional analytical approach to the study of research use that acknowledges empirical variations that exceed temporal and spatial dimensions (i.e. Boaz & Nutley, 2019; Weiss, 1979) and that incorporates an analytical focus on the role of the profession and professional work within the policy–research–practice nexus. In the final section of this chapter, we propose a multidimensional framework intended as a methodological contribution to further advance this research agenda. Although the focus here is on research use, this framework is applicable to other policy concepts in the field of education.

A Multidimensional Analysis of Research Use

We propose that investigating five aspects of research use is particularly important to develop a fuller understanding of this concept and how the notion of research use is constitutive of the role of the teaching profession:

- Definitional aspect: How do researchers define research use?
- Discursive aspect: How do researchers talk about research use?
- In-action aspect: Where and how does research use take place?
- Power aspect: Who is participating in research use and in what roles?
- Phenomenological aspect: How do researchers understand research use?

These analytical dimensions are intended for the analysis of studies that have empirically examined teachers' research use. Analysing these aspects in relation to each other yields deeper insights into the conceptualisation of the profession in studies on research use. As a starting point, the term 'use' implicates the profession since teachers are the actors intended to do the using. It therefore becomes important to examine on what terms and under which conditions the conceptualisation and enactment of this use occur and who has the power to shape different aspects of use. Additionally, the analytical gaze of the researchers' conceptual position provides an additional layer in the constitution of research use as a phenomenon. The above questions guiding the analysis are intended to shed light on the complex and multi-faceted context in which research use occurs. We now apply this analytical approach to two studies, both published in 2018 in the journal *International Journal of Educational Research*—one conducted in England and the other in the Netherlands.

Example One: Research Use as Professionalisation from Above

In the first article, titled 'Exploring the Impact of Social Relationships on Teachers' Use of Research: A Regression Analysis of 389 Teachers in England', Brown et al. (2018) aimed to examine the extent to which social influence affects teachers' research use, how such social influence relates to teachers' perceptions of whether they work in a trusting environment, whether school leaders encourage the use of research in their schools, and whether there is encouragement for teachers to innovate. Regarding the definitional aspect, they defined research use as follows:

Research-informed teaching practice refers to the use of research evidence by teachers in order to improve how they teach and, as a result, student learning outcomes. The use of research by teachers is considered both beneficial and desirable (a situation we describe as optimal rational). As such, research-informed teaching should be both encouraged and facilitated. At the same time we are still to discover the most effective ways of supporting and fostering teachers' engagement with research. (p. 36)

Use here concerns improvement in teaching practices, which influence student learning. In this sense, it depicts quite a linear relationship; word clusters, such as 'improvement', 'outcomes', and 'effectiveness', constructing a discourse throughout the article support this. The discourse thus primarily addressed the performative dimension of professionalism and did not address the organisational dimension, despite analytical interest in social relations within organisations. Moreover, the use of analytical perspectives on so-called rationality types and an optimal rational position matrix strengthened the individual and performative aspects.

Turning to the in-action aspect, or how research use takes place, the authors' hypotheses, which they tested in a survey ($N = 828$), were (a) whether teachers' research use increased if and when their colleagues' use of research increased, (b) whether teachers perceived that they worked in a trusting environment, (c) whether teachers perceived that they worked in an environment that supports research use, and (d) whether teachers perceived that their school encouraged them to experiment

with new ways of working. The results show that although all four factors had some relevance for the teachers, by far the most influential factors were how the teachers experienced the supportiveness of their school in encouraging them to use research findings and the extent to which teachers reported that research played an important role in informing their teaching practice.

Thus, societal ties emerged as crucial for mobilising research use. Based on this finding, and also by shedding light on the power dimension, the authors drew the implication that besides encouraging research use from the top down—including ensuring that teachers have opportunities to share and engage in research-informed learning conversations—there should be a focus on using social network approaches increasingly to support research use, for example, by identifying teacher ‘opinion formers’ to lead local processes towards increasing research engagement among their colleagues. If we then turn to the phenomenological aspect, this study mainly depicts teachers as recipients and users of research to be enacted in their practice, and the focus was mainly on the factors that could enhance research use. The findings, however, identify the teachers themselves as key drivers in the enhancement of research use in schools, recognising the need for the agentic position of the profession.

Despite concluding by recognizing the need for an agentic position of the profession, the study can be mainly placed within a broader discourse emphasizing improvement and implementation. Using the multidimensional framework assisted us in getting a deeper insight into how the teaching profession in this study was positioned.

Example Two: A More Agentic Perspective

In the second article, titled ‘Barriers and Conditions for Teachers’ Utilisation of Academic Knowledge’, Schaik et al. (2018) presented a definitional starting point regarding research use that differs from the article in example one above:

Yet the expertise of teachers is mostly based on insights they have acquired in their own practice, whereas knowledge from educational research hardly plays a role. Although teachers’ practical knowledge and expertise are valuable for everyday classroom practice, new and innovative teaching practices can benefit from educational research. (...) This gap between research and practice is commonly acknowledged; researchers claim there is a knowledge base that teachers can use, but the latter experience barriers to access it. (p. 50)

The definitional aspect here is more tension-oriented as the authors took as their starting point the characteristics of the knowledge forms that characterise the profession as well as teachers’ work. As such, it delimits itself from more linear conceptions of research use; at the same time, the authors emphasised the need for the increased use of research as it is likely that it will benefit teaching and, in turn, the students.

Following from the definitional aspect, there was a greater emphasis in the discourse in the article on the profession, its knowledge base, and how teachers learn

and develop. At the same time, the framing of the study, in terms of its literature review, evinced a deficit discourse as the literature offered reasons as to why teachers do not use research, such as time constraints, limited access to research, competence concerns, and so forth.

Turning to the in-action aspect, the article, on the basis of a systematic review, identified that research is increasingly showing structural collaboration—such as school–university partnerships and innovative communication networks—to be a promising strategy for improving teachers' utilisation of research knowledge. Moreover, the authors identified barriers and conditions for research use. They found that barriers at the individual level were related mainly to accessibility and competence, while a positive opinion about and interest in research knowledge were important conditions for research use. Concerning barriers at the research knowledge level, research has often shown both the content and form of research communication difficult to access and understand. Organisational factors, however, matter more than individual factors, particularly a supportive organisational structure. However, creating the right structures is not sufficient if doing so fails to create a culture for broadening knowledge sources seen as relevant. At the communication level, many articles emphasised the importance of effective communication between teachers and researchers while citing as barriers limited opportunities to meet researchers and the tensions that often arise when they do meet.

The authors of this article compared their results of Hemsley-Brown and Sharp's (2003) study and emphasised how the barriers to the use of research knowledge at all of these levels appear to be similar. However, they pointed to one specific shift—namely, that of the increased communication between teachers and researchers—as well as the call in several studies to establish more such structures to foster teachers' research use. While the authors emphasised this as a promising strategy, they rarely addressed its power aspects. There are clearly power aspects to discuss regarding relationships between researchers and teachers, in terms of both institutional structures and knowledge forms. Concerning the phenomenological perspective, however, teachers clearly had a more agentic position in research use than in example one.

Through this analysis, we have gained insight into the studies' depictions of the profession, and how it partly differs from the first article (Brown et al., 2018), upon which we further elaborate in the following discussion.

Conceptualising the Teaching Profession Within the Policy–Research–Practice Nexus

The multidimensional analysis of research use showed variations in the ways in which the two articles, published in the same year and in the same journal, depicted the profession (Brown et al., 2018; Schaik et al., 2018). In example one, the main emphasis was on improvement and implementation, and in example two, the article gave the profession a more agentic position. Despite these differences in the

framing, the two articles' in-action aspects pointed in similar directions in terms of the characteristics of teachers' research use: The main conclusion in both articles was that increased collaboration between teachers and researchers—including the importance of establishing structures where, for example, teachers serve as key innovators—is the way forward to increase the use of research in education. Although the two articles framed the positioning of the profession quite differently—from a more top-down professionalisation from above perspective in the first article to a stronger focus on professionalisation from within in the second article—this difference was not clearly reflected in the conclusions of either article in terms of a discussion about what this means analytically about how we understand and also then should understand research use. Put differently, when confronted with actual practices and knowledge, the key characteristics of the profession became visible—but the authors only addressed this to a limited extent in the discussion and implication parts of the articles.

Greater attention to the profession's conceptualisation in studies on research use could have led to the inclusion of perspectives that would have contextualised the conclusions differently. Including such a conceptualisation would also have consequences for the outline of the practical implications concerning how best to stimulate teachers to make more use of research in their daily work. This involves the relationship between professionalisation from above and professionalisation from within, both in terms of the performative and organisational dimensions. For example, previous research suggested that professionalisation processes benefit from a fruitful interaction between policy initiatives, and in the case of research use, it also refers to research initiatives and local development processes.

On the basis of this analysis, and going back to Boaz and Nutley's generations of studies on research use, we propose that there is a need for considering the development of studies that could represent *a fourth generation* of studies on research use—a generation of studies including a conception of the teaching profession to develop more profession-sensitive concepts and analytical perspectives. We argue that this is a necessary development to advance the research and discussions on research use and to encourage fruitful research use in professional practice, both in performative terms (how research use can contribute to developing professional practice) and in organisational terms (how research use can contribute to strengthening the professional collective).

Professionalisation from above has arguably gained another meaning in the case of research use in this chapter as it is the researchers who have the great responsibility to enhance research use. The concept of research use has thus been a fruitful entry point to enhance our understanding of the challenging area of relations between policy, research, and practice. Although researchers have often used the term 'nexus' to describe the ambivalence in different viewpoints over problems and solutions in education, they have described it only to a limited extent (see introductory chapter). The analysis of research use has shown that although policy presents it as a somewhat ideal way to develop professional practice and the profession, the conceptualisation of the profession can be decisive for its integration, and the

creation of more detrimental tensions, into professional practice. Research use can be an idea, a theoretical place, a meeting point, and an intersection where, ideally, different fields, actor groups, practices, or theoretical constructs meet in a productive manner. We argue that research on research use, including the conceptions of researchers working with professionals to encourage research use, requires a conception of the profession in order for research use to be a phenomenon where policy, research, and practice share some similar viewpoints. Otherwise, it could be an example of a nexus where different worldviews do not come together and therefore have limited influence.

Concluding Remarks

As the analysis in this chapter has shown, definitions of research use often utilise other terms and framings, and studies often investigate research use in terms of how we as researchers talk and write about it. A key question to ask is, 'What kind of research use develops the profession?' Yet there is also a need to scrutinise how the researchers using this term conceptualise it. Only with a conceptualisation of the profession can we develop a fuller understanding of the policy–research–practice nexus. A multidimensional analysis of studies on research use can assist us in getting a firmer grip on this problem by asking questions such as the following: 'How do researchers define research use?' 'How do researchers talk about research use?' 'Where and how does research use take place?' 'Who is participating in research use and in what roles?' 'How do researchers understand research use?' Studying teachers' research use by including a conception of the profession within this policy–research–practice nexus will contribute to the development of more profession-sensitive analytical concepts for both studying research use and employing research use in professional practice. Such a development is essential for developing research on research use, policymaking on research use, and actual research use in professional practice.

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Part II
Nexus Formations in Time,
Space and Place

Chapter 6

The Curriculum as a Standard of Public Education



Stefan Hopmann

Abstract This contribution first searches for historical and empirical evidence for whether and how curricula act or acted as a measure of public education. The problem is explicated on account of a short history of curriculum work and distinguished in a analytical, a political, programmatical and practical discourse of curriculum work. Curriculum work always underlies premises of planning, learning and effects. Three models are finally developed and brought in touch with the different discourses. Curriculum work proves to be an attempt to make publicly acceptable the empirically impossible accountability of schools.

Keywords Curriculum · History of curriculum work · Public education · Discourses on curriculum · Accountability of schools

There is a certain double meaning to the German expression ‘öffentliche Bildung’. On the one hand the term ‘öffentliche Bildung’ can be used as a designation of what is called ‘public education’ in English. In this case the curriculum would have to be examined as a standard of what is happening in public schools. On the other hand, ‘öffentliche Bildung’ can also be translated with ‘education of the public’, in this case it can be understood as a generic term or as the total of education which is accessible to the public. Both concepts are directly connected with each other.

The topic allows for various approaches. One can start from the plan of an ideal curriculum which is then used as a standard of public education. In the Swiss context, for example, Anton Hügli has recently demanded this by taking up a tradition which goes back as far as Plato’s *Politeia*. One could also move to a curriculum-theoretical metalevel and come up with the question of what a curriculum would look like if it were to take up its assigned function as a standard. In the German tradition of curriculum theory, the name Erich Weniger is especially connected with

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this theory. Instead of following these traditions, I would like to understand the curriculum topic mainly from a historical and empirical point of view, i.e., as a search for theoretical and empirical indications to whether and how curricula have functioned or still function, in the double sense indicated above, as a standard of public education. I base myself mainly on two research projects: on the one hand on the historical and empirical investigations into curriculum work which I carried out in the eighties together with Henning Haft and others (cf. Haft, 1986; Hopmann, 1988a, b; Haft & Hopmann, 1990), and on the other hand on a current research project which empirically examines the connection between curriculum planning and lesson planning in Germany, Finland, Norway, Switzerland, and the USA.¹

A Short History of the Curriculum Work

A curriculum develops when it is no longer self-evident what should be taught. It is difficult to determine since when this has been the case. Since Joseph Dolch's monumental history of the *Lehrplan des Abendlandes* (1971–1973) the beginning of curriculum history has been in Greek and Roman Antiquity. More recent research indicates that there may have been similar curriculum considerations even earlier, for example in the training of civil servants in advanced civilisations (cf. e.g., Assmann, 1995). It is certain that written evidence of reflections on curriculum problems can be found since about the fifth and fourth centuries BC, and it is surely no coincidence that one of the centres of such reflection is the Republic of Athens. Its existence was guaranteed for the first time through an organised public and seemed to depend on a minimum of public education. Complex systems of interaction, like the military system of Athens or the public jurisdiction, required understanding and communication of the participants to a degree which could no longer be presupposed as natural. This has been demonstrated especially by Christian Meier (1993). In the chapter on curricula of his *Politics*, Aristotle pointed out the loss of naturalness in teaching which necessitates a curriculum.

There must be educational rules and that education itself must become a public matter. But we must not forget the question, how this education should be, and how people should be educated. Because in our time we do not agree on the goals we should set and there exist different assumptions on what young people should learn to achieve virtue or the ability to lead useful lives; it is also not clear, whether education should aim rather at the development of the mind or the heart. It is not known whether one should teach young people what is of use for practical life, or what leads to virtue and great deeds. For all these viewpoints have found their advocates. (Book 8 introduction).

¹When this paper was first published, it relied heavily on not yet published material from an ongoing international research project (Organizing Curriculum Change: OCC). The project work started in 1993 with the Swiss part, the German part followed in 1995, all other parts of the project started in 1997. Since then key results have been published e.g. in a monography by Frank Ohlhaber (2005) and a special issue of the Journal of Curriculum Studies (Westbury et al. 2016).

Aristotle supports a prescribed and fixed circle of educational goods, as in the *enkyklikos paidea*, the circle of necessary general education. In Roman times the system of the *septem artes liberales* developed through many intermediate steps from the *enkyklikos*. It is the system of the seven free arts, with the *Trivium* of grammar, rhetoric, dialectics, and the *Quadrivium* of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music, and it remains stable for a good millennium. The most well-known curriculum-theoretical work of that epoch, besides Aristotle's *Politics*, is surely the *Politeia* already mentioned, Plato's far-reaching attempt to base the state on organised education (especially Books 5 and 7). From a curriculum-historical point of view the premises on which this draft is based are of special interest.

1. To start with there is the assumption that teaching can and must be planned publicly. This requires that teaching is organised action which is submitted to rules and can at least be brought to a planned conclusion as is the case with a craft. The mere execution of everyday life no longer suffices, calculated intervention is necessary. In Plato's time this concept was not least credible thanks to the social success of the sophists. Going beyond this and differing from the sophistic tradition Plato declares the decisions concerning the structure and content of education a public matter. This is a bit surprising from someone whose own teacher was forced by the public powers to drink from Shierling's cup because of his teachings.
2. Included in the premise of planning is the double assumption that what is known can be taught, and what is taught can be learnt. Plato has dealt with this problem in *Politeia* and in *Meno* by asking the question whether virtue could be taught. In the concept of the maieutically influenced recollection the difference between teaching and learning is neutralised in a discursive way, the teaching process seems to depend totally on the momentary course of learning. The cave simile, on the other hand, calls to mind that the process of learning is a difficult ascent in which no step can be left out, that one must slowly work one's way towards the bright light. No matter what is weighed more, in both cases teaching and learning seem to be two sides of the same coin. The uniting moment is the order of knowledge, which here still appears as the one and only order, no matter whether knowledge is organised for its own sake, in connection with its public use or for the purpose of teaching and learning.
3. The backing and coincidence is also valid for the third and most difficult premise, namely that what is learnt through teaching also corresponds in its effects to what was intended with the teaching. This too, is a problem which is likewise dealt with in the *Meno* dialogue and is solved here as well as there with the conviction, that what has been recognised as right also leads to the right action, that the learning return and the consequences of action come together as one.
4. Finally the connection between the three premises (the *planning premise*, the *learning premise*, and the *effect premise*) is theoretically guaranteed. This corresponds to Plato's conception of a state in which the state leadership is assigned to the philosophers as the most learned men. The three premises mentioned above belong to the mostly unspoken preconditions of the curriculum discourse

from antiquity until today, despite differences between the individual parts. However, the request to leave the curriculum planning to the philosophers, a request which is shared even today by some curriculum theorists, was not well received by the contemporaries, as they did not want to leave the curriculum decisions and even less all other state affairs to Plato and his philosophy colleagues.

The *first* of the three premises which began to falter was the one of the *one order of knowledge*.² Already at the closing of the first century Quintilian had fought for the right order of the subjects in his *Institutio oratoria*. On the Christian side, for example around the year 400, it was Augustine who emphasised the necessity to prepare the subjects, which are determined by the canonisation, according to the learning conditions and the learning history of the pupils (*De catechizandis rudibus*). The differentiation and increase of knowledge since the beginning of the second millennium finally went beyond the scope of the *septem artes*, which had been stable for many centuries. It was especially the monks of the leading monastery schools like, for example, Hugo from the monastery St. Victor near Paris, who tried to solve the problem through a new order, through a *disciplining* of knowledge and learning which could be taught (*Didascalicon*). Thus, the order of teaching was set apart from the social order of knowledge.

In the following centuries, other premises also misted their credibility. Because of the limited space, I can only pinpoint some of the cornerstones of the later development. The third premise, namely the hope that what is learnt through teaching corresponds in its social effects to what was intended by the teaching, never had much empirical evidence to support it (remember Plato's complaint about young people not following the example and guidance of their parents and teachers). It finally faltered together with the reformation concept of educating to Christianity, which was at the heart of Luther's theology, but didn't work out as wanted. The most substantial critique of the underlying assumption was brought forward from those Christian movements like pietism, which did not believe that true faith could be learned by teaching but is based in the individual experience of God. However, this is but one of many examples in the history of organized teaching, where schooling or other forms of planned instruction have hardly ever produced exactly those changes in attitudes, behaviour, or social life which they were supposed to enhance.

It is more difficult to sum up the history of the first premise, namely that teaching can and must be planned publicly. In fact, reformation brought about a massive development towards public planning. In the wake of reformation, more and more local and state governments moved actively into the field of schooling. They established committees, advisory boards, administrations and the like, which should develop and formulate a frame of schooling, including – among other things – detailed syllabi or other types of curriculum guidelines. However, there is

²The following reflections are based especially on Rudolf Künzli's basic study on the "Topik der Lehrplanung" (Künzli, 1986) as well as on my own papers; cf. also Künzli (1998).

overwhelming historical evidence that these syllabi or curriculum guidelines did not have much impact on what was going on in schools, except for a few schools close to the surveillance of the church or other social powers. At least there was a huge difference between what the guidelines asked for and what was possible in the everyday life of average schools. This fact was finally acknowledged by the school authorities themselves by developing a system of planning, in which the central guidelines were nothing more than very generalized tools of administrative control, leaving the factual planning of teaching and instruction to the schools and the teachers. This loosely coupled double structure of central planning and relatively autonomous local teaching was brought into a systematic fashion by the Prussian school administration in the early nineteenth century. Since then and until today most European countries follow this basic pattern.

From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, the teachers and their organizations increasingly complained that, even this loosely coupled system of control gave politics and administration too much influence on what they believed were pedagogical issues and which only could be solved by pedagogical professionals. This critique contributed to a new step of differentiation. The public planning was reduced to decisions on very general principals of schooling (e.g., by school laws), leaving the development of the curriculum guidelines to highly specialized expert committees (mainly dominated by the teachers themselves). As a result, in most European countries, there exists a tripartite structure of curriculum planning: At the top there is the public discourse on education, which results in political decisions about the structure and goals of schooling. It is accompanied by the development of curriculum guidelines. However, this is done by educational experts (most of them chosen by the educational administration and most of them active or former teachers). The public has no direct access to curriculum making. In most cases, it doesn't even know what is going on inside the curriculum making. The experts must function as a kind of intermediary agency, i.e., their curriculum development must consider the public discourse and its results as well as what they believe might work in schools. The school practitioners do their own planning – within the framework of the guidelines provided by the experts. In fact, there is overwhelming evidence from different European countries that teachers do not feel that these guidelines have much impact on what is going on in schools. They only relate themselves to these guidelines if forced to, i.e., in situations where it is questioned whether their instruction is in accordance with the guidelines – which almost never happens. Thus – even though there exists a public planning of teaching – these plans have no great impact on what in fact is taught. At best, they reflect what is going on in schools anyway.

The curriculum makers of today are aware of their intermediary function in the area between school political and school practical discourse. Asked about the reasons for their curriculum reform, they point out structure changes in school, political requirements, and social changes. In fact, most curriculum revisions are evoked by political-administrative decisions. This happens on average every seven years. When asked what plays a role in their curriculum decisions, then they no longer talk about politics and society: then only specialist, didactic and pedagogical arguments

count. The extent to which the political dimension of curriculum work is recognised by curriculum makers seems to depend on the periods of time and on regional circumstances. An active minister can remind people of this political dimension. According to the empirical investigations which have been done until now, all curriculum makers agree when decisions on concrete matters must be made; they give to politics what belongs to politics – at best in the preambles. The decisions on curricula, however, remain part of the inner-didactic discourse. The curriculum makers only must be careful that the conditions which they want to prescribe for pedagogical reasons, do not obviously contradict the political preconditions. That they mostly succeed can be seen in the fact that the curriculum drafts prepared by curriculum makers are only rarely changed in the process of political decisions concerning their validity.

Curriculum Work as a Division of Discourse

The curriculum discourse was eventually divided into three parts:

- a political discourse as a framework for the curriculum work
- a programmatic discourse which develops the concrete curriculum in the interaction between the administration and the teaching staff and finally
- a practical discourse which is responsible for the local forming of the lessons.

This division into three has not changed in essence in the German language area since the turn of the century and at the same time it is the predominant model for curriculum work of most European countries (cf. Hopmann & Künzli, 1994). In the history of the curriculum there have always been attempts to resolve this division into three, either through a greater degree of detail in the political preconditions, or through a didactic detailing of the curriculum which levels out the freedom of method; but none of these attempts could hold its own in the long run. For every loss of the discursive independence of the three levels would burden every curriculum decision with the expectation of legitimacy of all three levels. How closely or loosely the discourse levels are intertwined may differ from case to case. In general, the room to move is quite large. For example, it is quite possible that the political preconditions change several times during the curriculum work without the concrete forming of the curricula having to change. Let us record some of the results of this short passage through history which could be backed up even further by many empirical and historical individual findings (comp. For the following Hopmann, 1988a, b):

1. *Planning premise:* The curriculum has become a public matter as was the wish of Plato – and Aristotle – its actual making, however, is largely closed to the public. This is made possible through a division into three of the curriculum discourse. It leaves the dealing with general matters to the politicians and the

public, and the concrete curriculum decisions to the discourse between educational administration and school experts. This discourse is open but to a few and is connected only loosely with the course of practical educational work in schools. The co-ordination between these levels occurs only negatively, i.e., each discourse sets limits to the others, but cannot determine positively what happens in the other discourses.

2. *Learning premise:* Whether what is planned is taught, and whether what is taught is learned only becomes visible at some intersections of the educational system, i.e., in cases of conflict and in examination situations. Here too, the principle of *negative co-ordination* is valid, i.e., it is only a question of whether the facts which become visible at the intersections remain discursive within the frame set by the other discourse levels. It is not examined whether the development of the pupils fulfils the hopes which are pinned on them through the curriculum; there is only a selective examination of whether at a given point in time they are capable of school activities which were included in the expectation horizon of the curriculum. An empirical summary of whether the result of the school lessons correspond to the sum of curriculum expectations, or to the political hopes attached to them, does not exist, and cannot exist, because there is no linear connection between the three levels of planning. Each one only opens up a discursive scope of uncountable possibilities in which all learning results, which do not obviously contradict the frame set by discourse, are legitimate events.
3. *Effect premise:* It is questionable whether the out of school activities or later the social activities correspond in any way with the expectations expressed in the school-political principal ideas or in the curricula. Investigations into the connection between school knowledge and everyday-life knowledge indicate that there exists a considerable distance between the two for example in natural sciences, computer science or education in environmental problems. This indicates that what we learn at school has only a limited influence on what we do out of school. Of course, we acquire a basis of knowledge and skills at school which we use later in one way or the other. In what way, however, curricula do not tell us, and there is little that can be checked empirically. When we consider that curricula last only about 7 years on average (in Germany), and that they are only one of many factors which influence the actual lessons, then any attempt to find an empirical connection which can be checked is pointless. Curricula are no good for prognosis or for an empirical standard of social knowledge and activity. The premises required by Plato cannot be redeemed, or at least their redemption cannot be proved empirically. Nevertheless, the belief in public curriculum work has not dissolved, and there are few other social planning methods which can come up with a comparable continuity which has lasted several centuries. But how can something be a standard of public education, which by and large is unknown to the public and cannot be measured empirically? To analyse the standard function of the curricula we must see the independence and the interdependence of the three levels.

1. On a political level not the curriculum itself is the standard of public education, but the public discourse which relates to it. The curriculum discourse illustrates what the public expects from education or misses in education. Curriculum work is successful here when it can offer the public documents in which it can recognise itself and its problems. In democracies this is guaranteed through the fact that such documents can win a majority. Curriculum work on this level sums up the educational political common sense. It concentrates the complexity of social educational system. The long-term consequences of such planning documents do not play an important role in this discourse, because the political discourse movement is short-lived. They are unknown at the time of the discourse and cannot be traced empirically at a later point in time.
2. On a practical level the curriculum is just as little a standard of pedagogical activity or of concrete results of lessons. It only supplies the discursive frame which allows the binding of the complexity of the pedagogically possible to a verifiable criterion, i.e., the criterion whether it is possible by means of the school practical common sense to illustrate that the facts which always come into focus can be made legitimate in the frame set by the curriculum.
3. On a programmatic level, on which the actual curriculum is written, it is necessary to reconcile the political with the school practical common sense. Curriculum work is successful here, when it can convey the feeling to politicians and the public that it meets their expectations, and when in doing so it uses means which are seen as pedagogically reasonable by the average of the pedagogical profession.

Curricula are usually common sense recorded in documents – or as Peter Menck once formulated pointedly – the selection of the selected (Menck, 1989). When they go beyond this scope in the direction of the political discourse, then the difference between what is planned and what is generally accepted indicates how far the education of the public is from the education outlined in the curriculum. This can lead to fierce political battles, as in Hessen in the nineteen seventies – but they only marginally affect the actual school and teaching practice. Because of the political costs such transgressions are very rare compared to the number of public curricula. When curricula go beyond school practical common sense, then the difference usually indicates the distance between the social expectations regarding school and what is usual and possible in a school practical sense. Seen from a curriculum-historical viewpoint this is more often the case (even the Stiehl regulations of 1854, which were infamous because their restrictions went far beyond what was customary at schools at that time). The effect of such transgression is not immediate; it usually only has a discursive character, i.e., the scope of the possible changes in a certain direction. Whether and how this scope is used is not decided by curriculum work, but in the practical discourse, as it develops in classrooms and staff rooms.

According to the results of our survey, curriculum makers obviously do not believe that innovations in curricula have much chance of succeeding. A consequence of the negative co-ordination and of the connection with the existing common sense is the fact that curricula have become instruments for the securing of

stability, not of change. In the rhetoric of innovation which goes along with the making of curricula, one can easily overlook that the real margins of change are small. We do not have any precise empirical investigations in this area, but if we look at the amount of basic knowledge and skills which have become school subjects since the beginning of last century, e.g., in Schleswig-Holstein, then we can assume that about three-quarters of the compulsory curriculum has remained. It is proved that the relative weight of school subjects has not changed much since then. Recent empirical and comparative investigations into the structure of curricula and pupil knowledge indicate furthermore that this basis canon is largely identical and stable in the western countries (cf. Meyer et al., 1992; as well as the reports from the well-known Timms studies, for example Baumert & Lehmann, 1997). The short-term variations in the weighing of certain contents and aims may seem impressive to contemporaries. Seen from the curriculum-historical point of view they are mostly only swings of the pendulum in an almost linear movement in which the traditional is enlarged in an additive manner without being touched in its substance. Even seemingly radical reforms like *education in environmental problems* and dealing with *new technologies* have their history, the history of a constant coming and going in the fringe areas of the curriculum.

Basic Forms of Curriculum Work

Seen in an international context, curriculum work is only one of several variants used for measuring public education.³ Besides countries with a long curriculum tradition there are others which have no generally binding, written curricula. However, functionally equivalent patterns of control, with which the public school system can be supervised, have usually developed in those countries. There too, decisions on the actual contents of lessons are not simply left to the individual teachers or schools, but frame decisions, structure requirements, result controls or other codified preconditions set narrow bounds on everyone involved in the curriculum. Roughly speaking we can distinguish four basic modes of curriculum control in Western countries:

The Philanthropic Model

Represents, as mentioned above, one of the oldest forms of curriculum work run by the state. It is based on a kind of double strategy: on the one hand the state (or the school representative) has the right to stipulate any teaching ideas which are

³I have developed the following considerations partly together with Jörg Biehl and Frank Ohlhaber in another paper (cf. Biehl et al., 1996). Further literature references can be found there.

right through curricula or school rules; on the other hand, the state (or the school representative) has to give information on the contents and methods of lessons through models and experiments. In the language of implementation research this is a top-down model, in which the initiative and responsibility are mainly assigned to the curriculum administration. Since its first overall use around 1800 (for example in the former duchies of Schleswig and Holstein) his model has been popular for a long time, especially in the northern European countries (for example in Sweden and Norway) and was frequently used in connection with social democratic reform strategies. It is characteristic of the philanthropic model that a unity of the planning discourse is assumed, i.e., that all three Platonic premises (planning, learning and effect premises) and their inner connection regarding their validity are required.

The Licence Model

This also assigns a total responsibility for the contents of lessons to the state (or the school representative), but it limits the intervention to the requirement of a frame of 'subject matter' (curriculum, guideline), and leaves the responsibility for its implementation to the individual school and/or the individual teacher. The classic form for this is the systematic distinction between the planning of teaching and the planning of lessons, which gives the teacher a kind of *licence* for the realisation of the curriculum requirements through the pedagogical freedom or the freedom of method. This classic model, which was first codified in Prussia around 1810/20, represents the predominant basic pattern of curriculum work in the German speaking countries at least until around 1970. Characteristic of this model is the differentiation of levels as described above.

The Examen-Artium Model

This can be exemplified by school development in the USA. Until a few years ago there were no binding state curricula and no other forms of state preconditions concerning the contents of lessons; instead, there were entry controls of the respective following educational institutions which were just as effective. The admission norms of the leading colleges have set relatively clear preconditions for the high schools, which they must try to meet in their lessons which prepare the pupils for college, if they want their school-leavers to have a chance. The historical example of this model is the examen artium and other forms of independent entrance examinations, like, for example, the French *concours* system. Here the result control and the teaching are linked to different institutions and thus the unity of the planning discourse is abandoned.

The Assessment Model

This could also be exemplified with the school history of the USA, especially of some west coast states, like California. Here, too, there is mostly no binding written curriculum. By means of different school leaving controls, like standardised school ability tests, the schools have precise directives on what they must have achieved at a certain point in time. In many US Federal States, the publication of the results shows how much pressure schools are exposed to, if they do badly in this ‘school competition’. Other less rigid forms of the assessment model can be found in those countries which prescribe standardised intermediate and school leaving examinations (for example a central school-leaving examination), sometimes only for certain subjects, as is the case in Denmark. These basic forms are of course only *typifications*. They rarely exist in a pure form, but mostly as a mixture. Moreover, different strategies are often applied for different school levels, as is the case in Switzerland, Norway, or Denmark. With the question, whether with or without curriculum, and to their degree of control, these models can be systematically described as cornerstones of a field (cf. diagram 1; from Biehl et al., 1996). Moreover, there is a common ground for overlapping models. Models which are based on a curriculum tend to emphasise the course of lessons, whereas models without a curriculum emphasise the results of lessons. Both models of direct control are more exact in their directives and in their definition of room to manoeuvre than models of indirect control, the limits of which often only become visible in individual conflicts.

If the consequences of these different basic forms were to be described for the standard function of curricula, then it would be advisable to see how the border can be drawn between the *political* and the *programmatic* discourse on the one hand, and between the *programmatic* and the *practical* discourse on the other.

The Licence Model

On the political level, curricula or the general directives concerning curricula (like models, school laws), function, as described above, as a documentation of *common sense*. In this respect nothing essential has changed since nineteenth century; only the mechanisms of the documentation of common sense have been increasingly formalised and institutionalised. Today, there is hardly a curriculum method which can do without the preliminary work of political commissions, parliamentary guidelines etc., and the participation of all kinds of social organisations and groups representing their interest. The relation between the programmatic work and the practical level has also been subjected to a stronger process of institutionalisation. Until about 30 years ago the work of the curriculum administration was finished as soon as the curriculum was on the table. In the licence model it is up to the teachers and schools to translate the curriculum contents into local practice. Since then, however, a whole system of mediating activities and institutions has continuously moved

into the space between the planning of teaching and the planning of lessons. The most striking expression of this development are the state curriculum institutions, which developed in the last quarter of the century in several European countries and developed a large field of activities from the further training for teachers to the development of recommendations and teaching models.

The Philanthropic Model

In the philanthropic model the interpretation of the state directives was and still is delivered by the curriculum administration. The development of aids for the practical work and of further training is then carried out by the curriculum administration itself or, as is the case in Norway, for example, is delegated to other instances of the educational administration, like the regional school supervision. Changes can be controlled to the degree to which teachers integrate the intentions of the directives into their local practice. Different degrees of freedom result mainly from those parts which are not regulated in the curriculum and the following interpretations. Through their linearity philanthropic reform strategies require an immediate connection between what is politically intended and what is practically taught and its effects, a requirement which relates to enormous legitimacy costs, but cannot be fulfilled empirically. Curriculum-historically, philanthropic top-down strategies are mostly followed by a loosening which is explicitly orientated to the licence model which reduces the state's setting of a frame to a minimal catalogue and leave the rest to the subsequent levels (as in Sweden and Hessen at present).

The Examen-Artium and the Assessment Model

In the examen-artium model and in the assessment model, both systems without a curriculum core, the situation is different. Here it is not a matter of translating a given frame of contents discursively, but this frame must first be described and assessed in terms of its implications for lessons. Proceeding from the expectations set up by standards or tests, it is necessary to find out what the contents and the methods of lessons should be like, to meet these expectations. The most prominent expressions of this form of curriculum work are the big curriculum projects as they developed for example in the USA. The most recent of these curriculum projects is the frame-curriculum for natural sciences (*Benchmarks for Science Literacy*, 1994; cf. Riquarts & Hopmann, 1995). Unlike other curricula they are not binding on schools and teachers, but they offer suggestions as to how the expected school results could be generated. Room to manoeuvre exists mainly through the possibility to choose from the curriculum on offer. In many cases school- books and test batteries replace the curricula, both normatively and in fact. With this an essential part of the curriculum work is handed over to the 'free play of forces', i.e., the

producers of such materials. The political discourse hardly deals with the translation of contents of the given standards, it often limits itself to the vague demand for 'world-class standards'. When these standards are exemplified, as for example in Hirsch's *Cultural Literacy: What every American needs to know* (1988), they look quite like topoi catalogues of educated discourse. They are in their own way no more than but attempts to document the assumed common sense. The political advantage of 'national standards' is, of course, the shifting of the responsibility to carry through these standards, to schools and teachers. Here one can measure immediately, whether they have met the expectations compiled in the test batteries. The political drawback of the public measurement is the fact that the basics of measuring are largely not available to the public, because the development and official verification of result controls are a matter of experts, not last of private industries.

A decisive question in this context is of course, what kind of measurability of education these models produce.

The *licence model* is based on the division of labour between the planning of teaching and the planning of lessons, as it is defined through the limitation of curricula to subject matter requirements and through the freedom of method.

The amount of subject matter does not necessarily mean deprivation of personal freedom if the development profile is made possible through selection and concentration. It is also a question of the teachers' competence whether they can make use of the difference between contents and substance of education to profile their lessons (and how far they are supported by further education, school-books, etc.). Many local school innovations, and movements like the reform pedagogy, have made use of this division of labour: their reform proposals, which are mostly defined as methods of teaching (project, open lessons, etc.), are compatible with very different curricula. Admittedly they destroy the division of labour to the same extent as their proposals are accepted in the curricula and thus limit the freedom of method. In the licence model school results can meet the expectations of the curriculum in many ways; they allow for a variety which can hardly be demonstrated appropriately in a quantitative comparison of different elements of performance (as it forms the basis of international comparative studies like the TIMSS).

In the *philanthropic model* variant is possible if the curricula administration holds itself back, i.e., if it regulates only part of the lessons with its instructions concerning subject matter and method. The development of profile is made possible through the filling out of that part which is not regulated. This room to move is endangered in two ways: on the one hand, if the holding back fails. When we consider that a large part of the lessons does not serve the teaching (but organisational tasks, discipline problems, etc.), then the formal room to manoeuvre quickly shrinks to a technical consideration of means alien to teaching.

On the other hand, this division bears the danger of setting up a hierarchy, if the room to manoeuvre is not systematically expanded on the school level. When the non-regulated parts are left to the coincidental willing of individual teachers, and when they are not related to each other within the curriculum, as is the case in the binding part, then pupils (and their parents) would of course concentrate their attention to the 'compulsory section prescribed from above' and would consider the

‘free section’ to be a bonus for the few who were not already fully occupied by the compulsory section.

In the *examen artium* model the freedom of schools and teachers is the greatest so far. There is no-one who formally forces or pushes them into teaching anything. They can choose from a variety of prefabricated curricula or develop their own. However, a totally different pressure develops through the pupils (or their parents) who want to be qualified for certain educational sectors or periods of life. In curricula systems lessons may be taught when they can be embedded through didactic interpretation into the horizon of the curricula rules; however, the legitimacy of teaching lessons without curricula directives is permanently precarious. How strongly this limits the freedom of decision for the teachers and individual schools then depends on the balance of power between them and their social environment. In locally controlled school systems like the Danish one, this can oblige the teachers to constantly justify themselves. In Denmark many teachers try to withdraw from this local legitimacy pressure by voluntarily using the non-binding curriculum recommendations of the ministry of education. There is every reason to believe that because of this legitimacy need the non-binding Danish curricula have a higher binding force than the binding curricula of the licence model.

Assessment models bind school directly when the measurements become publicly assessable (and that cannot be prevented in open societies) or – as in parts of the USA – when they influence the assignment of resources. A hierarchy of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ schools develops in the political *common sense*. But only success and failure in relation to what is measurable becomes visible. Other achievements or specialities of the lessons are not excluded by this. How much room is left to schools and teachers becomes dependent on how ‘problematic’ the measured placing becomes and on how strongly it forces an indirect hierarchy upon the various school achievements and contents. The great challenge to the European curriculum tradition is the assessment models, on which international comparative studies like SIMMS and TIMMS are based. They almost naturally start out from the Platonic premises: that what was planned is taught, and what is taught can be learned; that the learning success can be empirically and clearly shown; and that it is relevant for the future development in the sense of the effect premise. These are all assumptions which are no more than doubtful empirically, but despite this, they have gained considerable political impact. Moreover, these comparative studies are paradox because, despite the public turbulence over the exact league tables, they show precisely the opposite of what they try to prove: although school and curriculum systems vary greatly, the performance of pupils differs only little in the western countries. Finally, we should distinguish who is granted the right to dispose of the standards of public education: career-orientated parents and other locally interested persons, according to their internal power balance, could profit the most from an *examen artium* model, which makes a goal-directed pre-schooling of their children possible. Formal equality can best be achieved through uniform assessment. With a high degree of detailing (as in standardised performance tests), uniform assessment limits the local freedom of forming to such a degree that actual inequalities of the chances for success cannot be avoided. Assessment systems depending on the

forming of their standards – are an excellent means to stabilise the social inequality of the educational chances. If one primarily relies on the freedom of the individual teacher to give the lessons a local forming, then this can best be secured with the licence model, whereas the philanthropic model only then allows for a local forming, when the ‘remaining space’, which is handed over to the schools, is big enough and is planned on a school level. It is not a coincidence, that efforts to ‘develop the organisation’ in schools have been well accepted mainly in countries of the philanthropic curriculum, like Norway. The farthest-reaching limitation of local freedom of movement finally results from mixing method-orientated and result-orientated models. This would push all those parts of lessons and school life aside which were neither prescribed nor measured (a danger, as it exists in the expansion of the ‘uniform examination requirements’ for the secondary level and the school-leaving examination, and which can already now be studied in England and Wales).

Of course, yet a fifth strategy could be planned, one which would radically renounce any state control and would combine this with the greatest possible freedom of structuring for each individual school or teacher. Even if one disregards the inequality in the school system, which would be unavoidable in this system, it would be doubtful whether this system could maintain itself in the long run. Why should society, represented by politicians and the public, not call its most expensive subsystem, the schools, to account? Curriculum work in its different forms is an attempt to give this empirically impossible account, so that the public can accept it. Seen in this way, the different forms of curricula control are a standard of the ability of the public, which is relevant for the making of decisions, to live with this structural incapability.

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Chapter 7

Exploring Education Policy Transformations and Agency in a Postcolonial Context: The Case of Launching the Preparation Scheme in Greenland in 1961



Simon Holleufer and Christian Ydesen

Using the prisms of post-colonial history together with the theoretical concepts of policy instruments and uploading and downloading, this chapter investigates how different actors in different arenas of the Danish-Greenlandic education system have emerged, interacted, and struggled to shape and develop policies and practices. The chapter focuses on a particular policy instrument called ‘the Preparation Scheme’ [*præparandarrangementet*] which was launched in 1961 and remained in operation until 1976. The purpose of the scheme was to identify promising Greenlandic children and send them on a one-year school stay in Denmark to boost their Danish language skills and prepare them as spearheads for the modernization of Greenland according to a Danish development trajectory. Analytically, the chapter explores the historical compositions of actors inhabiting the arenas in Copenhagen, Nuuk and the Greenlandic school districts in 1961 when the policy instrument was launched, and it investigates the emergence of policy–practice nexuses revolving around such a new policy instrument. The chapter finds that a conducive environment for the enactment of the preparation scheme ranging from the centre to the periphery eventually came into existence. This environment was conditioned on the alignment of cultural scripts between Copenhagen and Nuuk, positioning Greenland as an object of a modernization process. In this way, the chapter adds to our knowledge about how a policy instrument is recontextualized in a downloading and subsequent uploading process in a post-colonial context.

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In reference to the school director's telegram 6093, I submit some information about the pupils from grades 6B and 7B, who, in my telegram 135, have been recommended to attend the experimental groups. First, the 7B pupils: in this class, there is a rather big group of similarly good pupils. We might as well have recommended 10 just as well as these six.¹

Introduction

The opening quote stems from the period 1953–1979, when Greenland had morphed from being a Danish colony into a county in Denmark. It is a clear example of local education actors – in this case, the head teacher in Julianehåb [*Qaqortoq*]² – struggling to decode and find meaning in a new policy instrument that had recently been rolled out by the higher echelons of the education system in Copenhagen and in Godthåb [*Nuuk*], the capital of Greenland. The focus of this chapter is to analyse the emergence of policy–practice nexuses revolving around such a new policy instrument in the making.

The new policy instrument in question was the so-called Preparation Scheme [*præparandarrangementet*], which was launched in 1961 and remained in operation until 1976. The purpose of the scheme was to identify promising Greenlandic children and send them on a one-year school stay in Denmark to boost their Danish language skills and prepare them as spearheads for the modernization of Greenland according to a Danish development trajectory. Alternatively, Greenlandic children could be sent to preparation classes at a boarding school in Godthåb.³ Apart from practical considerations, such as the economy and number of places available in Denmark, this dual arrangement served the purpose of allowing for comparisons between the trajectories of children educated in Greenland versus those educated in Denmark. With the institutionalization of a selection process and its ensuing powerful effects on the future education possibilities of Greenlandic children, the preparation scheme can best be described as a high-stakes programme. During its lifetime, the preparation scheme involved some 1530 Greenlandic children who were sent to Denmark for 1 year (Jensen, 1997; Ydesen, 2010).

¹Letter from school inspector Christian Størmose (1920–1990) in Julianehåb [*Qaqortoq*] to the School Directorate in Godthåb, 29 May 1961, *Kultureqarnermut, Ilinniartitaanermut, Ilisimatusarnermut, Ilageeqarnermullu Naalakkersuisoqarfik* [Department for Culture, Education, Research, and Church] (KIIN) Archive, j.nr. 949.3, sheet 2, 1961. All translations from Danish into English were by the authors, unless stated otherwise.

²We use the Danish place names because they were the official place names in the period covered in this chapter and are the names appearing in the archival sources used for this chapter. Today, Greenlandic place names are the official appellations. Greenlandic place names are in square brackets upon their first mention.

³From the school year 1965/1966 onward, all preparation pupils were sent to Denmark, until 1971/1972, when preparation classes were re-established in Greenland (Ydesen, 2011).

The whole idea behind the preparation scheme was permeated by distinct postcolonial imaginaries about attractive development trajectories and paths of modernization. However, as indicated in the opening quote, the identification of children for the preparation scheme seems to be permeated by distinct elements of contingency and coincidence. This element reflects how the launch and enactment of the preparation scheme could be described as a complex recontextualization process of policy ideals, policy contexts, and the development of new educational practices in both national and local contexts. In other words, the formulation, dissemination, and enactment of the preparation scheme serves as a relevant case to illuminate the nexuses between interrelated fields of education policy and practice (de Leeuw et al., 2008), as well as adding to our understanding of structure and agency in education policy processes.

Using the postcolonial setting of Greenlandic education in the 1960s as a prism, this chapter investigates how different actors in different arenas of the Danish-Greenlandic education system have emerged, interacted, and struggled to shape and develop nexuses between policy and practice in relation to the pupil selection process in the preparation scheme in 1961. In this sense, the chapter explores three research questions that connect with contemporary research literature, emphasizing the complexities (Ydesen, 2021) of education policy formation, as well as the inherent political dimension of policies and practices (Ozga, 2020):

- Which values and discourses about pupil selection criteria are in evidence in different arenas of the education system?
- Which priorities, agendas, and means were promoted in different arenas of the education system shaping the pupil selection processes?
- How can the recontextualization processes between the different arenas of the education system be understood?

To explore these questions, the chapter zooms in on the meaning-making surrounding the new policy instrument in the MfG in Copenhagen, the School Directorate in Godthåb, and the Greenlandic school districts. In terms of education policy research, exploring the launch, implementation, and enactment of the preparation scheme in 1961, including the roles of key actors, allows for an investigation of agency and politics and how they shaped nexuses of policy and practice in national, regional, and local arenas in the Danish–Greenlandic education system.

Theoretical Underpinnings, Methodology, and Chapter Structure

Theoretically, the chapter draws on postcolonial theory (Niedrig & Ydesen, 2011) to understand the historical context and mechanisms at play. A core feature of postcolonial theory is its focus on uneven distributions of power hinging on racial, ethnic, or cultural constructions of the other as inferior, deficient, and in need of

intervention. This is often described as processes of ‘othering’ taking place discursively and as part of a dispositif, understood in Foucauldian terms as a power–knowledge complex (Velho & Thomas-Olalde, 2011). This lens is suitable for understanding the power positions among actors and the value system behind and inherent in the selection process of the preparation scheme. Another feature of postcolonial theory is a focus on the centre– periphery dynamics leading to the development of new identities, practices, and cultural hybrids. As contended by Stoler and Cooper (1997), it is necessary to bring ‘metropole and colony, colonisers and colonised into one analytical field’ (p. 15). This dimension offers valuable insights for our analysis of how a new selection practice was developed in a postcolonial context, because it points to the constitutive interactions between arenas.

In congruence with the postcolonial lens and for a distinct focus on the interactions and influences across the three arenas – Copenhagen, Godthåb, and the Greenlandic school districts – we draw on the twin concept of uploading and downloading put forth by Prøitz (2015). These arenas constitute three distinct but interacting and mutually shaping spaces in which the policy–practice nexuses of the preparation scheme were developed. The arenas remain distinct, because they encompass different actors, authorities, mandates, and functions, as well as different speeds and experiences of time and urgencies.

Finally, to engage with the policy dimension of the preparation scheme, we use the theoretical concepts of policy instrument and instrument constituencies. In this sense, the chapter draws inspiration from the works of Lascoumes and LeGales (2007) and Simons and Voß (2018). These concepts permit the chapter to focus explicitly on the preparation scheme and the development of its selection process, including the recruitment of protagonists, the agency behind instrument design, the social enactment of instruments, and how the instrument came to shape the policy–practice nexuses across arenas according to their own logic.

We find the identified theoretical concepts heuristically compatible with each other, since they all have different foci and add supplementary perspectives. While the postcolonial lens offers insights into the contextual workings of the system, the other theoretical concepts allow us to focus on the preparation scheme and the interactions between arenas, respectively. The centre– periphery dynamics are epitomized in the uploading and downloading perspectives on the arenas.

In terms of chronology, we limit our investigation to cover only the first year of the preparation scheme, after the Copenhagen/Greenland arena had issued its basic guidelines for launching the scheme in general and assessing the children in particular. The year 1961 was when the scheme was developed, recontextualized and translated across arenas. In this sense, a focus on that year offers a privileged lens into understanding the emergence of policy–practice nexuses revolving around a new policy instrument in the making.

The chapter draws on archival material harvested from the Greenlandic Department for Culture, Education, Research, and Church (KIIN Archive) and The Danish National Archives/Rigsarkivet (RA), as well as primary sources in the shape of reports from key events and historical publications from the leading actors of the

time. The KIIN Archive material consists of correspondence between the arenas, as well as concrete recommendations of pupils from the school districts.

In the next section, we introduce a case study to add important points about the context, with the purpose of establishing a necessary frame of analysis. An analysis of the downloading and uploading processes across the three arenas follows. The concluding discussion looks across the three arenas and engages with the research questions, presenting a summary of the insights gathered from this research endeavour.

Introducing the Case Study

Following a constitutional revision in 1953, Greenland effectively went from being a Danish colony to becoming an integrated county in the Kingdom of Denmark. This newly given status, at the time, was part of a decolonizing process after World War II, when the newly formed UN pushed its agenda globally. In 1955, the Directorate for Greenland was transformed into the Ministry for Greenland (MfG), signalling an era of more active and transformative policies in Greenland.

The Greenlandic education system consisted of 18 school districts – often coinciding with the old colonial districts (Gad, 1984) – organized under the auspices of the School Directorate in Godthåb. They were headed by a school inspector, and each comprised a teachers' council.⁴ Even though the MfG in Copenhagen held economic control and served as the highest authority in governing Greenland, the School Directorate achieved a significant degree of autonomy, such that the educational field stood out as a rather special case in the governing of Greenland. It was the only area with a local administration in Greenland, while all other areas had to 'ask homewards', as it was put; that is, consult the Danish executive (Ydesen, 2011; 1950 Education Act, §3). This autonomy was reflected in the authorization of the School Directorate to issue administration circulars without consulting the MfG.

This significant autonomy was partly due to a history of autonomy dating back to when the church ran the educational system, an autonomy rooted in the vast geographical distances in Greenland and the heterogeneous nature of Greenlandic schools. Moreover, being a large, nationwide institution, the educational system had long assumed a strong position within the administration of Greenland. However, part of the explanation can also be found in a lack of pedagogical competence in the MfG caused by scant contact between the MfG and the Danish Ministry of Education (Stærmose, 1960). Pedagogical expertise at the MfG relied heavily on the school inspectors they employed, who functioned as day-to-day liaison officers with the School Directorate in Godthåb and as ministerial advisors. The school inspectors mostly participated in the process of employing Danish teachers for the Greenlandic

⁴Grønlands Statistik, Statistisk Årbog, *Grønlands skolevæsen 1968–1969*, Nuuk, 1970, p. 6 f.

educational system and in the selection and preparation of teaching resources for Greenland (Jensen, 2001). These points clearly indicate that major decisions regarding the Greenlandic educational system – including decisions about curricula and assessments – were made by the School Directorate. From the perspective of local and remote schools in Greenland, however, the educational system remained a highly centralized system, not least because the School Directorate controlled budgeting, supplies and distribution, and personnel policies, as well as all building and maintenance activities (Jensen, 1998).

A key education issue in the 1950s was the expansion of the role of the Danish language in Greenland. The MfG pursued a policy of Greenlandic children needing to improve their Danish language skills to receive a higher educational level and to thereby become a more integrated part of Denmark (Ydesen, 2011). The ethnic Greenlandic school director Christian Berthelsen (1916–2015) wrote, ‘The road to further education for the young Greenlandic goes ... through a certain mastering of the Danish language’.⁵ In a retrospective article, Berthelsen (2008), reflecting on his time as school director in Godthåb, emphasized, ‘Time and time again, I was expressly told that my most important task was to teach the Danish language to the youth growing up’ (p. 13).

There was a clear postcolonial dimension to this policy. Many administrators in Greenland had strong modernization ambitions for Greenlandic society, and these ambitions were legitimated by an understanding of traditional Greenlandic culture being obsolete. An early example comes from the ethnic Dane Finn Gad (1911–1986), who was a historian and lecturer at the teacher’s college in Godthåb from 1937 to 1946. About Greenlandic culture, Gad (1946) wrote, ‘Just as the material culture has been able to evolve to a certain point and then reached a standstill, it is typical that also the spiritual culture has evolved to a certain point and then not one step further’ (p. 37). The quotation reveals a clear evolutionary, hierarchical view of culture that clearly places Greenlandic culture in an inferior position. Another example is provided by Berthelsen, who, in a 1972 report on the past 20 years of development in the Greenlandic educational system, constantly referred to the Greenlandic sealing society as ‘static’, to contrast it with the apparently ‘dynamic’ Danish industrialized society as a role model (p. 10). The same notion is also reflected in the writings of former educational psychologist and headmaster of the Greenlandic Teachers College, the ethnic Greenlandic Ingmar Egede (1930–2003): ‘many children and youngsters interpret the position of the Greenlandic language in school as an expression that the language, and thus the way of life, with which it is connected, is inferior’ (Egede, 1976, p. 16). Thus, a picture emerges of a postcolonial mindset shared within a group of administrators consisting of both ethnic Danes and an ethnic Greenlandic elite. As argued by Rud (2019), the Greenlandic elite had long been eager to achieve the same rights and opportunities as the Danes in terms of legal position, education, social mobility, political influence, and economy.

⁵ KIIIN Archive, j.nr. 0670-05-01, 1966/67, sheet 4.

However, the implication was often that the Greenlandic elite had to make a ‘cultural leap’ to achieve these benefits.

However, besides the postcolonial dimension of the language policy in the Greenlandic education system, there was a material dimension. In the 1950s, there was a marked shortage of teachers, meaning that ethnic Danish teachers had to be employed in Greenland who could only teach in Danish, and therefore, over time, it became increasingly important for Greenlandic pupils to improve their Danish language skills.

By 1961, the privileged position of the Danish language in Greenland meant that the preparation scheme saw the light of day. Its purpose was, among others, to improve the Greenlandic children’s Danish language skills to enable them to pass the lower secondary school exam faster than children who went to school in Greenland.⁶ At the time, the language barriers between Greenlandic and Danish meant that it took 2–3 years more to produce a lower secondary school graduate in Greenland than in Denmark.⁷ When the scheme was first launched in 1961, it discursively professed the ‘home sending’ of 26 ethnic Greenlandic children (13 girls and 13 boys), who had to obtain 1 year of schooling in Denmark.⁸ Concurrently, the same number of children was selected to be schooled for 1 year in Godthåb, so the success of schooling in Denmark could be compared with the year of schooling in Greenland.⁹

The Greenlandic school system consisted of a four-year lower secondary school, in addition to a seven-year mandatory public school. It was a widespread opinion among teachers in Greenland – many of whom were ethnic Danish – that Greenlandic children did not possess the necessary maturity to enter lower secondary school, which is why a one- or two-year preparation class was added between the two modules, finishing with an entrance exam (Ydesen, 2011) (Fig. 7.1).¹⁰

Another key development was a scheme of streaming pupils in Greenland. The 1950 Education Act meant the division of pupils into A and B classes¹¹ after second grade at ‘feasible locations’ (§ 10). Two years later, in 1952, the scheme was implemented in the four major urban schools of Egedesminde [*Asiaat*], Julianehåb, Holsteinsborg [*Sisimiut*], and Godthåb (Jensen, 2001, p. 127).

The purpose of the streaming scheme was to create a stream (the B classes), where pupils would be taught several subjects in Danish. This stream was created for children who had a better starting point than others for learning Danish. Conversely, the A classes were intended for less-skilled Danish-speaking pupils, who would only be taught Danish as a foreign language (Gam, 1968; Rasmussen,

⁶RA, MfG, journalsager1957–89, nr. 1203-07-00 and KIIIN Archive, j.nr. 949.3, 1961.

⁷KIIIN Archive, j.nr. 949.3, sheet 2, 1961: Minutes from a MfG Meeting on 19 June 1961.

⁸KIIIN Archive, j.nr. 949.3, sheet 2, 1961: Minutes from a MfG Meeting on 19 June 1961.

⁹KIIIN Archive, j.nr. 949.3, 1961, sheet 2: Minutes from a Meeting in the MfG on 19 June 1961.

¹⁰KIIIN Archive, j.nr. 949.3, 1961: Minutes from a Meeting in the MfG on 19 June 1961.

¹¹The terms A and B classes do not refer to a ranking system, but reflect the streaming of children into non-academic [*almen*] and academic [*boglig*] classes.

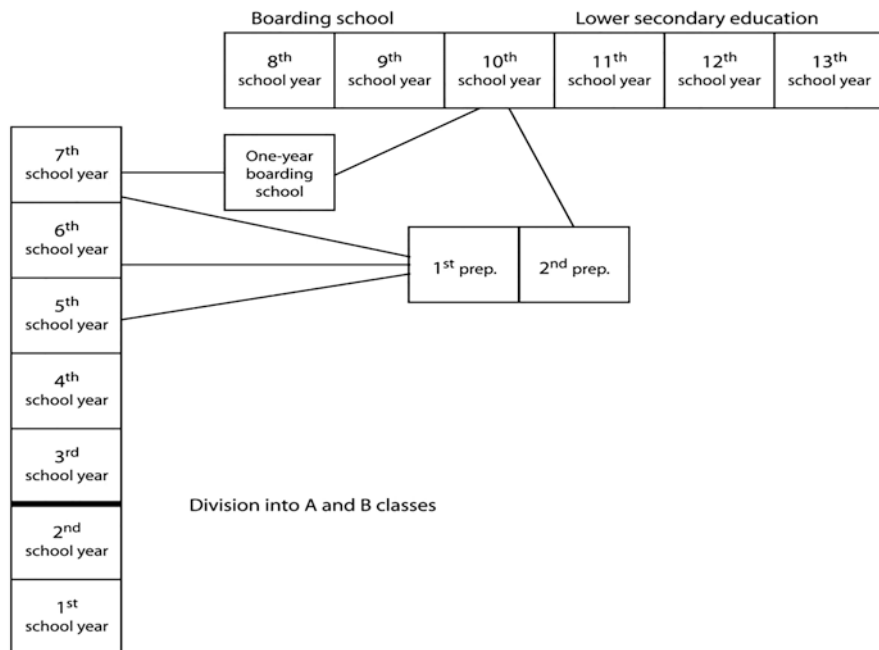


Fig. 7.1 The Greenlandic education system according to the 1950 Education Act. (Reproduced from Ydesen, 2011, p. 185)

2005). Since, at that time, Danish was the only language that could provide an entrance ticket to higher education, it also meant that the pupils placed in the B classes now suddenly gained an elitist status compared to their fellow pupils from the A classes (Ydesen, 2011).

The Copenhagen/Godthåb Arenas: Downloading the Preparation Scheme

The idea of sending Greenlandic children to Denmark for education was raised decades before the start of the scheme in 1961. As early as 1921, the idea of sending Greenlandic children to Denmark was put forth by the Danish geographer Sophie Petersen (1885–1965), and, during the 1959 Greenlandic National Congress, the issue was raised by Greenland’s first school director, the ethnic Dane Mikael Gam (1901–1982) (Ydesen, 2011). Gam even proposed sending all children from the B classes to Denmark to promote a principle of bilingualism (Jensen, 2001). Thus, when the scheme started, political backing was secured, not least because Gam had become Danish Minister for Greenland in Copenhagen in 1960.

Nevertheless, Berthelsen, who took over the office of school director as Gam's successor in 1960, expressed serious concerns about the scheme. First, Berthelsen believed that the abrupt and profound change of environment could have damaging effects on some of the children. Second, he felt that his task was to secure and expand the Greenlandic school system in Greenland, not in Denmark. Third, Berthelsen doubted that the scheme would generate any cost reduction in Greenland, remaining unconvinced that the 350,000–400,000 DKK budget for the preparation scheme would not be better spent in Greenland. Fourth, Berthelsen found that the scheme of sending children on a one-year school trip to Denmark was 'an artificial intervention' in the Greenlandic school system. However, Berthelsen was put under pressure by the local teacher councils in Greenland and the MfG to endorse the preparation scheme, and eventually Berthelsen proved to be a loyal and careful civil servant who would not try to obstruct Gam's plans for the new scheme (Ydesen, 2011).

Berthelsen was, however, not the only one to raise concerns about the new scheme. In a pupil evaluation from Holsteinsborg in June 1961, explicit concerns were expressed about the psychological impact of the cultural 'repotting', as it was expressed.¹² So, while Berthelsen saw the preparation scheme as a temporary initiative, Gam saw the process as a more permanent program right from the start. Gam stated that 'if the plan is met with understanding, both from schools and parents, it is highly conceivable that it will continue in the years to come'.¹³ In this sense, the roll-out of the preparation scheme has a distinct top-down power component that clearly reflects a hierarchy between Copenhagen and Godthåb and perhaps even also gives an indication of the limits of how much power an ethnic Greenlandic civil servant could obtain.

The main operational component of the preparation scheme as a policy instrument was the development of a pupil selection process. This is where the values and discourses most vividly found an expression, but also where it is possible to find a glimpse of the priorities, agendas, and means inherent in the preparation scheme. Pupil selection criteria are at the core of the different enactments of the policy instrument – that is, the policy–practice nexuses – and they therefore constitute the content issued to be downloaded by subordinate arenas in the Danish–Greenlandic education system.

As indicated in the minutes from a central meeting at the MfG in June 1961, the development of pupil selection criteria for local schools was something that both the School Directorate in Godthåb and the MfG came up with together. In this sense, it does not make sense to distinguish between Copenhagen and Godthåb in the formulation phase of the preparation scheme. Instead, the selection criteria are the expression of the joint agenda and discourse of the administration permeated by a postcolonial mindset. The school director, Berthelsen, stated the overall and important guidelines to follow in the assessment process to be¹⁴

¹² KIIIN Archive, j.nr. 949.3, 1961. This concern of Holsteinsborg was shared by many teachers in Greenland.

¹³ KIIIN Archive, j.nr. 949.3, 1961, læg 2: Minutes from a Meeting in the MfG on 19 June 1961.

¹⁴ KIIIN Archive, j.nr. 949.3, sheet 2, 1961: Minutes from a MfG Meeting on 19 June 1961.

1. The pupils' endowments
2. Danish language proficiency
3. The parents' unequivocal support
4. The pupils' physical and mental stability

At first, the call was for the selection of 25 children, but the number was quite quickly changed to 26, to identify 13 boys and 13 girls. The number of children to be selected was defined by the economic frame of the scheme, as well as a consideration of gender composition. At the same time, the essential experimental nature of the scheme aiming to compare pupils at the Godthåb boarding school with pupils sent to Denmark was at the forefront of the scheme, right from the outset. This distinct experimental dimension of the scheme testifies to the social engineering approach taken by the authorities in this matter. The agenda was to identify the fastest and most efficient path to the modernization of Greenland in the image of Denmark. Berthelsen was a key arbiter in the scheme, holding independent authority as school director and tasked with communication, mediation, and liaison between the MfG in Copenhagen and the local schools in Greenland.

The fact that Berthelsen was the one formulating the selection guidelines indicates the autonomy of the School Directorate. In this sense, Berthelsen became a key co-constructor of the preparation scheme as formatted in the Copenhagen arena. One interpretation is that the centre–periphery relations became blurred. More specifically, however, the strong involvement of the School Directorate in the design of the preparation scheme is an indication that the centre–periphery relations follow a different recipe, which is better understood in terms of cultural scripts and priorities than along lines of ethnicity and bureaucratic hierarchies. Although the motives could have been different, the cultural scripts between Copenhagen and Godthåb seem to have common ground *vis-à-vis* Greenlandic culture, which was seen as inadequate for the world of tomorrow. It thus became an object of a modernization process, and this started with education and the school.

The Local School Arena

When news of the preparation scheme reached the local arena in Greenland, the schools found themselves with only an overall set of guidelines on how to evaluate and nominate their pupils. In other words, the guidelines often raised more questions than they answered. Being left with such a sparse set of guidelines to follow in the selection of school children for the scheme, in many cases the schools ended up downloading different interpretations on how to nominate their pupils. Consequently, the practices being adopted were far from aligned or unilateral across the Greenlandic school arena.

As demonstrated in Fig. 7.2, there was generally considerable discrepancy between the number of pupils nominated for a one-year school stay in Denmark and the number of pupils selected for the preparation scheme. This pattern could be interpreted as indicating that interest in participating in the preparation scheme was

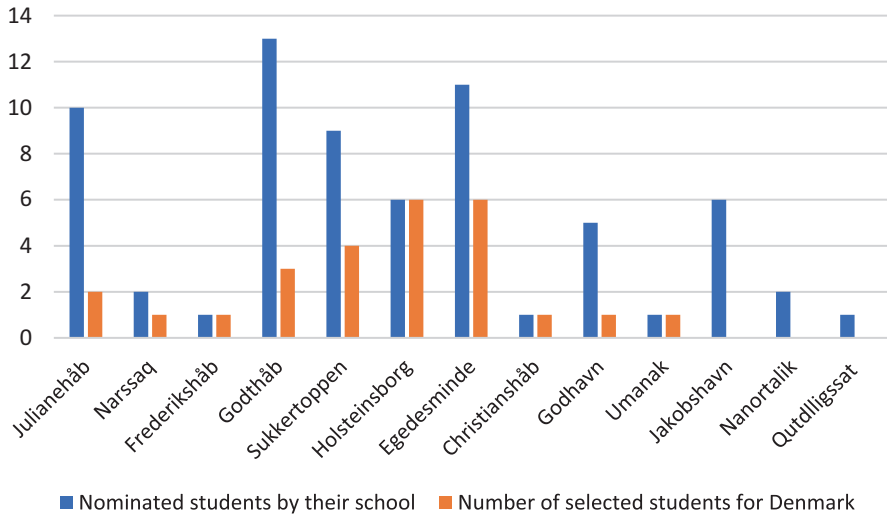


Fig. 7.2 Nomination and selection of school pupils for 1 year of schooling in Denmark

much greater than the actual number of places available. In this sense, an alignment of expectations between the different arenas had not taken place. The procedure was for the local schools to upload their pupil nominations in a prioritized ranking, and the School Directorate in Godthåb would then make the final selection of pupils. A total of 70 pupils from various schools around the country were nominated for the one-year school stay in Denmark, which the School Directorate would narrow down to 26. This procedure left the School Directorate with the deciding voice, and it clearly put the schools in a dependent position. Therefore, it is particularly interesting why some schools' nominations were severely reduced, while a few nominations precisely matched the number of final selections. Most notable is the school of Holsteinsborg, as shown in Fig. 7.2. To unpack these patterns and determine how the policy instrument was downloaded in the local school arena, it is necessary to delve into the archival communications from the local school arena to the Godthåb arena.

At the Sukkertoppen [*Maniitsoq*] school, a letter from the head teacher to the School Directorate in response to the call for the nomination of suitable pupils stated,

[The pupils] are nominated according to giftedness, based on the school's assessment. I have nominated them all for a stay in Denmark, because their parents all have been very interested and because I believe their proficiency levels are such that they will manage and because I consider them to be so mature that they should have a good chance of improving under different and foreign conditions. The pupils from 6b have also been listed in numerical order, but it is perhaps doubtful whether No. 1 and No. 2 are better than 3 and 4, but the first two are much more Danish speaking and influenced, so I believe that the school's nomination covers the selection quite well.¹⁵

¹⁵ KIIN Archive, j.nr. 949.3, sheet 2, 1961: Nominations from the school of Sukkertoppen, 29 May 1961.

First, it is noteworthy that the school argues along the lines of the guidelines issued by the Copenhagen/Godthåb arena. It emphasizes the support of the parents and the pupils' endowments. However, the response also reveals a lack of precision in ranking the nominated pupils. In this case, giftedness is a key indicator, while the postcolonial mindset also comes to the fore when 'Danish speaking and influenced' is used as an argument for selecting children. This indicates that the schools were left with significant room for interpretation and local assessments. This interpretation is substantiated in the communications from other schools.

The uploading from the Julianehåb school expressed severe doubts about how many pupils they could nominate, and they therefore decided to send a list of 10 pupil names, with a remark that they could just as easily have nominated 10 more pupils (see the opening quote). The school seems to have experienced great difficulty in prioritizing a ranking of the recommended pupils. Therefore, it added a comment recommending that some pupils be assessed similarly, since they were found to be equally talented. Again, the element of local assessments comes to the fore, but the attempt to maximize the number of pupils being selected from Julianehåb could even be seen as an attempt to redefine the criteria anchored in local needs and priorities. On the other hand, the letter from Julianehåb does emphasize the two best-ranked pupils, who were described as much more proficient than the other pupils. Eventually, the School Directorate chose to select precisely those two pupils for the school stay in Denmark, which indicates that pupil endowment seems to have been a key criterion in the preparation scheme.

In the smaller town of Nanortalik, the school nominated only two pupils for the scheme. Compared to Julianehåb, which had nominated 10 pupils, the picture emerging from Nanortalik is very different. An interesting explanation for this reverse picture is found in the letter from Nanortalik to Berthelsen. The letter tells a story about how the Julianehåb head teacher, Stærmosé, had been involved in the Nanortalik nominations:

The head teacher from Julianehåb took part in testing the pupils and said that we should write the following about the pupils, 'Just before the arrival of your telegram 6093, we had an entry exam for the boarding school conducted by School Inspector Stærmosé, Julianehåb. I therefore asked the school inspector if he thought there were obvious cases in this district. He replied that I should nominate the tested pupils from this school not as obvious, but as fairly good cases. Out of these there were only three whose parents unambiguously wanted it'.¹⁶

The quote clearly indicates that Stærmosé exerted influence in the nomination process of pupils from Nanortalik. It therefore becomes relevant to identify what seems like a shadow criterion in the nomination process, namely, the power play between the schools and districts in Greenland. Stærmosé, an ethnic Dane, was a man with great influence and power in the Greenlandic education arena. In 1957, he became the convener of all teachers in Greenland¹⁷ and, in 1961, he became the

¹⁶KIIN Archive, j.nr. 949.3, sheet 2, 1961: Nominations from the School of Nanortalik, 31 May 1961.

¹⁷*Atuagagdliutit*, 97(22), 16 (24 October 1957).

school consultant with the MfG,¹⁸ which allowed him to operate as a cross-arena arbiter wielding considerable capital in the Danish–Greenlandic education system. It is striking how Stærmosé found it possible to nominate only two pupils from Nanortalik, while his own school in Julianehåb could easily have nominated 20 pupils. This case with Stærmosé also indicates that gatekeeping also had some kind of influence in the selection process, or at least it seems to be the case in the most southern part of Greenland, where both schools/towns were located.

A different aspect that could also have played a role in the nomination process is that of the economy. Berthelsen felt the great distances between all the small towns in Greenland were causing problems in terms of resource distribution and education standards and, therefore, also for the modernization project of Greenland. In a 1963 meeting at the School Directorate, Berthelsen is quoted in the minutes as having said, ‘I suppose it must be considered as wishful thinking to stop the population growth in the remote areas, let alone achieve that half the population of the remote areas would leave the areas (...).¹⁹ It is therefore reasonable to assume that the economy and geography played a role in the preparation scheme.²⁰ As reflected in the November 1960 planning meeting for the preparation scheme, ‘the School Director noted that the expenses associated with a one-year school stay in Denmark had been estimated at 350,000–400,000 DKK per year’.²¹ However, that cost could have been higher for children coming from remote areas, because of transportation expenses, and that would have had implications for the spending ceiling of the preparation scheme.²²

As indicated, Holsteinsborg school is an interesting case, because it was successful in having all their nominated pupils selected. Apparently, the school also had doubts about how many pupils could be afforded for a year of schooling in Denmark. The school decided to recommend six pupils for the scheme. Interestingly, the school decided to make a special recommendation for the Godthåb classes, rather than just for the Denmark classes:

¹⁸ *Atuagagdliutit*, 101(15), 18 (13 July 1961).

¹⁹ RA, MfG, journalsager 1957–89, nr. 1200-01-03: Minutes from a Meeting in the School Directorate in Greenland on 11 December 1963. The urge to depopulate the remote areas of Greenland is also reflected in the extensive Danish government reports of 1950 and 1960. In 2022, the Danish Broadcasting Corporation revealed that some 4500 Greenlandic girls and women had contraceptive intrauterine devices inserted against their will or without their consent in the 1960s and 1970s. The rationale behind this procedure was increasing expenses for the Danish state in Greenland. In June 2022, the Danish Ministry of Health launched an independent investigation into what happened during what has now been dubbed the spiral scandal. See <https://www.dr.dk/lyd/p1/spiralkampagnen>

²⁰ It should be duly mentioned that the administrators of the preparation scheme in the 1970s gave children from remote areas preference, since they were seen as being most in need of Danish language skills (Ydesen, 2011).

²¹ KIIIN Archive, j.nr. 949.3, sheet 2, 1960: Minutes from the School Directorate meeting in Greenland Monday, 21 November 1960.

²² *Ibid*

Of course, there are too many pupils for these experiments, but we hope that some of the pupils recommended for the first lower secondary school grade will be directly accepted. Here we ignore the regular recommendation and add the following comments: Godthåb 1–4 are recommended here because their Danish language skills are so good that they are not in urgent need of the extra training a school stay in Denmark would give them.²³

Thus, in the Holsteinsborg letter, it is possible to find another reinterpretation and intention of the initial scheme of the MfG. Instead of nominating their most skilled pupils for the one-year stay in Denmark, they selected these to go to Godthåb and then selected their next best pupils to go to Denmark. This selection was based on an argument that the next best pupils would benefit more from a stay in Denmark. The example of Holsteinsborg shows how the selection process could be interpreted very differently, and it clearly demonstrates agency in terms of uploading its own policy about which pupils would benefit most from a school stay in Denmark. The Holsteinsborg approach even seems to have been the most successful in terms of having its wishes fulfilled.

The very different policy enactments reflected in the uploading responses to Godthåb indicate that several concerns were important to the local schools, including the parents' wishes, teachers' assessments, and the general promotion of the community by putting as many pupils on the modernization track as possible. At the same time, the analysis indicates the existence of shadow criteria in the nomination and selection processes, where the postcolonial mindset is revealed. We have seen indications of power play between schools, strategic calculations of how to best push one's agenda, and local interpretations, priorities, and assessments, but also how the somewhat random influence of parents would sometimes tip the balance in favour of their child. In a telegram from the school director to the MfG dated 27 June 1961, it is highlighted how 'many parents want to send their children on a school trip to Denmark'.²⁴ The response resonates with the responses from both Godhavn [*Qeqertarsuaq*] and Sukkertoppen of parents pushing the school to nominate their children. In this sense, a picture can be drawn where the parents were generally positively disposed towards sending their children to Denmark. The sources contain several parental complaints about rejections, and, in some cases, the parents even offered to pay for the school trip themselves (Ydesen, 2011).

The Godthåb/Copenhagen Arenas: Uploading the Preparation Scheme

In this section, we investigate how the uploads from the local school arena were processed and reshaped by the School Directorate in Godthåb and uploaded to the Copenhagen arena. Starting with insight into Berthelsen's own selection process of

²³ KIIN Archive, j.nr. 949.3, sheet 2, 1961: Nominations from the school of Holsteinsborg, 3 June 1961.

²⁴ KIIN Archive, j.nr. 949.3, sheet 2, 1961.

the pupils, it is possible to obtain a better perspective of how he interpreted his own guidelines and how he downloaded the expectations of the kind of pupils he was supposed to select.

On 17 July 1961, Berthelsen wrote a letter to the MfG that addressed his selection of the 26 pupils. In this letter it becomes clear that the uploaded agendas from the various schools did not directly affect Berthelsen's selection process enough to steer him away from his own understandings and agenda. What becomes very explicit in Berthelsen's upload is a wish to select the most European/civilized children for the one-year school stay. In his letter, he is focused on pointing out how Greenlandic children, apart from those living in the south of Greenland, are not familiar with so-called European conditions:

Conditions in the southern part of Greenland seem more civilized. A profession such as sheep breeding is not well known outside the Julianehåb area. Children from the northern part of Greenland are more familiar with the stricter climatic conditions, while the conditions in the south provide greater opportunities for the introduction of European-style conditions.²⁵

In a theoretical lens, the discourse about Greenlandic children in the quote certainly contains a considerable degree of othering, where the otherness of Greenlandic children – in light of a notion of Europeanness – seems to be increasing on a continuum from the centre to the periphery. Berthelsen's remarks appears almost apologetic for the pupils' non-Europeanness. This is perhaps to align expectations with the MfG. Berthelsen continues,

For all school children, it applies – as already mentioned – that they are much closer to nature in everyday life and, to the children, the schools in Denmark will seem very orderly and beautiful ... the children will discover that time with minutes and seconds play a dominant role in Denmark, while, in Greenland, people have a somewhat lighter attitude to being late, for example, for meals. They will find that everything in Denmark is minutely planned.²⁶

The focus on the comparison between very strict Danish punctuality versus a more unstructured time perception among Greenlanders reveals that the criteria of being civilized, punctual, and European are central for the final selection of the candidates of the preparation scheme. Given a closer look at the schools from which most children were selected, it becomes clear that most of them came from the larger urban schools operating with a B stream (most notably Holsteinsborg). This is a clear indication that Berthelsen saw these children as those best suited to fit into a Danish context.

In a postcolonial lens, the upload from Berthelsen is interesting, because it indicates that he felt a need to even make reservations vis-à-vis the MfG about the best pupils he could find. It seems that not even children who lived up to the

²⁵ KIIN Archive, j.nr. 949.3, sheet 2, 1961: Letter to the MfG about which pupils the school director selected for the one-year school stay in Denmark, 17 July 1961.

²⁶ KIIN Archive, j.nr. 949.3, sheet 2, 1961: Letter to the MfG about which pupils the school director selected for the one-year school stay in Denmark, 17 July 1961.

selection criteria were deemed to be equal to the Danish standards of being civilized. What Berthelsen provided in this sense were 26 children who were perhaps best positioned to make the cultural leap from Greenlandishness to Danishness. In his retrospective article from 1976, Ingmar Egede wrote the following about the Greenlandic education system: 'Planning and development have happened on Western European conditions and the carriers of societal functions are Danes and the few Greenlanders who have made the big cultural leap' (p. 10). In this sense, the upload from Berthelsen to the MfG reflects a selection process in which the children considered most apt to make the cultural leap – and who would minimize the risks identified by Berthelsen in his initial concerns about the preparation scheme – were selected.

Concluding Discussion: Looking across the Arenas

In this concluding discussion, we return to our purpose with the chapter, to analyse the emergence of policy–practice nexuses revolving around a new policy instrument, using the context and case of the 1961 preparation scheme in Greenland as our object of analysis.

Through our analysis, we have demonstrated how a policy instrument was recontextualized in a downloading and subsequent uploading process between the MfG in Copenhagen, the School Directorate in Godthåb, and the local school districts in Greenland. In this sense, the context displays a clear centre–periphery dimension that also entailed a salient power dimension. In the initial negotiations about the roll-out of the policy instrument, school director Berthelsen expressed serious concerns about the expediency of the scheme. Berthelsen was backed by voices from the local school districts. In this process, the MfG stood firm, and the plans for rolling out the preparation scheme were upheld. Once the decision had been made, the new policy instrument seems to have broadly gained a keen instrument constituency across the arenas. Berthelsen and other leading actors, such as Stærmose, played important roles and exerted considerable agency in the enactment of the policy instrument. It is important to note that the instrument constituency of the preparation scheme was not limited to these leading actors. Instead, local teachers, school leaders, and even parents subscribed to the core idea of the preparation scheme, namely, the one-year school stay in Denmark to improve Greenlandic children's Danish language skills and thus put them in a privileged position as vital cogs in the modernization of Greenlandic society in the image of Denmark.

The political construction of the policy instrument and the emergence of an instrument constituency cannot be understood without considering the distinct postcolonial setting of the Greenlandic education system in the 1960s. The postcolonial compass meant the establishment of a cultural hierarchy placing

Danish culture at the top and Greenlandic culture at the bottom. The value yardstick upholding this hierarchy consisted of desires for modernization, progress, industrialization, economic growth, and prosperity. Although, there could be disagreement about how these goals should be achieved between Greenland and Denmark, these desires had long been shared by the Greenlandic elite, and, in this sense, a rather conducive environment for the enactment of the preparation scheme ranging from the centre to the periphery eventually came into existence. We have argued that the underlying condition for this to happen was an alignment of the cultural scripts between Copenhagen and Godthåb, positioning Greenland as an object of a modernization process. Education and schooling were at the forefront of this process.

However, even though the ideas and goals of the preparation scheme resonated across the arenas, this did not mean that the recontextualization process would run smoothly or encompass aligned agendas and shared understandings. Our analysis has demonstrated several different interpretations and considerations in – and between – the MfG/Godthåb and school district arenas. This finding testifies to the agency of key actors seeking to modify the policy instrument and push their own agendas by exploiting ambiguities and creating arguments that would benefit local interests and agendas. In the arena of the School Directorate, it is notable that Berthelsen greatly reduced the number of pupils recommended by the school districts for the preparation scheme in accordance with the 26-pupil ceiling of the programme. Some schools' recommendations, however, were modified more than others. In this sense, Holsteinsborg stands out as the only district with a match between the number of pupils recommended and the final number of pupils selected.

Our focus on the pupil selection criteria has revealed several interesting findings arising in the intersections and downloading/uploading processes between arenas. Local schools received the selection criteria issued by the School Directorate in very different ways, and they pursued different strategies in their uploading to the Godthåb arena, not least because of local idiosyncrasies and the vast geographical distances in Greenland. Even so, a picture emerges of local schools being generally concerned with the parents' wishes, teachers' assessments, and the general promotion of the community by having as many suitable pupils selected in the preparation scheme as possible. At the same time, the analysis indicates the existence of shadow criteria in the nomination and selection processes, where we have seen indications of power play between schools, gatekeepers, and strategic calculations about how to best push one's agenda. Berthelsen went to great lengths to align expectations with the MfG in his upload of the final selections. It is plausible that Berthelsen tried to compensate for some of his initial concerns about the preparation scheme in his selection. Again, the postcolonial setting comes strongly to the fore in Berthelsen's correspondence to the MfG, where the otherness of Greenlandic children – in light of a notion of Europeanness – seems to be increasing on a continuum from the geographical centre to the periphery.

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Chapter 8

Merging Traditions and Emerging Tensions



Nexus Linking Education Policy and the Development of the Teaching Profession

Petter Aasen and Tine S. Prøitz 

Abstract The development of teacher professionalism is contextualised in timely and spatial configurations. Historically educational policy and reforms have influenced the development of the teaching profession. In this chapter we discuss how educational policy and reforms in primary and secondary education and teacher education have influenced the construction of the teacher profession in Norway. We limit our examination of this policy—practice nexus starting from the end of the nineteenth century. In analysing policies and politics that have shaped developments of the teaching profession, we focus on three nexuses or connections crucial in any analysis of professional development: Policies influencing (1) the organization of arenas for professional development, (2) the steering, management and organisation of the professional field and occupational practice and (3) the professional knowledge, skills, and standards. We argue that different knowledge regimes in educational policy historically have influenced the construction of the teacher profession and laid foundations for new forms of differentiation within the teaching profession. To meet emerging tensions and new forms of differentiation, the challenge seems to be how teacher education can strengthen research-based and value-based professionalism and how teacher training can ensure that the profession is developing a coherent conceptual framework, a common language, a unified theory, an intellectual community, and a frame of reference for value-based and evidence-informed reflection and action.

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Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to examine the construction, development and differentiation of the teaching profession serving public education in Norway from a historical and contemporary political perspective. The foundation for the public school in Norway was laid in 1739 through a royal decree introducing compulsory schooling for all children. Over the next 100 years, compulsory schooling for children of the peasantry and of the poor in the cities focused on reading instruction and religion. The church supervised the school, and church servants were teachers. In parallel, in the cities there were separate schools for children of civil servants and the bourgeoisie that went beyond religious instruction and prepared pupils for the professions of the bourgeoisie and for receiving a university education. In these schools, the teachers had their education in disciplines offered at the university, but they had no pedagogical training. Gradually over a relatively long period, the church and theological knowledge base lost the hegemony. The decisive defeat, however, did not come until the end of the nineteenth century when the Norwegian parliament passed laws stating that public schools were no longer just meant to prepare for Christian confirmation. To support the reforms, separate educational institutions for teacher training were established (Telhaug & Mediås, 2003; Telhaug et al., 2006; Aasen, 2008).

The chapter describes and discusses how educational policy and reforms in primary, secondary and teacher education have influenced the historical construction of the teacher profession. Nexus or connections linking policy and professional development and professional practice in the construction of the teacher profession is complex and addresses several issues, different stakeholders and historical and new forms of differentiation within the teaching profession. In analysing the developments of the teaching profession in Norway, we focus on three nexuses or connections that are crucial in any analysis of professional development: Policies influencing (1) organization of arenas for professional development, (2) steering, management and organisation of the professional field and occupational practice and (3) professional knowledge, skills and standards (Fig. 8.1).

We address the socio-historical construction of the teaching profession and forms of differentiation within the profession based on a conceptual and thematically oriented analysis rather than a chronological approach. The chapter draws on review of previous historical and contemporary studies of education policy and reforms in Norway and a re-analysis of the findings. The material includes data and findings from a broad set of studies based on different sources and methodological approaches, including surveys, interviews, sociodemographic data, and policy documents.¹

Accordingly, the focus in this chapter is the nexuses or the links between policy and professional development and practice as a historical and contemporary basis

¹Brekke (2000), Telhaug and Mediås (2003), Garm and Karlsen (2004), Karlsen (2006), Telhaug et al. (2006), Aasen (2008), Afdal (2013), Aasen et al. (2015), Mausethagen et al. (2017), Prøitz and Aasen (2016, 2017), Mølstad and Prøitz (2018), and Mølstad et al. (2020).



Fig. 8.1 Nexuses linking policy and professional development & practise

for the development of the teaching profession. In an historical and international perspective Norway early introduced compulsory education and a common school for all; a comprehensive educational system which recruited students from all social strata. Compulsory and comprehensive schooling has also been decisive for the development of the teaching profession in many other countries. The assumption is that historical perspective on the development of the teaching profession in Norway will shed light on the policy-professional development and practice-nexuses and make the connections between policy and the development of the teacher profession more visible and thus promote the general understanding of the profession's social position and professional practice today.

Differentiation from a Historical Perspective

Historically, the construction of and the differentiation in the teacher profession and teacher professionalisation have developed in different ways in different countries. The concept of knowledge regimes can enable us to gain a better understanding of the policy practice nexus in the construction of the teaching profession and forms of differentiation. A knowledge regime in education policy refers to the understanding and definitions of governance, manners of governing and curriculum issues; thus, it comprises the contents, structures and processes of

education policy and governance. Different forms of knowledge regimes underpinning modernisation have given rise to different forms of educational systems and teacher professionalisation in different countries—both structurally and ideologically. Historically, different knowledge regimes work simultaneously within a country. They are in principle not linked to formal political organizations or parties. Historically knowledge regimes also operate across political party lines. Thus, one finds e.g., traces of a social democratic knowledge regime both on the political left and on the political right, although historically the centre of gravity lies in the former. The same applies to a cultural-conservative knowledge regime, but here the centre of gravity historically has been on the political right (Prøitz & Aasen, 2017; Aasen et al., 2014).

In Norway, an active state has strongly regulated the educational system, including teacher education, since the mid-1700s. Until the middle of the nineteenth century, educational policy was dominated by a *cultural-conservative knowledge regime* characterised by religious pietism. The curriculum conveyed religious and moral enlightenment and a Christian-Latin European culture of unity (Telhaug & Mediås, 2003). In the political sphere, the hegemony of pietism and the notion that state authority had its legitimacy from God were gradually replaced by the ideals of liberal democracy. In the cultural sphere, the belief of progress as the will of God was gradually replaced by the belief in enlightenment and science. However, the cultural dimension also drew on impulses from Romantic idealism. The school was seen as a way to revive Norway's soul and Norwegian identity after being the junior partner in unions with Denmark and later Sweden for many centuries. During the nineteenth century, national awareness and cultural nation building became a major task for the school curriculum. Christian humility was soon supplemented by national self-esteem and pride (Telhaug & Mediås, 2003).

Regarding teaching methods, the cultural-conservative pietistic knowledge regime, with its immense emphasis on memorising and reproductive pupil activity, came under heavy criticism from the mid-nineteenth century. The ideal became the enthusiastic, charismatic teacher who, through communication, motivated the students and released them from social and cultural constraints. The curriculum was no longer to be catechism explanations but rather a broad academic approach based on enlightenment and an encyclopaedic tradition. At the same time, the school's content was to reflect a national culture where the children met Norwegian literature, the Norse heritage and Norwegian fairy tales and legends (Telhaug & Mediås, 2003; Telhaug et al., 2006).

Approaching the turn of the century, education policy was increasingly influenced by a *social-democratic knowledge regime* that emphasised the school's role in the pursuit of social equalisation and integration. Gradually, the formation and operationalisation of a public, comprehensive education system became an increasingly powerful tool for the realisation of broader social goals, such as nation building, economic growth and equal opportunities. A comprehensive school system was introduced in 1896 as primary education for all children from grades 1 to 5; this was organised in a common school for all pupils, replacing the different types of schools that had existed in parallel before (Telhaug & Mediås, 2003).

The social-democratic knowledge regime, with its emphasis on comprehensive schooling, strengthened its position throughout the twentieth century. In 1920, public comprehensive school was extended to grades 1–7. Later, new legislation in 1969 and in 1997 expanded the comprehensive, unstreamed school system to levels 1–9 and 1–10 (primary and lower secondary school), respectively. Education was considered to be an extension of the state's duty to provide equality of opportunity for all members of society. Consequently, there has been little room in the Norwegian egalitarian political philosophy for elite schools, with the result being that private schools have constituted an insignificant fraction of the total number of schools in Norway. As late as 1970, the number of pupils in private schools comprised no more than 0.5 of the total number of children of compulsory school age (Telhaug, 1994; Aasen, 2003, 2007).

Since the mid-1990s, the Norwegian educational model has been influenced by a *market-liberal knowledge regime*. The consequence has been a new political order that can be characterised as dialectic in the way it unites faith in a relatively strong state with a neo-liberal political philosophy characterised by a market-based, choice-driven, consumerist policy (Aasen, 2003). The vision of a good state that ensures social and individual justice goes hand in hand with confidence in local autonomy, market-based solutions, and individual choice. However, even today, more than 90% of pupils in primary schools and lower and upper secondary schools attend public institutions (Prøitz & Aasen, 2017; Dieudé, 2021).

Historically, the comprehensive structure has been supplemented by a common national curriculum that has been regularly revised in terms of both its content and level of detail. As late as the fall of 2020, a new national curriculum for compulsory education and upper secondary education was introduced. Until recently (2010), the general teacher-training programme qualifying for teaching all levels and subjects in primary and lower secondary schools was an important tool for creating a strong inclusive community within schools. Often, pupils stayed with the same teacher for all subjects throughout primary school. As we shall see below, after 2010, reforms in teacher education and national appointment regulations have changed the qualification requirements for teachers both in primary and lower secondary schools. In upper secondary schools, however, teachers have always been specialised subject teachers holding a university degree.

To enhance the quality and efficiency in public education, policy initiatives and reforms after 1990 influenced by the market-liberal knowledge regime and new public management have reinforced deregulation and pushed policy-making authority downwards in the education system. A cornerstone in these reforms has been the introduction of new forms of governing and managing schools leading to increased decentralisation and enlarged autonomy for school owners,² school leaders and the

²In Norway, the 'school owner' concept refers to municipalities and counties that have the responsibility for the provision and results of primary and secondary education. It is also used to refer to a small but growing number of independent schools managed by trusts. The concept was introduced in parallel with the introduction of a more decentralised and accountability-oriented education system in the early 2000s.

teaching profession in general. Simultaneously influenced by the globalisation of educational policy, the reforms mark a serious effort to introduce robust performance management into the education system. More weight has been placed on the schools and on teachers' accountability for student achievement. This rationale has also influenced basic and continuing teacher training. The decentralisation of public education has brought into focus the balance between political/national and professional/local power and control over education. In this chapter these developments are seen as/are argued to have been/is suggested to be preparing the groundwork of new forms of differentiation in the teacher profession.

Below, we present and discuss the most notable trends in the three nexuses linking policy and professional development and professional practice in the construction of the teaching profession. In the last section, we argue that educational policy has influenced the construction of the teacher profession and laid foundations for historical and new forms of tension and differentiation within the teaching profession. However, first, we give a short presentation of the contemporary Norwegian education system and teacher education as a point of departure for the analytical and historical perspectives on policies influencing the organization of arenas for professional development, the steering, management and organisation of the professional field and occupational practice, and professional knowledge, skills, and standards.

The Norwegian Education System and Teacher Education

Since 1997, Norwegian children have begun their formal schooling in the calendar year in which they reach the age of six. Compulsory education covers 10 years and comprises primary education (grades 1–7) and lower secondary education (grades 8–10). Primary and lower secondary education is founded on the principle of a comprehensive, unstreamed school system that provides equal and adapted education for all based on a single national curriculum. Upper secondary education lasts for 3 years; it consists of either general or vocational studies.

Kindergarten is voluntary, but all children from 1 to 5 years old are entitled to enrolment. Municipalities are responsible for ensuring that the right to kindergarten is fulfilled by public or private providers. Whereas compulsory and upper secondary schooling in Norway is a public responsibility, with only approximately 4% of pupils attending private primary/lower secondary schools and 8% attending private upper secondary schools, 50% of children attend privately owned kindergartens. However, nonmunicipal kindergartens are entitled to a grant that equals 100% of the public funding allocated to municipal kindergartens.

The Norwegian parliament (the *Storting*) and government in general define the goals and decide the budgetary frameworks for primary and secondary education. The Ministry of Education and Research is Norway's highest public administrative agency for educational matters and handles implementing national educational policy. A common standard is ensured through legislation, through a national curricula and a national quality assessment system for monitoring of the results and quality of

education. The municipalities are responsible for running primary and lower secondary schools, while county authorities are responsible for upper secondary schools. Within the framework of statutes and national curricula, municipalities/counties, schools, and teachers can decide what learning materials to use and what teaching methods to adopt.

Today, a differentiated provision of teacher education and training studies is offered across the 23 higher education institutions in Norway. There are four teacher-training programmes: two 5-year integrated *primary and lower secondary school (PLS)* master's programmes (PLS levels 1–7 and PLS levels 5–10), a five-year integrated 'lector' programme (levels 8–13) and a one-year 'practical' teacher programme grounded on a discipline-based master's degree (levels 5–13). Traditionally, university colleges have offered teacher education for primary and lower secondary schools, while the universities have provided a master's education for teachers for lower and upper secondary school. Today, this division has changed, and universities generally offer all programmes.

Organization of Arenas for Professional Development

In the nineteenth century and far into the twentieth century, Norwegian education reflected a class society where it was a sharp distinction between the social recruitment to primary and secondary schools. This differentiation in the school system was also reflected in the organisation teacher education and the development of the teaching profession. The teachers in lower and upper secondary schools (*den lærde skole, middelskolen* later *realskole and gymnas*) were generally the sons of civil servants and people in free professions. They were recruited from subject or discipline focused programmes at the university.³ Teachers in primary schools (*allmueskoler*, later *folkeskoler*) were often recruited from gifted pupils from the peasantry who were trained at diocesan seminars and later, starting in the 1820s, at public teacher-training seminars⁴ (Aasen, 2008).

The university's educational programmes were subject oriented and scientifically grounded. The candidates did not receive any practical pedagogical training. The seminars aimed at primary school and taught practice-based, vocation-oriented education. Access to further education was not an option. Without first having

³ Until 1949, the **University of Oslo**, named **Royal Frederick University** until 1939, was the only university in Norway. The university was founded in 1811. Previously, Norwegian citizens went abroad for university education, primarily to Copenhagen. Norway currently has 10 universities, six university colleges and five scientific colleges owned by the state. Norway also has many private higher education institutions in the nonuniversity sector, 15 of which receive government support.

⁴ By 1890, there were seven public seminars in Norway. During the twentieth century, the seminar tradition was continued and expanded through a number of teacher education institutions (*lærerskoler*, later *lærerhøgskoler*).

passed secondary education—the Exam Artium—there were no openings for university studies, which, in turn, could help individuals to professionally and socially advancement. The road to secondary education for seminarians was long and expensive. Hence, the teacher profession was divided academically, socially, and culturally (Hagemann, 1992; Aasen, 2008; Thue, 2017).

Primary school and lower and upper secondary school were initially subject to their respective authoritative institutions: The state church and the university. This was also reflected in teacher education. Until the end of the nineteenth century, the priests were the administrators at the public teachers' seminars, where they exercised strict control over all aspects of the lives of future teachers. Christianity maintained a strong grip on teacher education well into the twentieth century. The teacher seminars were basically 'total institutions', where the students' moral lives became subject to constant monitoring and control. The first seminars were often situated in the countryside, where students were minimally exposed to temptations. The timetable was tight, the work pressure was hard, and all teaching took place in classrooms according to the model of teaching in the primary school. Although this strict control regime was gradually softened, for a long time, the legacy of the seminars came to shape the culture and teaching methods of teacher education of primary school. On the other hand, in line with the German and Nordic university traditions, the education given to future teachers in secondary school was open. Students enjoyed extensive freedom and the absence of institutionalised social control; they were educated in an academic knowledge tradition, for a long time without pedagogical preparation for the teaching profession.

In the nineteenth century, Norway was an agricultural society. In 1875, 210,000 pupils attended rural primary schools, while 35,000 attended urban schools. For a long time, male teachers dominated the rural primary school. In 1875, 3272 male teachers and 54 female teachers were registered in the rural primary schools (SSB, 2000). The period leading up to the interwar period in the twentieth century was characterised by the rapid urbanisation and feminisation of the teaching profession. The two phenomena were connected. In 1890, women made up 62 of urban primary school's teaching staff, but only 11 of the staff members in rural schools. Although a large majority of the male teachers came from the countryside and the peasantry, the female teachers were primarily from the bourgeoisie or the middle class in the cities. From around the turn of the century, women began to dominate the teacher seminars. Thus, rural primary school also received an increasing proportion of female teachers. By the end of the century, women made up most primary school teachers. In 1985, 58% of teachers were women. In 2017, the proportion of women was 75%. It is worth emphasising, however, that the process of the urbanisation of the teacher profession in Norway was slow, in many ways slower than the general urbanisation and industrialisation of society would suggest. As recently as the 1950s, Norwegian teachers in primary school stood out in the European context with their relatively strong connection to the peasantry (Thue, 2017).

For a long time, men dominated higher education, even though women started to be admitted to the university from 1882. In 1962, the proportion of women was about 22%. Since then, the increase in student numbers in higher education has been

much greater for women than for men. In 1986, for the first time, there were more women than men in higher education. The recruitment pattern of teachers in secondary school reflects the recruitment to higher education. Today, most teachers in lower and upper secondary school are women.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, it was repeatedly suggested that the teachers in the secondary school/gymnasium should get a practical pedagogical introduction and pass a practical test before they could be certified to teach. However, the university authorities argued that a pedagogical education was a practical facility that was not university worthy. The parliament accepted this position. Nevertheless, the debate continued through the last part of the nineteenth century. In connection with the reorganisation of the university studies in 1905, when higher professional education programmes (medicine, theology, law, etc.) were supplemented with master's programmes in philology and science, it was once again proposed to introduce a one-year practical pedagogical education for qualifying university graduates as teachers. The proposed model included one semester in pedagogical theory given by a university seminar and one trial semester to test candidates by exercising the profession in the school. However, the university faculties were still sceptical of pedagogy as a university subject. Nevertheless, in 1907, a political compromise introduced one semester of practical pedagogical education (Grotnæss et al., 1982). Thus, in Norway, a pedagogical seminar at the university level to qualify teachers for secondary education was introduced rather late compared with other European countries. The University of Copenhagen established its pedagogical seminar for teachers in secondary school as early as 1799. At the University of Oslo, the seminar for teacher training was officially opened in the spring semester of 1908. Thus, the seminary tradition and practical side of the teaching profession gained a foothold in the universities' teacher education, even though it took many years before it became an integral, equal part of the university.

The educational reforms on the other hand introduced a gradual extension of a national comprehensive school system in the twentieth century, which, in 1997, culminated in a 10-year unstreamed school without structural differentiation, resulting in new disputes about the segregation and differentiation of teacher education. The radical extension of this comprehensive system was based on an economic objective and the assumption that there was a clear association between the level of education and economic growth. Supporters of the comprehensive system maintained that this form of school organisation was in a better position to unearth any hidden talent, more so than a system of parallel schools. A second and even more important motive for expanding the comprehensive system was to abolish the class-based society. The structure of the comprehensive school system with its unstreamed classes would lay the foundation for equal opportunities and a social community in which the strong aided the weak.

The proponents of the comprehensive school argued that this form of educational system required a comprehensive teaching profession. Despite resistance from secondary school teachers holding a university degree—who were afraid of the devaluation of academic standards and their professional status—the national political authorities decided to soften the dualism in teacher education. Historically, there

has been broad political agreement on both the expansion of the comprehensive, unstreamed public school and a comprehensive and more uniform teacher education.

In 1973, the old seminars (*lærerskoler*) were granted status as higher education in the nonuniversity sector by becoming university colleges (*lærerhøgskoler*). In the following decades, educational programmes for primary teacher education were gradually expanded. In the beginning of the twenty-first century, structural reforms in higher education and institutional merging processes included many of the teacher education institutions that had roots in the old seminar tradition in the university sector. As of 2017, certification of both primary and secondary school teachers requires master-level qualifications that can be taken at a university or university college.

Historically, the content in primary teacher education has been regulated by detailed national curricula. As of 2010 (teacher education for levels 1–7 and levels 5–10) and of 2012 (teacher education for levels 8–10 and the one-year ‘practical’ teacher programme grounded on a discipline-based master’s degree) learning outcomes that apply to Norwegian teacher education programmes are coordinated by rather detailed and specified national regulations. As shown above, teacher education is offered as 5 years of integrated master’s programmes or as subject-oriented master’s education supplemented with a one-year practical pedagogical seminar. The integrated teacher education programmes are specialised and divided into programmes with a specialisation in school subjects. Thus, the seminar tradition of giving general teacher education has been abolished.

Consequently, in Norway, the historical dualism in teacher education and the differentiation of the arenas of professional development have been gradually replaced by an integrated and comprehensive professionalisation of teachers for primary and secondary schools. This historical development has provided a structural base for a more unified teaching profession. There are separate educational pathways for teacher qualifications for the vocational programmes in secondary education that are based on craft certificates or the equivalent, along with a minimum 2 years of relevant work experience. However, teacher education for vocational secondary education is now offered both at universities and at university colleges.

In addition to the developments of the formal structures of the provision of teacher education, teacher professional development initiatives supplementing the system of teacher education can also be found in Norway. The Norwegian government has a long tradition of in-service courses and nonaccredited informal training initiated and funded by the state; this has been linked to major educational reforms (Lloyd & Payne, 2012; Lyng & Blichfeldt, 2003). This tradition has been further developed and intensified with the *Knowledge Promotion Reform (Kunnskapsløftet)* in 2006 and has continued in the new *Subject Renewal Reform (Fagfornyelsen)* which introduced a new national curriculum for primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education starting from the school year 2020/21.

The development can be seen as reflecting the developments in many countries for more systematised approaches towards teachers continued professional development (CPD) (Kirsten, 2020; Czerniawski, 2013). More recent education reforms have raised a strong awareness and focus on teacher competence as a key factor for

quality in education, paralleling an emergent emphasis on raising student learning outcomes in schools (Mølsted & Prøitz, 2018; Prøitz, 2015). This is not only strongly stated in policy documents, but also followed up by concrete CPD measures. One example is how the introduction of the comprehensive reform in 2006 was coordinated with the national Strategy for Competence Development (2005–2008) of teachers and school leaders in both primary and secondary education (OECD, 2019). A decentralised scheme was designed to ensure that all municipalities implemented competence-raising measures by channelling state funds into the municipalities that define and prioritise what they needed with reference to national goals and in co-operation with universities and university colleges.

However, studies of large-scale CPD programmes for teachers have shown that such initiatives often face several challenges. The evaluation of the Norwegian Strategy for Competence Development (2005–2008) found that most of the funding was spent on courses for leaders at the municipal level rather than being given to the schools. According to the evaluators, teachers had not been involved in the processes of defining competence needs and the strategy was not grounded in teachers' perceived needs' (Hagen & Nyen, 2009, p. 8). In general research and evaluations repeatedly have shown that it is difficult to establish solid structures for CPD that involve teachers and meet their needs (Irgens, 2018). The CPD initiatives for teachers can be characterised as an arena for teacher professionalisation built on short-term perspectives to solve government needs for reform implementation or to make changes in existing practices related to international large-scale assessment results (ILSA) or other more acute policy needs. Furthermore, the great emphasis on the need for continued professional development has laid the foundation for new forms of teacher differentiation because the facilitation of professional development varies among counties, municipalities and schools. The individual teacher is also given greater responsibility for professional updates. Thus, new requirements open for regional and individual defined differentiation.

Professional Fields and Occupational Practice

Historically, the development of the teaching profession in Norway has been influenced by a strong innovative state that has constantly introduced new national reforms. Thus, powerful national steering and management of primary and secondary education, as well as teacher education, has regulated teachers' professional fields and occupational practice. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, the social-democratic knowledge regime introduced a highly state-regulated public teacher education as an important element in the formation and operationalisation of a comprehensive educational system that constitutes what—after World War II—has been referred to as the Nordic education model (Prøitz & Aasen, 2017); this model is intrinsically linked to the development of the welfare state in Scandinavia.

As we have seen above, in Norway, this model has its historical roots in the idea of a public comprehensive school system introduced and developed starting from

the mid-1800s. During the first decades after World War II, the compulsory school system was debated in many Western countries. However, a comprehensive system did not make any significant advances in countries such as Germany, France, the Netherlands or the UK. In Norway, on the other hand, a strong state and dominant social-democratic knowledge regime resulted in major advances in developing a comprehensive school system.

By the 1950s, Norway used a greater proportion of its GDP for public education than any other country in Europe. Teachers had a high status in society, both socially and financially, not only because of their idealism, but also because of the strong position of the teachers' unions and high standards of recruitment into the profession (Telhaug et al., 2006). The political circumstances in general and education policy favoured national standardisation within an egalitarian and comprehensive school system. The aim was a common school for all children and young people, extending as far up the education system as possible. Education was defined as a common good, and children and youth were regarded more as the state's responsibility than as parents' sole responsibility.

The particularly characteristic feature of classical social democracy was the transformation of a relatively passive bourgeois state into an active, strong authority engaged in national planning. This expansion of the state and public sector was based on the view that it was the responsibility of the state to promote the collective values and interests of society. The social-democratic welfare state model stresses the redistributive role of the state in promoting social inclusion, here with a special emphasis on equality of access and outcomes in education. The former addresses the responsibility of the state to provide equal opportunities to participate, while the latter is concerned with whether children from different social groups can take advantage of that access and are successful in doing so. From this perspective, simply providing the same opportunities is not enough because children with different economic, social, and cultural backgrounds will need different opportunities and support to be successful. However, working for equality in results does not imply that every child should reach the same level or receive identical results; instead, the goal is to reduce those differences children and youth possess when entering school. In this way, the pupil's merits should emerge, regardless of their social background. If children from different backgrounds are going to have similar chances in life, they need to be treated differently. Hence, education policy has introduced different provisions, ensuring actual participation/enrolment and a substantial degree of success across social and cultural groups. Differences in outcomes—attributable to differences in characteristics, such as geographical background, gender, wealth, income, power, or possessions—should be limited and disputed. In policy approaches, the social-democratic knowledge regime has stressed that to improve equity, which is defined as the equality of outcomes, the state must play a crucial role in ensuring that all citizens have real, not only formal, access to the required resources to compensate for the inequality of provisions and resources (Prøitz & Aasen, 2017).

Since the mid-1990s, under the influence of the market-liberal knowledge regime, values such as competition, choice, streaming, hierarchy, and managerial accountability have been introduced to strengthen national competitiveness in a

global knowledge-based economy. Thus, socially inclusive policies, comprehensiveness in education, democratic values, and a focus on community rather than on the individual have been delimited by the recent education policy of the last decades (Blossing et al., 2014). Even so, every individual's right to free public schooling, regardless of geographical location and learning conditions, is still deeply rooted in Norwegian and Nordic culture. Indeed, this image can be seen even clearer from the outside, where a comprehensive school for all is controversial under an increasingly market-oriented knowledge regime and possessive individualism (Aasen, 2003; Apple, 2006; Blossing et al., 2014; Prøitz & Aasen, 2017).

A prominent trend in Norway is the strengthening of the responsibilities for student learning at the local authority level. The central elements in this change are the introduction of a more results-oriented education system and systems for assessment and evaluation in combination with a stronger accountability script (Hatch, 2013; Aasen et al., 2012; Mausestagen, 2013). Today, the initial ideas of decentralisation and governing exclusively by goals and monitoring results have been disrupted by the policy initiatives of recentralisation, which have strengthened the control of the central state. Today's governing is characterised by the monitoring of results and outcomes and the provision of more supervision, various support systems and supplemental documents and guidelines for working with local curriculum, specifications of learning outcomes and assessment and a system of school inspection (Aasen et al., 2012, 2015; Prøitz, 2015). This tendency towards recentralisation has been observed in how the national authorities have developed and provided guidelines, tools and support materials directed at teachers' work in classrooms more than at local authorities and school leaders (Prøitz et al., 2019). This can be considered a break from the former ideas of governing by distance and decentralisation, for example, as reflected in the formal documents regulating Norwegian education and teacher education.

The Norwegian national curricula are legal documents and can be regarded as having two functions: first as a platform and tool for the national governing of education and schooling and, second, as a common platform and tool for the pedagogical work of teaching and learning in schools (Aasen et al., 2015). The national curriculum aims to govern and influence what is taught in the classrooms, providing a common ground for teaching, and learning the same knowledge, experiences and values to all students. This approach also provides a common ground that should be prioritised in teacher education. Likewise, for the national curriculum, there is the National Framework regulations for teacher education, which certify the teacher profession; Norwegian teacher education is regulated by several formal documents, forming a web of regulations and guidelines of varied regulative power and influences (Prøitz et al., 2017). The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is the framework in which the study programme descriptions of all higher education are supposed to be written in accordance with. The Ministry of Education and Research has amended the NQF's regulations for professional courses, including for teacher education. National guidelines for each subject field and module level have been developed by Universities Norway (UHR), a cooperative body of 33 accredited universities and university colleges in Norway; these guidelines have supplemented the

National Framework and the NQF. The guidelines can be modified and adapted by the institutions, but studies have shown that this is seldom done and that the guidelines are copied or mimicked in teacher education (Prøitz & Aasen, 2017). The higher education institution study programme for teacher education builds on the National Framework's regulations and the guidelines but is developed by the higher education institution in accordance with the University and University Colleges Act, sections 1–5, on academic freedom.⁵ The program plan presents the study programme in general descriptions regarding its purpose, structure and learning outcomes. Within the frame of the study programme plan, there is a module plan that presents the structure, teaching and learning activities, syllabus, learning outcomes and assessment scheme of the programme.

Professional education must normally demonstrate that it meets the standards requirements described by the regulator. However, examinations of Norwegian study programme plans have shown that the most transparent and easiest way to do this is to parrot the source documents' language in the institution's guidelines (Prøitz et al., 2017). In theory, this should lead to standardisation, with each institution producing similar programme documents. This similarity was clearly found in the study programme plans for teacher education programmes; here, a study observed how teacher education programmes and module plans copied the National Framework and the competence structure set by the NQF, as well as the national guidelines. Compared with teacher education in the UK, the Norwegian case showed that teacher education is strongly regulated and influenced from the national level but not so much at the education level, where the UK was more thoroughly governed. To what extent these governing attempts actually reach the teaching and learning of teacher education in Norway depends on the practices in teacher education (Prøitz et al., 2017).

In addition to more traditional ways of governing by regulations and resource allocation, successive Norwegian governments have lately introduced new requirements and heightened qualification standards to become a fully qualified teacher. One example is the introduction of new admission requirements for all forms of teacher education in Norway; this means that applicants must have a specified grade level in defined school subjects (e.g., Norwegian language and math) starting from upper secondary school to enter teacher education; another measure amended in

⁵Extract, Sections 1–5. Academic freedom and responsibility: (1) Universities and university colleges must promote and safeguard academic freedom. The institutions are responsible for ensuring that teaching, research and academic and artistic development work maintain a high professional level and are conducted in accordance with recognized scientific, artistic, educational and ethical principles. (2) In other respects, universities and university colleges are entitled to establish their own academic and value basis within the framework laid down in or pursuant to law. (3) Universities or university colleges may not be instructed regarding (a) the academic content of their teaching and the content of research or artistic or academic development work. (b) individual appointments. (4) Each person teaching at institutions subject to this Act has an independent academic responsibility for the contents and plan for the teaching within the framework that is determined by the institution or that follows from statutes or regulations pursuant to statutes. Retrieved 08.06.20 from <https://lovdata.no/dokument/NLE/lov/2005-04-01-15>

2015 requires all in-service teachers to have a defined minimum of relevant education to teach key subjects (30 ECTS in primary school and 60 ECTS in lower secondary school). The amendment requires a large number of Norwegian teachers to upgrade their competence in certain subjects (Norwegian language, Sami language, sign language, math and English language). Yet another example of governing by qualifications and competence can be seen in the introduction of most teacher education as a five-year master's education. This last change must be seen in relation to the general trend towards research-based teacher education, here with an ambition to educate research-informed practitioners who can critically reflect on various trends and developments in education. This also includes a focus on evidence and knowledge about what works. Another prevailing trend that can be seen in relation to recent changes is the preparation for a teacher role within an education landscape, which comes with clearer responsibilities and an accountability rationale (Helgøy & Homme, 2006, 2007). Governing by competence can also be seen in relation to the already mentioned intensified provision of CPD, which was initiated partly in relation to the introduction of new reforms in schools but also because of national ILSA results.

Several of the governing measures mentioned here parallel an increased focus on teachers and teacher education in Norwegian education policy. This is exemplified by the appointment of several national and international expert groups, national commissions, evaluations of teacher education, national recruitment campaigns and a five-year national strategy for teacher education and a government and stakeholder forum and advisory council for teacher education to follow up on the strategy *Teacher Education 2025*. At least partially, all these initiatives can be viewed as government responses to the new and growing availability of national student performance data, hence directing policy attention to the links between teacher competence and student learning outcomes. Norwegian policy documents also display a strong belief in teachers as change agents who have a high impact on students in school and in their future adult lives (Mølsted & Prøitz, 2018; Prøitz et al., 2019). This emphasis also reflects a policy concern for recruitment numbers and a future situation characterised by a lack of teachers in Norwegian schools.

Stronger national management of professionalisation strengthens the requirements for teachers' knowledge base and professional practice, but at the same time, it challenges professional autonomy. It creates tensions that feed new forms of differentiation that will be addressed in the final section, but first, we will look at the content of professionalisation.

Professional Knowledge, Skills and Standards

Upper secondary school is no longer a school for youth from privileged classes. Even though upper secondary school is not mandatory, today, just about everyone who leaves lower secondary school in Norway enters upper secondary education. Thus, over the past 50 years, upper secondary education has evolved from being a

school for the elite to a prerequisite for further one's career, be it academic or vocational. This is placing new demands on teachers and, thus, on teacher education. The requirement for enhanced pedagogical competence among teachers in upper secondary education has been emphasised. At the same time, recent educational reforms in primary and lower secondary school have underlined that the teachers need to acquire more solid subject-based knowledge. Hence, the prominence of a more solid education in subject matter in teacher education for primary and lower secondary schools has been strengthened. Reforms and certification requirements have reinforced the links between science, research-based pedagogy, and teacher professionalisation, both through basic teacher education and through teachers' access to CPD. All teacher education is currently at the master's level. The fundamental differentiation between the two teacher education traditions has been erased both by the new needs that result from changes in student recruitment into secondary education and the stricter academic requirements for teachers in primary education.

The renewal of education and teacher education is influenced by international political tendencies and powerful supranational trendsetting political agencies. For example, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) was initiated by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2000—and along with other international assessment regimes—has influenced both the content and national monitoring of schools' academic level and achievements, as well as the content in the professional programmes of teacher professionalisation. The introduction of the NQF for all higher education—based on the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)—has also influenced reforms in teacher education.

High on the agenda nationally and internationally is the requirement to bring research-based knowledge into the daily work of professionals. The literature has defined this as the theory–practice or research–practice gap (Nutley et al., 2003). A recent example illustrating this situation is the Norwegian reaction to the internationally debated work of Hattie (2009), which was based on evidence from research synthesis and meta-analysis. A range of actors in education, including politicians, educators, and researchers, participated in heated debates not only about the results, knowledge, and recommendations in Hattie's study, but also about what kind of evidence shaped the results and the basis of the systematic review studies.

The OECD project 'Evidence in Education. Linking Research and Policy' explained the expanded emphasis on evidence in education; it refers to a multitude of factors: a greater concern of student achievement outcomes; the explosion of available evidence because of a greater emphasis on testing and assessment; more explicit and vocal dissatisfaction with education systems nationally and locally; and the increased access to information via the Internet and other technologies (OECD, 2007).

In Norway and elsewhere, the implications of more evidence-based professionalism have been interpreted as both a reprofessionalisation and deprofessionalisation of teachers. Proponents have argued that research-based practice and specialisation imply a reprofessionalisation, making teachers' professionalism more in line with the need to keep up with the demands and requirements of a new era. Critics of the

evidence-based practice movement emphasise how contextual variations seem to be ignored and question whether evidence-based practice can be used within the field of education. Others have criticised the linear and top-down logic that underpins the evidence movement; the main arguments here are that education, teaching and learning take place in contexts characterised by unpredictability and complexity and by decision making grounded in professional judgement and normativity. A fundamental consensus is that evidence-based knowledge, which focuses on studies of ‘what works’, cannot meet the need for a broader focus in thinking about the relation among research, policy, and practice (Prøitz & Aasen, 2016).

In the Norwegian context, there are differences between the government and teachers’ union concerning the aspects of teacher professionalism. The government emphasises teacher accountability based on evidence-based practice, whereas the teacher’s union highlights research-informed practice and the teachers’ responsibility for educational quality in a broader sense and for their own professional ethics (Mausethagen & Granlund, 2012).

Although devolution and autonomy have been underlined in national education reforms, the contemporary governing of teachers in schools also shows a strong interest in leading the way and guiding teachers in how to interpret curriculum and teach ‘correctly’. Accordingly, a softer way of governing is embedded in contemporary policies and national initiatives. The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training—the executive agency for the Ministry of Education and Research that represents a strong normative force in shaping the content, methods, and assessments in Norwegian schools and in teacher professionalisation—handles the development of kindergarten and primary and secondary education.

Soft governance is carried out through a myriad of support structures, guidance materials and in-service training to help and guide teachers in their daily work. This development seems paradoxical regarding how the system has lengthened the formal education to secure a highly competent teacher workforce. As shown above, the national government has initiated large-scale CPD programmes for teachers as a supplement to the provision of formal teacher education; these programmes often relate more to the government wanting to implement a new reform with new concepts and working methods than to building on the needs of the municipalities for local governing or the needs expressed by teachers.

Emerging Tensions and New Forms of Differentiation

In this chapter we have described and discussed how educational policy and reforms have influenced the historical construction of the teacher profession and the interaction between historical and new forms of differentiation within the teaching profession in Norway. The more recent policy initiatives—characterised by a decentralisation of power/responsibility to local authorities, evidence-based practice, and accountability policies—have introduced new forms of differentiation. The policy initiatives have sharpened the tensions between national political

requirements/standardisation and local/institutional/professional independence. The teacher's union has criticized new public management and the detailed follow-up of goal management through a new and extensive test regime. Historically, Norwegian teachers have been licensed to manage their own affairs within the framework of the national curriculum. Both politicians and the parents have trusted teachers, accepting that they knew the best for their children. Since the beginning of the 1990s, this licensed autonomy has been questioned, and the state's modality of control has been changing.

Additionally, in the context of devolution and new accountability regimes, new forms of differentiation seem to be evolving. This includes tensions in the policy-making process and in the implementation of educational policy and reforms. Different ideologies or knowledge regimes work simultaneously and comprise different perspectives on knowledge and education: different understandings of schooling and the relation between education and society. Thus, because different knowledge regimes work simultaneously there are always contradictions and tensions embedded in education policy and reforms. Recent and ongoing political initiatives have created and continue to create new forms of differentiation (Møller et al., 2009; Aasen, 2013, 2017; Prøitz & Aasen, 2017).

We can observe tensions between national educational policies and regulations and local policy implementations and professional initiatives. We can also find tensions between expert power/steering and local professional power/autonomy. In *the governance dimension*, we can observe tensions between input- and output-based steering, between national steering authorities and locally elected political bodies' ability and willingness to act autonomously and between decentralisation in terms of delegation and decentralisation as devolution.

In *the systemic relation dimension*, there are tensions between central, detailed control and state steering at a distance by empowering local authorities. The central state's demands for extensive documentation are often interpreted as unwanted interference and a form of 'feeding the beast'. At the same time, local governments and schools ask for national intervention in form of support.

In *the social dimension*, we can see strains between education as an individual good and education as a common good, between equity as equality and equity as equivalence and between the importance of early intervention and a more patient approach towards learning. In *the knowledge base dimension*, there are tensions between evidence-based practice and practice-based evidence, between research-based solutions and experience-based reasoning, between efficient intervention and professional reflection and between knowledge directed at what works and knowledge focusing on when and whom it works for.

In the school content or *subject matter dimension*, there are tensions between knowledge and competence, between competence and skills and between focusing on learning processes and the demand for documented learning outcomes. Finally, in *the accountability dimension*, there are tensions between professional teachers, school leaders and managerialism and tensions between trust in professionals and an increased administrative technocracy.

Some of these tensions in education policy are also found within education practice, creating differentiation at the school and classroom levels and within the profession. The contradictions present challenges experienced by local authorities, school leaders and teachers in the classrooms. At the local and school levels, they can generate ambiguity, frustrations, and differentiation. Thus, in the educational disputes at the local and school levels, we can see the demands for a return to stronger and clearer hierarchical guidelines and clear, consistent mechanisms. On the other hand, we can also see more proactive and autonomous actions by school leaders and teachers. We can observe teachers as change agents, who are finding creative ways to occupy the openings and spaces created by these contradictions (Prøitz et al., 2019; Dieude & Prøitz, 2022; Stenersen, *this volume*; Wiig, *this volume*; Hontvedt et al., 2023).

Identifying the varied aspects of teacher professionalism in terms of the arenas, management and governing and content seems to bring forth an image of several measures that point at the same direction, potentially leading towards a more unified teacher profession. At the same time, a new form of differentiation can be identified because of the governing of both Norwegian education and teacher education. From a governance perspective, our analysis of merging traditions and emerging tensions and new forms of differentiation in teacher professionalisation illustrate how the Norwegian education system and teacher education are brought together by overlapping and supplementing policies in new nexuses of education policy and practice. Where there is a piece missing in one of the systems, the other is constructed to fill the gap, whether by strengthening the formal education system or through more short-term initiatives.

Teacher education develops teachers' professional judgement and discretion; this is grounded in research-based and experience-based knowledge and value-based assessments and priorities (Aasen & Prøitz, 2014). Hence, to meet the new forms of differentiation manifested through the differences between schools and classrooms, the challenge seems to be how teacher education can strengthen research-based and value-based professionalism and how teacher training can ensure that the profession is developing a coherent conceptual framework, a common language, a unified theory, an intellectual community, and a frame of reference for value-based and evidence-informed reflection and action.

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Chapter 9

Initial Teacher Education Partnership: Bureaucracy, Policy, and Professional Agency



Paul Adams

Abstract Initial teacher education partnership as an example of ‘educational nexus’, often signals particular responses to normative questioning. Set within the ‘theory-practice’ nexus, partnership is positioned as the interleaving of various pedagogic/didactic D/discourses (Gee JP. *Social linguistics and literacies. Ideology in Discourses*. Routledge, 2012) to realise systemic development. Since the publication of *Teaching Scotland’s Future* (Donaldson G, *Teaching Scotland’s future. Report of a review of teacher education in Scotland*, In *Education* (Issue December), 2010) Scottish initial teacher education has spent considerable time developing supportive local authority/higher education institution/school partnership arrangements. Problematically, inter-group practice has been privileged over shared theoretical debate. This chapter proposes a ‘spatial heuristic’ centring on the epistemological matters of ‘identifying’, ‘knowing’ and ‘doing’ teaching. It proposes agency ‘...in which the agent is clearly decentred, an approach in which the achievement of agency is not an achievement of the agent alone but of the agent-in-interaction-with-others’ (Biesta G, Tedder M, *How is agency possible? Towards an ecological understanding of agency-as-achievement*. 44(0), 1–40, 2006) as a key part of professional development and that partnership, subsequently should be reconceptualised as ‘existing’ in the overlaps ‘between’ theory and practice.

Any story of a traveller trying to find their way in a new country often uses the apocryphal phrase ‘if I were going there, I wouldn’t start from here!’ Indeed, such tales might be taken as a metaphor to note thinking inherent in charting progress towards some defined policy goal. It is sometimes all too easy to bemoan current matters and instead highlight the problems inherent in where we are now and that another starting position would be beneficial. It is tempting to wish to change the origins for action rather than chart a path taking current practice as the basis for change. Those working in education, for example might decry the quality of

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resources, partnerships or even student teachers as reasons for lack of progress. In effect, a sense of helplessness may prevail which can stifle progress and development. Alternatively, there are those for whom the current situation provides ample challenge and stimulus for gain. While more realistic perhaps, herein lies the potential danger that romantic notions of what is (and indeed was) and what might be take centre stage so clouding judgement.

Somewhere between these two is a middle ground built on a strong appraisal of that which prevails and that desired. It is not the arena of longed for solutions and dramatic reorganisations, but a space where authentic observations occur and worked through possibilities ensue. Politically, change and growth are sought neither by denying prevailing conditions nor romanticising about possibilities but by being cognisant of challenges born of culture and social constructions and attempts to both work within these and modify them where necessary. Such work can occur individually or within one organisation, but more-often-than-not interagency or interprofessional working is required to sustain and embed change. Partnerships here form a clear part of the development cycle: not only can one group or individual learn from another but, if done well, synergistic outcomes can be forthcoming.

Regarding partnership in initial teacher education, solutions may well point to differing education arrangements for both. However, given the interpersonal nature of collaboration it is propitious to examine how and to what ends all working therein might approach partnership for the development of future teachers and their early career development. Duly, this chapter outlines a partnership heuristic for initial teacher education (and beyond). At its centre is the development of an epistemology for teaching and the development of teachers; that is, the way emerging (and extant) professionals ‘identify’, ‘know’ and do ‘teaching’ (Adams & McLennan, 2021) as the basis for the operationalisation of partnership. By examining the ‘spaces’ between these three epistemological elements a focal point to supporting beginning teachers can be highlighted. Rather than distinguishing between ‘theory’ and ‘practice’ and demarcating roles for those in different organisations, the heuristic’s originality lies in its foregrounding of the importance of multiple views of teacher knowledge and skills and how such variety of perspectives engenders innovative solutions that relate to the interweaving of individually generated theory in the form of praxis with widely articulated knowledge forms. Such an approach recognises that agency ‘...in which the agent is clearly decentred, an approach in which the achievement of agency is not an achievement of the agent alone but of the agent-in-interaction-with-others’ (Biesta & Tedder, 2006) is a key part of professional development.

The ‘Problem’: Partnership in (Initial Teacher) Education

It could be argued that partnerships across compulsory-age education manifest the view that schools alone cannot solve all problems and that others may provide solutions. Often, Political pronouncements cite the need for education to be, if not *the*

way to solve societal ills, at least front and centre. Such missives often couch education as ‘essential’ in such matters. Indeed, it is churlish to suggest that partnerships cannot and should not feature in schooling; for example, for English education between 1997 and 2010 during New Labour’s Third Way era, collaboration was lauded as the educational future (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). Problematically, response thereon often reflected bureaucratic professional change alone, stemming from and resulting in linear and rationalist policy orientations (Adams, 2016) with associated reifications of data which often ‘...turned genuine teacher enquiry into rituals of contrived congeniality’ (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009): 92). It is of little surprise that partnership here was mostly directed ‘from above’ with concomitant requirements that those on the front line ‘deliver’. Whether such endeavours are more akin to that which Webb (1999, cited in Hood, 2012) describes as ‘routinized coordination’ with attached offerings of limited creativity was, perhaps not always explored or realised. Indeed,

If interprofessional networks are to move beyond functional duties, they will need to develop the capacity to observe their own behavior [*sic*], challenge their own hypotheses and encourage innovative solutions that accept risk as well as manage it. (Hood, 2012)

Initial teacher education globally holds up partnership as core to its work. That most initial teacher education programmes negotiate between partners lends weight to the belief that working together in the initial preparation of teachers is important. Although in-country mechanisms may differ, here partnership increasingly apportions responsibilities or expertise to agencies and individuals therein. Often set within the ‘theory-practice’ nexus, professionalism is positioned as the interleaving of various pedagogic/didactic D/discourses (see Gee, 2012 for discussion on the distinction between Discourse and discourse) that seek to proselytise working methodologies and determine ensuing professional action. One outcome is, though the delineation of initial teacher education into ‘learning silos’ where parts can be learned and subsequently converged into the whole. Here Higher Education Institutions share theory while schools undertake to support initial teacher education students’ development of practical skills. There are many who challenge such working, noting efforts such as boundary spanning (e.g. (Fisher & Many, 2014) or third-space working (e.g. LilleJord & Børte, 2016) as responses to such interleaving.

Partnership Theory and Initial Teacher Education

Globally, new teachers often state that placement was the most important part of their initial teacher education (Grudnoff, 2011). Indeed, this seems to influence facets of teacher life, including job satisfaction and length of service, albeit not always positively (Grudnoff, 2011). It is also argued that placement is crucial in iterative reflective cycles as part of slowly learnt tacit knowledge and competencies specifically by enabling student-teachers to ameliorate unformed and sometimes conflicting classroom knowledge (Ferrier-Kerr, 2009). Collaborative partnership, then,

relies upon different partners across sites to support student-teachers to manage professionalisation synthesis. Successful programmes thus integrate placement experiences to facilitate personal narrative construction that merges theory and practice into a coherent whole (Pridham et al., 2013). For individual student-teachers, this is intended to lead to ‘wisdom of practice’ while partners likewise co-re-construct shared understanding of what is required to support teacher learning such that development is not seen as the sole responsibility of any one partner (Ong’ondo & Jwan, 2009). More recently and internationally, collaborative approaches to initial teacher education through placement are influenced by debate around teacher knowledge and the purpose of teacher education. The assumption that complex tacit knowledge requires gradual and iterative experiences formed through partnership is particularly challenged in approaches which stress ‘training’ (rather than ‘education’) and where the here-and-now of teacher skills is seen as a much less problematic but more important form of knowledge (Ulvik & Smith, 2014). In contrast to collaborative partnership, such a view individualises the student-teacher experience through narratives such as ‘survival’ or ‘resilience’. Tatto et al. (2017) refer to this shift as an international ‘placement turn’ privileging school experience over other initial teacher education aspects. Advocates highlight similarities to clinical experience models although there is still debate over whether such approaches are reductionist and whether notions of ‘best practice’ can be mapped across to pedagogy (Burn & Mutton, 2015; McLean Davies et al., 2015).

However, although ‘partnership’ is an oft used word it is not a universally agreed term. Across the globe initial teacher education deploys a variety of differing approaches that are culturally, socially, and educationally situated. Importantly, but also problematically attempts to instigate a single unified method miss the key point that context not only contributes to meeting need it also defines possibility. The Scottish position highlights tensions often experienced by those seeking to develop partnerships and will come as little surprise to those from other countries. Certainly, there are myriad reasons why partnerships succeed or fail, many of which are pertinent to the context in question. There will be, though, cross-cultural, or cross-country reasons and any examination of these benefits all in the field.

Collaboration is, though much more than administrative for it requires the need to traverse ‘boundaries’ and engage with significant organisational change including redefining relationships and cultures (Akkerman & Bruining, 2016). Accepting boundaries as ‘sociocultural differences between practices leading to discontinuities in action or interaction’ (Akkerman & Bruining, 2016) both reflects that the ‘work’ of schools differs from the ‘work’ of others in the initial teacher education partnership while simultaneously recognising that partnership must be part of day-to-day practice. Accordingly, ‘boundary crossing’ positions collaboration as drawing on dialectical approaches to the interface between theory and practice in order to construct and legitimise different forms of knowing (Smith et al., 2006). Such collaborative partnership working seeks to overcome perceived limitations of higher education institution led and complementary approaches (Cohen et al., 2013); respective positions whereby higher education institution staff ‘legitimise’ school-based staff views (Smith et al., 2006) or where roles are distinct and

demarcated between school and higher education institutions (Furlong et al., 2006). Alternatively, collaborative partnership aims to avoid the dichotomy of theory *and* practice and the risk of seeing teacher knowledge as sequential (first university, then school) or locating responsibility for bringing together the separate worlds of the higher education institution and the school onto student-teachers (Furlong et al., 2006).

Bartholomew and Sandholtz (2009, p. 156) argue that collaborative models ‘offer a means to end fragmented approaches to teacher education, professional development, and school improvement’; collaborative models bridge theory-practice divides so strengthening higher education institution/school relationships (J. M. Allen, 2011). One view thereon is that of boundary-spanning: individuals and organisations work to bridge the seeming divide between the oft noted work of the higher education institution (theory-laden, embedded in distance between theory and practice; built on the principles of professional reflection and debate) and schools (where practice takes centre stage through a closeness to the recipients of teacher work (children/young people) and a focus on ‘what works’). This is not without problems however, in particular that many teacher educators (be they higher education institution or school-based) are ill-equipped to do such work or are reluctant to do so (Madalinska-Michalak et al., 2012). If, as Pridham et al. (2013) write, ‘[t]he opportunities for pre-service teachers to develop and practice expertise is likely to be enhanced when they are afforded horizontal, cross university and school-based boundary activity...’ then such work would appear propitious.

International dilemmas challenge the success of partnership working often due to time constraints and cultural and traditional differences between partners (Allen et al., 2013). Indeed, it is not universally accepted that partnerships between higher education institutions and schools are altogether necessary for initial teacher education. For example, English policy has criticised higher education institution-led initial teacher education for being too theoretical (Department for Education, 2010) and has opted to move most initial teacher education into schools. Further, and more generally, university can often appear set against school (conceptual Vs practical). If both locations are important for teacher learning then separation is problematic (Allen et al., 2013). While mechanisms should exist to support the development of all, power imbalances often mitigate against effective working and privilege one group over another:

...most partnerships between teacher education institutions and schools are based on traditional, hierarchical relationships between partners, vertical lines of ‘collaboration’ and stable ideas of knowledge transfer. In such one-way relations, one partner is normally expected to ‘add value’, and in teacher education partnerships, this has typically been the university (LilleJord & Børte, 2016, 551).

Developments to boundary-crossing encompass ideas of ‘third-space working’ in an attempt to occupy the area between the Janus-face of school/higher education institution (Madalinska-Michalak et al., 2012). Third space signals a shift towards that which Bhabha (1990, p. 2) describes as the in-between existing in the ‘overlap and displacement of domains of difference’. For student-teacher

learning, such ‘both and also’ approaches reflect that which Zeichner (2009, p. 89) posits as utilising ‘hybrid spaces’ which transcend the historic academic-practice divide. Bhabha’s work attempts to overcome historic Indigenous-colonising dualities through a rejection of Indigenous need to either assimilate and relinquish identity or alternatively be read as culturally ‘Other’. ‘Living on the cusp’ thus becomes the central domain for action without transcending or repressing noted contradictions. Importantly, actors do not seek to enter third-space but rather understand ‘...the in-between experience of cultural difference that acknowledges, with-out seeking to unite, multiple and sometimes contradictory identities, knowledges and cultures’ (Forgasz et al., 2018). Specifically, Bhabha’s third-space notes the dual focus of discomfort and possibilities for contingent, hybrid identities.

Alternatively, drawing not on Indigenous-colonial thinking, Soja’s third space uses the work of French philosopher Henri Lefebvre through the idea of ‘thirding-as-Othering’ (Soja, 1996, p. 5). As a contest to the Indigenous-coloniser perspective, Soja attempts to disrupt conventional binary oppositions through acknowledgement of ‘an-Other’ which is more than the sum of two parts (Forgasz et al., 2018). Whereas Bhabha highlights a third-space that is neither first nor second, Soja’s work creates an alternative space and perspective.

In contrast, Gutiérrezian third-space theory challenges dominant D/discourses through its invocation of a space for improvised, dialogical exchange. Educationally, whereas teachers’ official space speaks first with student-teacher counter-scripts possibly providing alternatives, both are dominated by transcendent hierarchical hegemonic Discourses. Third-space, for Gutiérrez, consists of an ‘unscripted space’ (p. 452) forged between student and teacher that negotiates ‘what counts as knowledge’ (p. 452). As (Forgasz et al., 2018) write,

Gutiérrez’s approach recognises that... the agency of all social actors participating in the professional experience is determined by a transcendent script that they cannot control, only challenge through dialogue and genuine exchange.

For (LilleJord & Børte, 2016) ‘third-space’ is where school practice culture meets higher education institution academic culture in joint deliberation and requires the explanation of activities normally taken for granted in their original setting as ‘participants become aware of the historical and cultural context of their activities, and when norms are challenged, innovative thinking evolves’ (LilleJord & Børte, 2016).

Questions can also be raised through the positing of ‘research-turns’ which require refocusing partnership and initial teacher education on placements. Here, arguments such as Menter’s (2017) that higher education institution input to initial teacher education involves the ‘maximisation of reason’ through teaching as research activity, are viewed as preferable to those where teachers are positioned solely as practitioners translating theory into practice. Relationships and sharing of power and responsibilities within collaborative partnerships enacted around student-teacher placements can be seen as related to such political and epistemological debates and require an understanding of how conversation acts to constrain or define positions between partners.

Initial Teacher Education Partnership in Scotland

Scottish initial teacher education prides itself on working within a partnership approach. Since the publication of *Teaching Scotland's Future* (Donaldson, 2010) many have spent considerable time developing supportive partnership arrangements. Such work has been carried out between local authorities (as the employer of teachers and teacher-support staff and the organiser of local educational systems) and higher education institutions who are provided with funds to teach future teachers mainly through four-year undergraduate courses or one-year (post-graduate) Professional Graduate Diplomas of Education (PGDEs). While the framing of partnership arrangements is a systemic and organisational endeavour, operationalisation has an interpersonal necessity: notably the partnership operationalisation usually falls to staff in schools and higher education institutions. Potentially, complications in the ways in which staff in both locations are positioned militate against progress.

At the heart of the initial teacher education experience in Scotland is the provision of such education through partnership mechanisms between various systems actors. It is accepted, globally, across most jurisdictions that the quality of partnership is a sign of a healthy initial teacher education system (Harford & O'Doherty, 2016); indeed, collaboration can be seen to offer mutually renewing opportunities to both schools and higher education institutions where the outputs from one collaborator can assist inputs for the other (Bartholomew & Sandholtz, 2009). An underlying benefit of successful partnerships is that they can help end a fragmented approach to initial teacher education and further professional development and school improvement (Valli & Cooper, 1999). This though, may reflect a utopian view, one stemming from a policy perspective designed for a particular initial teacher education school/higher education institution system. While it may be tempting to judge partnerships and collaborations against 'official' policy explanations such missives are positioned in socio-economic and cultural-political frames which are in turn positioned and 'formed' by small-d/discourses (Gee, 2012) at the local level (Adams, 2016). The Scottish context reflects this: while schoolteachers and higher education institution tutors recognise the importance of initial teacher education partnership and policies thereto, both groups also acknowledge that these stand or fall on interpersonal discursive arrangements (Adams et al., 2023; Kennedy, 2019).

Current policies and approaches to partnership originate in the report *Teaching Scotland's Future* (The Donaldson Report) (Donaldson, 2010). Here collaborative partnership was cited as vital to the development of a sustained approach to professional learning. This report spawned several small working groups, one of which was tasked with outlining approaches to the development of partnership mechanisms between all involved in initial teacher education. This National Partnership Group reported to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning in 2012 (Edwards et al., 2012) and reiterated Donaldson's view that initial teacher education and the early career phase (the first 3–5 years following full registration) were best seen as one continuum to promote enhanced professional learning to meet the aspirations of Scotland's *Curriculum for Excellence*. The report strengthened

Donaldson's call for collaborative partnerships between all those involved in initial teacher education and early career development and while it stopped short of recommending one countrywide model for partnership it did note the funding implications inherent in developing collaborative models.

The subsequent *Aspect Review of the Education Authority and University ITE* [initial teacher education] *Partnership Arrangements (phase one)* (Education Scotland, 2015) heralded marked improvements in partnership working between national agencies such as the General Teaching Council (Scotland) and the Scottish College for Educational Leadership, and enhancements towards the development of teaching as a masters level profession. Conversely, it also noted ongoing need for partnership actors to understand and share the benefits of collaborative working and the need to share good partnership practices. Similarly, and more recently, (Mackie, 2020) highlights that while collaborative partnerships might seek to break down historic power imbalances and areas of work/responsibility, all-too-often such arrangements lack cohesion between local authorities and schools with the former viewing initial teacher education as the province of higher education institutions alone. Such views reflect a traditional, essentialist interpretation reminiscent of historic theory/practice divides. Although staff in all three locations of local authority, higher education institution and schools desire joint working across initial teacher education and early career development, it is often the case that Scottish education compartmentalises the two phases. Indeed, Mackie's work draws attention to how classroom practice in initial teacher education, although judged as vital was occasionally seen as different to, and only *connected to* theory. This 'difference' aspect may be based on the idea of 'complementarity': schools promote contextualised knowledge while higher education institutions promote that which is more generalised. Such a position exacerbates the theory/practice duality whereas orienting both theory and practice as intertwined facilitates the student teacher in developing wider appreciation of the complexities of teaching and their own personal/professional development. Such connections are helpful in developing the theory/practice nexus so positioning a holistic approach to teacher learning.

As a small country within a larger 'Union of Nations', Scotland has its own education system including approaches to teacher development and learning. While the initial preparation of teachers seeks to work through collaborative partnership arrangements, the country's geographical size and population spread requires myriad arrangements at both local and national level. The General Teaching Council (Scotland) may decide where initial teacher education students go for their school-based placements through the School Placement System but arrangements between schools, local authorities and higher education institutions are a matter for local deliberation. Specifically, while the organisation of the initial teacher education system requires higher education institutions to liaise with local authorities to determine arrangements for student teachers, such arrangements are enacted through relationships between *teachers* in schools and higher education institution *tutors* and are often built up over time (Adams et al., 2023).

Research for the *Measuring Quality in Initial Teacher Education (MQuITE) Project* (www.mquite.scot) found that while staff in both higher education

institutions and schools were supportive of partnership as a vehicle for initial teacher education, they differed in the extent to which they felt this was achieved in practice, with the latter holding more sceptical views (Kennedy, 2019). Additionally, although higher education institution based teacher educators desired more collaborative working, questions were asked as to whether school-staff have the time, training, or wherewithal to conduct partnership working successfully (Adams et al., 2023). Indeed, higher education institution tutors stated that any calls for collaboration must be met by greater clarity and assurances about the role for both higher education institution and school-based staff and their remuneration (Adams et al., 2023). School-based staff were equally positive about the possibilities of partnership, but their responses drew attention to the need for: a shared conceptualisation of the role and aims for initial teacher education pedagogy; the design of holistic assessment of initial teacher education students, especially school-based components; a reappraisal of power imbalances between higher education institutions and schools; and, in keeping with comments from higher education institution tutors, the need for school-based teacher educators to be appropriately trained and resourced (Kennedy, 2019). These are not wholly contemporary issues though for they form part of the history of Scottish initial teacher education partnership.

Such issues are exacerbated when students are placed outside pre-existing local authority/school arrangements. Often, schools work with several higher education institutions to facilitate student-teachers in undertaking, for example a much-needed rural or remote placement even when the student-teacher's higher education institution is urban-based. Collaborating to facilitate such placements is a good example of meeting partner needs, while delivering policy aims to improve recruitment and retention in rural areas.

Given that each higher education institution approaches partnership, programme design and placement documentation differently, it is little surprise that arrangements outside existing demarcations add to workload and tensions. Moreover, the initial teacher education approach of learning teaching (Mayer et al., 2017) is often replaced by 'teaching here' in the first few years following provisional registration due to a shift in support from higher education institutions to local authorities and early career teachers' employment by the latter. While (Beck & Adams, 2020) note the tangible benefits partnership brought to Scottish initial teacher education post-2010 they also signal the challenges yet to be met resulting from system organisation, role definition, resourcing and recent policy moves towards the standardisation of teacher accountability and student measurement. The Donaldson Report's calls for a seamless early career development experience are it would seem, still some way off. While much good work has been undertaken since 2010 it would not be unfair to state that this view (Smith et al. 2006) in some ways still prevails:

In Scotland, there have been very significant barriers to any move towards collaborative partnerships. Indeed, it can be argued that Scottish partnership practices have remained trapped in duplication models, despite clear aspirations within the higher education providers from the early 1990s to move towards complementary and ultimately collaborative models of partnership.

If partnership is touted as the mechanism by which various initial teacher education actors and agencies might work together to further student-teacher experience, it is through school placement that partnership is mostly enacted. Across Scotland, the structure of placement across multiple programmes varies between higher education institutions. However, the General Teaching Council (Scotland) determines, to a large extent the length and distribution of student-teacher learning and thus ensures somewhat uniform and perhaps conservative approaches (Beck & Adams, 2020) built around placement requirements of 30 weeks across 4 years of undergraduate initial teacher education where ‘[m]ore than half of this experience should occur in the final 2 years of the programme, with a substantial block taking place in the last year’ (Guidelines for Initial Teacher Education Programmes in Scotland, 2013). On one-year professional graduate diploma routes, placement must last at least 18 weeks and should be at least 50% of the programme. Statutory General Teaching Council (Scotland) guidelines state that placement arrangements ‘take full account of the partners’ mutual aims and their respective priorities and responsibilities’ (Guidelines for Initial Teacher Education Programmes in Scotland, 2013). These guidelines, along with the Donaldson Report, set a collaborative benchmark for Scottish partnership involving managing myriad arrangements including LA mediation. Added to this are Standards for Provisional Registration (General Teaching Council (Scotland) (GTCS), 2021) that each student-teacher must meet before they can be awarded provisional registration. Following successful graduation from an accredited initial teacher education programme which includes meeting such standards, student-teachers then enter, should they wish, into the Teacher Induction Scheme: guaranteed one-year employment as an induction-year teacher.

Scottish initial teacher education is, then, operationalised through three mechanisms. The first, is the establishment of standards for provisional registration and standards for full registration as mandated by the General Teaching Council (Scotland), a body independent of government. The second is the provision of initial teacher education courses by 11 Scottish higher education institutions. These courses are either four-year undergraduate routes or one-year professional graduate diplomas in education, mostly taught at masters level. Third, following success on one of these routes, student-teachers receive provisional registration. Following a successful induction period teaching in a Scottish school, inductees then become fully accredited teachers through the conferment of full accreditation. Figure 9.1 highlights this process, and possible additional steps following full registration.

Across Scottish initial teacher education partnerships, while collaborative models are built on joint planning, joint delivery is somewhat constrained even though all partners are encouraged to consider the epistemological and pedagogical implications of student-teacher learning (Furlong et al., 2006). Whereas intent is mostly on the design and delivery of programmes to draw upon the wealth of knowledge and experience of all partners, it is evident that for those working in Scottish higher education institutions and schools as teacher-educators, partnership presents challenges and issues (Adams et al., 2023; Kennedy, 2019). Importantly, while relations

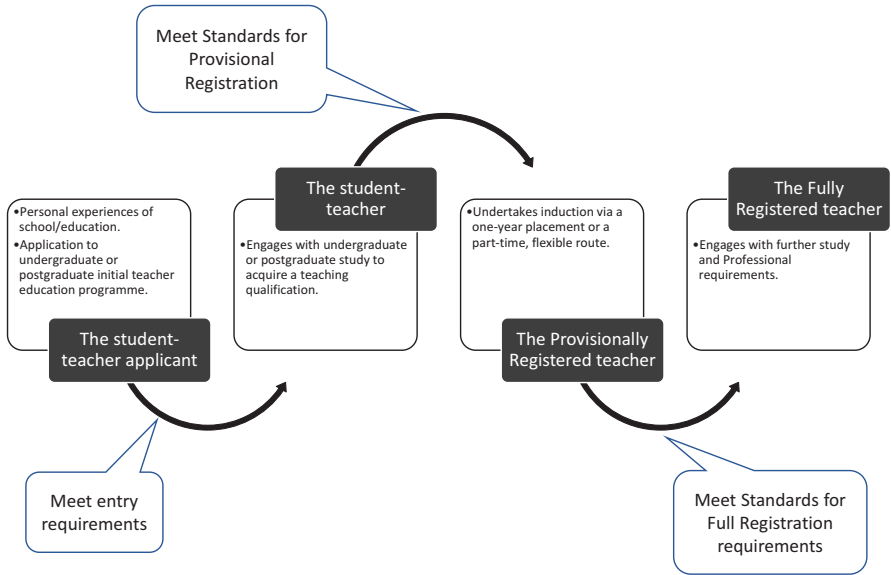


Fig. 9.1 Process for qualifying as a teacher in Scotland

between higher education institution and school participants may generate myriad opportunities for collaborative work, *Standards for Provisional Registration and Guidelines for Accrediting ITE Programmes* (General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCS), 2019) provide transcendent hegemonic Discourses. There are those working in partnership seeking to counter these, perhaps through Gutiérrezian approaches, but it is neither clear how such working is to be achieved nor what sorts of conversations might well lead to such challenge.

Partnership and Quality: The ‘Frames’ of the Evaluative State

The ubiquity of the Evaluative State (Neave, 1998) embeds matters such as the regulation of initial teacher education partnership within systems of student access, curriculum content, internal governance and associated procedures for system scrutiny and reform. These provide principles which, taken together provide for new thinking (Dill, 1998, p. 361), specifically: centrally identified performance objectives to control outcomes; the delegation of authority over resource inputs and decisions to agencies; and performance accountability thorough competition and privatisation. In those jurisdictions where higher education institution/partner relationships form the cornerstone of initial teacher education it is fair to state that the development of student-teachers bridges an emancipatory/provision-of-labour divide. There exists an ontological/epistemological nexus that requires the

development of both ‘teacher-as-self’ and ‘skills for the classroom’. Tensions are evident though through the ways in which, epistemologically,

...in most contemporary service occupations, professionalism, rather than being agreed from within, is being imposed from above and serves to promote and facilitate occupational change and as a disciplinary mechanism. (Edmond & Hayler, 2013), p. 210).

For initial teacher education, this contest is often couched in terms of student teachers being ‘classroom ready’ at the end of their ‘education’ or ‘training’ through a desire to ensure that initial teacher education is ‘fit for purpose’. Associated mechanisms such as inspections by external agencies seek to ensure this. Countries have their own mechanisms for assuring and ensuring quality but mostly such mechanisms desire both suitable and sustainable initial teacher education in terms of the development of student-teacher knowledge and skills. Often evident are simplistic ways of judging quality (Kennedy et al., 2021), such as the number of students graduating with certain degree classifications, or the number of hours spent learning key skills (such as literacy).

The Evaluative State is a Political Discourse designed to laud or denigrate provision. It seeks to mirror reality, and both reflect and determine that which is seen to be of worth or value for the purposes of reducing deficit and maintaining control. Stemming from enlightenment desire to understand and control the world, it deploys the Discourse (Gee, 2012) of observation and responsibility: external agencies observe activity within a frame of responsible action. Based on individualism and self-interest it is an operation that pinpoints areas of deficit and apports blame and responsibility thereby forcing acceptance and provision according to dominant Discourses. Importantly, the Evaluative State’s preferred observation of quality is preoccupied with the here-and-now of provision set against narrowly defined, pre-ordained standards, charters, inspections, and incentives, rigorously managed, audited, and incentivised. Although it may desire personalisation of initial teacher education provision, it does this impersonally and objectively for the purposes of control, often through a concentration on the easily observable, such as student-teacher/teacher/higher education institution tutor/pupil activity. With more than a nod to the Global Education Reform Movement (GERM) (Sahlberg, 2012), this quality position has captured much of the international, political initial teacher education Discourse. Mostly it centres on political party attempts to control social, political, economic, and cultural narratives that lean towards the provision of neoliberalism as a challenge to Welfarism and denigrates historically perceived ‘progressive’ ideas, preferring instead an orientation towards ‘traditional’ mantras, even if such a term is denied. Associated with this definition for quality are mechanisms that, whilst not denying teacher ontology, certainly pay it scant regard. Fulsome in its praise for the identification and realisation of teacher effect, associated forms of student-teacher legitimation centre on observable professional activity: the reification of overt teacher performance through the development of technical skills. In effect, quality is subsequently proved/not proved.

There are those for whom such a position is problematic: what should be of concern are ethical questions concerning how we identify and ‘measure’ quality to describe success. Such questions are normative and feature strongly in matters where policy seeks to do more than *describe* than *mandate* quality. The provision of guidelines and standards may orient Scottish initial teacher education towards the achievement of pervasive, predefined outcomes (Adams & McLennan, 2021) but as (Gunzenhauser, 2010) notes, such judgements often lead to the elision of alternative philosophies of and for education. Especially notable here is a separation of the ontological and epistemological: a concentration on the *skills* of teaching or *what teachers know and can do* to the detriment of *who teachers are or might be*. This quality position seemingly dominates the Political discourse and has led, in many countries, to the ‘farming out’ of initial teacher education to schools, NGOs, and charities to side-line higher education institution input and elevate technical aspects so cheapening and quickening initial teacher education.

An alternative political (as opposed to Political) position might be one that considers what *can be* and what *might be* within conversations about *who student-teachers are* and *who they might become*. This is an agentic orientation where collaboration and desire take centre stage in the formulation of student-teacher/teacher epistemology and ontology through the deployment of the language of possibility and potential. More Gutiérrezian in focus, it seeks to negotiate what counts as knowledge through dialogue that challenges prevailing standards-based hegemonic Discourses. Here is a system conversant with the *here-and-now* and *that which might be*. It draws upon negotiated understandings of teacher acts in an interface between action as reflection that at once observes and challenges the reification of teacher activity and assumptions about ‘quality teaching’ whilst also staking claims for possible future alternatives. It is deeply subjective and human and features elements such as happiness, contentment, and desire. In this regard it considers the development of self as much as knowledge and skills and is politically democratic.

It might be inferred that Political wrangling will always desire to foreground teacher epistemology, for knowledge and skills development can more easily provide evidence about ‘provision’, ‘impact’ or ‘rigour’ as such manifestations of overt activity are relatively easy to observe and comment upon. However, there is a need to identify the ways teacher knowledge can be explained with reference to the ways in which this impacts the ontological. Adams & McLennan (2021) argue for such a position through the deployment of three aspects of ‘learning teaching’ (Mayer et al., 2017): *identifying teaching*; *doing teaching*; and *knowing teaching*. They argue that such epistemological matters ‘...provide a foundation for ITE [initial teacher education] quality that explicitly acknowledges the ontological’ (Adams & McLennan, 2021).

Identifying teaching acknowledges that the Discourses inherent across entry into, progression through and exit from initial teacher education programmes are socio-economic and cultural-political and require adjustments to the demands of varying workspaces (HEI and school).

Access to, and success in, ITE is judged as a process of responses to occupational demands; but such matters operate within situational constraints: political, social, cultural and historical for example. Ignoring such constraints is problematic for these Discourses position teachers and teaching. For the entrant they are most acute when trying to understand acts and action given the lack of experience which often accompanies ITE [initial teacher education] entrants (Adams & McLennan, 2021).

Student-teachers must work within a variety of professional/educational perspectives to varying degrees. The Discourses of entry into, progression through, and exit from initial teacher education offer positions for individuals to take up, resist, subvert, or amend (Harré, 2004). Teaching is replete with history, culture, and learning; engagement with these is necessary for the student teacher (Dall'Alba, 2009). All teachers are subject to the contradictions of continuity and change, possibilities and constraints (Dall'Alba, 2009) and thus there are instances where entrants may shake up the system. When these are marked as creative, resistant, subversive, or reorienting they may garner either praise and recognition or, alternatively, derision. *Identifying teaching* is not, then, a straightforward matter.

Doing teaching recognises that teaching is social. To become a teacher is to be in and act on the world with and for others. Discursive acts define sense making through moment-by-moment interactional events with children, young people, other students, and colleagues. Here, the student-teacher acts on and invites others into her world but is also offered entry into the world of others. Through *doing teaching*, student-teachers engage in and on the world to enter an aspect of the world (the profession). Here matters such as categorisation come to the fore: for example, *pedagogy* and *not-pedagogy* as envisaged by both Big-D and little-d/D/ discourses inherent in age and stage, related working, or subject didactics. Standards for provisional registration confer more than simple statements for observation. They engender ways of 'seeing' teaching as a particular type of person through particular lenses.

Knowing teaching concerns the development of the enduring as much as the here-and-now and thus sustains *praxis* through the taking up, resisting, amending, or subverting of positions provided by D/discourse. Tensions abound here though, and it is common for student-teachers to bemoan theory as lacking in 'their context' (Roth, 2002). Praxis positions student-teachers to see the world in ever shifting and temporal moments that convey meaning. Theory is not something either useful or not but is, rather, that which might or might not be called to action *in this moment*. To view theory as infallible misses the point that it provides not necessarily answers but, rather, ways of viewing possibility. As Adams & McLennan (2021) note,

It may well be that race-theory, or social constructivist ideas are not 'held in the moment', but what these form are ways of living with meaning and intent: they call for reflection in/on praxis; consideration of the ways in which locally formed praxis is expressive of wider educative moments. They are not before or after praxis, they are with theory: they garnish personal construction.

Developing a Heuristic for Initial Teacher Education Partnership Working

Starting from this position for quality as an expression of initial teacher education epistemological development enables consideration of the focus for partnership. Mostly, developing partnership working has involved considerations of how differing professionals and/or organisations might work together. Such work has been systemic and organisational and has sought to define roles, responsibilities, funding mechanisms and ways of acknowledging and celebrating success in such terms. While such methods and judgements might be important, they conceal what is and should be developed epistemologically by members of the partnership. It might be argued in the Scottish context that the Standards for Provisional Registration provide for professional knowledge; indeed, these go far beyond simple statements about planning, lesson delivery, assessment, and behaviour/classroom management. Nestled within statements about the values and ethics of teaching, the standards provide for holistic statements about what knowledge and skills student-teachers need to develop if they are to gain provisional registration.

However, MQuITE research indicates that often those standards that refer explicitly to ‘classroom practice’ are more readily accessed by school-based teacher educators, while others that relate to matters of theory, ethics, or values are often identified as the province of those in higher education institutions (Adams et al., 2023; Kennedy, 2019). Potentially this exacerbates theory/practice divides and does little to counter the tensions outlined above, cross boundaries, or operate in third-space. Eliminating standards is not something achievable in the current political or educational environment and thus a position that seeks to work within such confines whilst extolling the virtues of theoretical approaches to partnership is required.

Identifying, knowing, and doing teaching can be used as the basis for a heuristic for the development of partnership endeavours. Specifically, they provide two points of debate, discussion, and action. First, while it may be ideal to consider these three epistemological aspects as intertwined, it is certainly appropriate to assume that this is not always the case especially for the beginning teacher. A concentration on *doing teaching* may well prevail in the education of student-teachers which orients the student-teacher towards consideration of and a concentration on classroom activity. As signalled above, *doing teaching* is not a simple matter of overt activity removed from socio-economic and cultural-political matters. Pedagogic forms and didactic operationalisations are as much concerned with the *how* of acceptability as they are the *why* and require understanding not only of what the standards require, but how they were conceived, how they can be realised and, more importantly, how they are perceived and positioned in the local space. *Doing-here* may well be different to *doing-there* and yet both (should be/are) considered acceptable. An intricate relationship with *knowing teaching* thus exists that itself extends beyond matters of standards and overt operationalisation. Personally constructed epistemological

forms are vital for the development of the ontology-of-self. These neither circulate around notions of ‘best practice’ nor stem simply from ‘modelling’ but are, instead representative of personally constructed interfaces between the *here-and-now* and enduring *theoretical perspectives* that converge in the space between knowledge and skills. Similarly, identifying teaching is as much about the *is* as it is the *is-not*. For the student-teacher this means understanding the wider Discourses that orient and constrain the work of those in higher education institutions and schools and the discourses that seek to form, at the local level, policy and practice in relation to policy frames and policy explanations (Adams, 2016). For the teacher-educator, this entails understanding and working with various possibilities for the interface between activity and action through the provision and acknowledgement of teacher-acts.

Noting such matters requires consideration of how teacher-educators and student-teachers might jointly talk about and operationalise learning teaching. There is a need for a *language of the act*; that is, a way of understanding and appreciating that *which is*, that *which could be*, and that *which should be*. Thus, partnership moves from the descriptive to the normative but in ways that both work within and simultaneously challenge prevailing orthodoxy and hegemonic Discourse. Here should be noted the differences between *activity* and *action*. The former centres on observable, overt behaviour that might be deemed *teacher-like* or *not-teacher-like*. While activity provides immediate insight into observable pedagogic/didactic forms and is thus relevant to judgements of student-teacher quality, concentrating thereon offers little more than opportunities to develop overt skills possibly devoid of reasoning and understanding. For example, deploying particular methods to bring a class to attention may achieve success in terms of ‘behaviour management’ but unless the student-teacher understands how and why this works/does not work in this context/more broadly, opportunities for learning teaching stagnate and founder. This is particularly acute when one considers that what works ‘here’ may not work ‘there’.

To counter, many offer reflection (cf. Schön, 1983) as to how teachers might develop deeper understanding and appreciation of teaching. When applied in the context of activity alone this is problematic, for it does little to circumvent the tensions implicit in overt behaviour. A concentration on ‘what can I do?’ as demonstrated above, orients epistemological reasoning towards ‘doing’ in a reductive, task-based sense. Rather, what reflection requires is consideration of that which sits outside of activity and which challenges notions of self. The question ‘what can I do?’ thus shifts to two questions: ‘what can I do, given where I am now?’ and ‘how does this develop my knowledge and skills and my sense of teacher-as-self?’ Reflection thus morphs from reflection *in* and *on* action (cf. Schön, 1991) to reflection as an ontological state: the development of understanding of professional acts as positioned in and resultant from prevailing Discourses enacted within local discursive acts.

Finally, teaching requires the teacher to ‘animate’ learning, that is, bring learning to life within the space occupied by all involved in the process. This requires more than simply activity and reflection. It requires the student-teacher and those supporting her to engage in the mutually reinforcing endeavour that is learning with and for

others who are themselves engaged with learning. It requires the realisation that teachers do not only learn *from*, but also that they learn *with* children, young people, and other adults. While they persuade others to engage with new opportunities, they themselves accept such challenges.

To summarise:

- Learning teaching is more than simply engaging in the development of theoretical knowledge and its application/non-application in the school setting.
- Learning teaching requires the appreciation, understanding, and operationalisation of the interface between identifying, doing, and knowing teaching.
- To achieve this requires an understanding that the simple observation of activity is insufficient as the basis for deciding upon acceptability/unacceptability of student-teacher work.
- Reflection both on and in action is an important part of the development of the student-teacher, but this must go further and begin to question the acts that student-teachers undertake, that is, reflection must seek to support the development of the teacher-as-self. Such reflection must engage with action (the questioning of that directed as personal understanding) in association with activity. To this end, the acts of teaching are questioned through the merging of activity and action.
- Finally, teachers need to bring to life, or animate, their work and that of the children and young people in their care. This means more than simply seeking to reflect on acts as above; it requires the development of professional activity that understands the congruence that comes from *learning with* as opposed to *learning from*.

Taking this as the basis offers a perspective on partnership working in that it offers all a means to operationalise not only the parts but the whole of initial teacher education. It confers on student-teachers and their supporters a framework for understanding how the epistemology of teaching might be realised as both theory and practice. Figure 9.2 below offers a diagrammatic perspective on what this might look like.

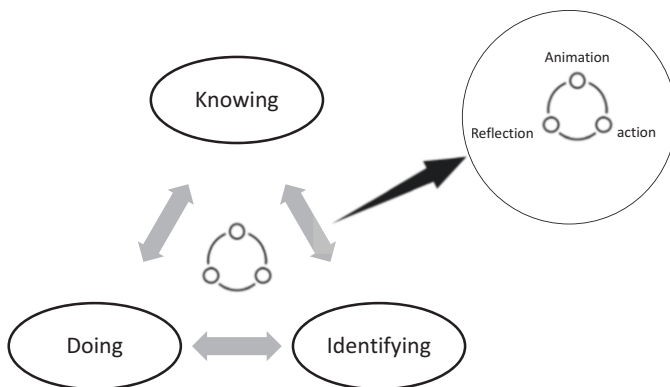


Fig. 9.2 Heuristic diagram

Conclusion

If we are to ensure that student-teachers develop more than just the skills to provide activity that seemingly leads to student learning, there is a need to ensure that theoretical approaches to partnership are established in ways that offer mechanisms for their realisation in practice. There is little to be gained by simply developing procedures and activities that seemingly support student-teachers for these will lack and more importantly share insight into what it is that is being developed. Although in the Scottish context General Teaching Council (Scotland) standards offer seemingly obvious messages by which to judge they are, unsurprisingly, generic in their outlook and are written from ‘somewhere and nowhere’. They offer the ideal; a way by which all involved in initial teacher education might provide student-teachers education and support. By offering statements about that which should be known and that which should be done, they seek to embed the features of the Evaluative State. As a mechanism for sharing what all student teachers *should* be able to do when they graduate, they may suffice. However, this misses two key aspects. First, learning-teaching experiences may not always be satisfactory. Part of developing as a teacher is identifying one’s own identity and this does not involve simply reinforcing and maintaining current practice but rather offering new perspectives on that currently done. In Gutiérrezian terms this signals the need for all involved in initial teacher education to forge improvised, dialogical exchanges that challenge dominant D/discourses. The intertwining of reflection through an appreciation of the pedagogic act and the associated animation of learning teaching offers opportunities whereby the official first space of the teacher and the second formative space of the student might come together to challenge dominant hierarchical hegemonic Discourses that seek to orient teachers’ work towards narrow and confining conceptions of pedagogy, didaktik and education. This approach to partnership, embedded in the desire to develop both personalised pedagogic responses and an appreciation of wider socio-economic and cultural-political frames offers all in the initial teacher education partnership the opportunity to develop conversational spaces that challenge dominance.

Secondly, the heuristic shifts conversations away from what has been done and why, to questions about what has been done, why, and how these impact on student-teacher identity. Specifically, it challenges the demarcation between theory and practice and instead calls for a conjoining of the two within a new hybrid space co-created by all involved.

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Part III
The Complexity of Education Nexus
Studies

Chapter 10

Fragmentation Management from Policy to Practice. Special Educational Needs Teachers (SEN Teachers) in Mainstream Schools in Germany



Torsten Dietze , Lisa Marie Wolf , Vera Moser , and Jan Kuhl 

Abstract Inclusive education is one of the most far-reaching reform projects in school policy since decades in Germany. In the perspective of educational governance the chapter examines how and by which stakeholders the job profile and role clarification of special educational needs teachers (SEN teachers) in primary schools in Germany is steered. The analysis is based on data from the project FOLIS, which used a mixed-methods design to interview school administration experts, school principals, and SEN teachers from 4 out of 16 federal states. The results show a “fragmentary form” of steering, which is in essence limited to measures of input control and largely excludes elements of output control. Within the single schools, several ways of negotiation on tasks and task distributions of the SEN teachers were found. The responsibility for daily inclusive education is shifted to the responsibility of each individual school, and within the individual school largely to the SEN teachers themselves. Written agreements to clarify the SEN teachers’ areas of responsibility are rarely used and SEN-teachers are pushed into the role of a “fragmentation-manager”. The results of the study show that inclusive education is a very fruitful field of research in the policy-practice nexus.

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175

Introduction

With the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) in 2009, the Federal Republic of Germany and more than 150 other countries committed itself to ensure an inclusive education system in which students with and without special educational needs (in the following: SEN) attend the same schools and are educated together. A special characteristic of the German school system with regard to SEN support is a fixation on independent special education schools for over more than 130 years (Dietze, 2019). So-called “Integration trials” were approved in the mid-1970s and “joint teaching” of students with and without disabilities was recognized as an alternative to special education schools from the mid-1990s. Since then there has been a marked shift away from the German system of SEN support in special schools. From 2009 to 2018, the proportion of students with SEN support in mainstream schools increased from 19.8% to 42.3%, though the proportion varies from between one third and 90% depending on the federal state (KMK, 2020). At the same time, special educational needs teachers (in the following: SEN teachers) are also increasingly employed in mainstream schools. For example, in 2008 in the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NW) only 12% of SEN teachers were working at a mainstream school; in 2018 the percentage had already increased to 33% (Wolf et al., 2022). However, the responsibility for school policy in Germany does not lie with the government of the Federal Republic, but essentially with the 16 German federal states and their 16 respective systems of legislative, executive, and judicial power. As a result, inclusion policies in the Federal Republic of Germany vary. For example, in some federal states SEN-teachers are employed directly in the mainstream schools while in others they are delegates from a special education competence center. The proportion of special education resources varies between a basic allocation and an allocation based on the individual student’s educational needs. However, the federal states have in common that several SEN are recognized, which are individually diagnosed.¹ In most cases and most (but not all!) federal states this is accompanied by a formal “labeling” and identifies the students – in mainstream schools more or less – as clients of SEN teachers (Kuhl et al., 2022). SEN teachers are qualified during a 4–5 years-long study program. The curriculum is based on the different SEN types/funding priorities (see FN 1) and on one specific class subject. The curriculum formally enables them to work both in the still existing special schools and also in mainstream schools. There are increasing demands to orient the first phase of teacher training towards a “school of diversity” (HRK & KMK, 2015) but specifically the training of SEN teachers, who graduated several years/decades ago and today make up a large part of the teaching staff, was oriented towards a separating school system.

¹Funding priorities: sight, learning, emotional and social development, speech, mental development, hearing, physical and motor development, instruction for sick students. And since 2000 in addition: “Education and teaching of children and young people with autistic behaviour”

The model experiments of inclusion respectively school-integration of the 1980s and the first legally anchored implementation of inclusion from the middle of the 1980s onwards were accompanied by a comparatively generous provision of SEN teachers, and inclusive teaching was accompanied by a comparatively generous supply as teaching with double-staffing (= co-teaching non-SEN teacher & SEN teacher). In contrast, inclusive school development in Germany in our times is under pressure from a shortage of SEN teachers. For example, the federal state of Lower Saxony in 2016 was able to provide SEN teaching supply only to 62% by special education expertise (Wolf et al., 2022). For this reason, among others, the professional role of SEN teachers in mainstream schools is no longer negotiated (alone) in the individual co-teaching teams. Instead, it requires a targeted embedding in the school organization (Grummt, 2019) as well as a tailored professionalization of the stakeholders involved. Surveys of SEN teachers on their deployment at mainstream schools reveal specific, mainly support- and counseling-related, but overall heterogeneous tasks (Neumann, 2019, p. 69). Further, these days “typical” SEN teachers’ tasks (e.g. promoting, diagnosing, cooperating, and advising) are described as basic activities of all teachers in Germany (e.g. KMK, 2014, for international context see Rice & Zigmond, 2000). With a view to international developments, Köpfer (2012) was able to identify a model according to which SEN teachers take over coordinating and moderating functions as “methods & resource teachers” in the sense of case management. This steering function of SEN teachers is also found in other international studies: for example, a Swedish study points to the relevant coordinating function of teacher cooperation (Lindqvist & Nilholm, 2014). Research have shown how politics can affect teachers, school leaders and administrators and how teachers realize and frame education policies in classrooms through their practices (e.g. for german case Bengel, 2021 within individual schools; for swedish case see Magnússon et al., 2019; with a comparative view: Wermke et al., 2020).

The relocation of SEN teachers to mainstream schools leads to numerous questions from the perspective of organizational theory and professional theory, which are largely interrelated and must be observed in the context of the complex constellation of the school system and its stakeholders. This chapter aims to focus on specific constellations of the multi-level school system and the contexts, forms and results of steering practice of inclusive education in the field of SEN. From the perspective of an expected policy-practice-nexus and considering the complex power and organizational structures in the school system, it is important for the german case, that

- (a) the school system is characterized by a strong bureaucracy² with a high level of differentiation into several school types following the idea of selection.

²Schmid et al. (2007) theoretically distinguish three types of “control regimes”: (a) the bureaucracy type (characteristic: hierarchical control and narrow scope for reform; examples: Austria, Germany) (b) the efficiency type (characteristic: strengthening of the individual school with competition-like market elements; examples: England, New Zealand) and (c) the legitimacy type (characteristics: negotiation-based decision-making; strengthening local ownership; examples: Finland, Hungary).

- (b) the challenges of building up inclusive (special needs) education cannot be embedded in the usual administrative structure of school administration, which is based on working units according to school-type or education curriculum. Instead, the challenges in policy have to be managed by many different units and responsible persons.

In the FoLis project (Förderpädagogische Lehrkräfte in inklusiven Schulen) – for general information see <https://ufo.reha.tu-dortmund.de/forschung/projekte/folis/> – experts from school administrations, primary school principals, and SEN teachers in four (of 16) German federal states were questioned and interviewed from 2018 to 2021 using qualitative and quantitative methods in a mixed-methods design. The data generated in this exploratory research project form the basis of the results presented here. The theoretical framework of the analysis is a multilevel model of the school system. The empirical part provides an exemplary answer to how the previously analyzed forms of governance are processed at the macro and exo level (school policy and educational administration) and the resulting contexts at the meso and micro levels.

Control and Educational Governance

Control and Inclusive Education

In this chapter, *control action* is understood as an intentional practice of steering with which structures in the multi-level system of schools are to be preserved, changed or guided (Mayntz, 1997, p. 191). In line with the prevailing “control scepticism” (Berkemeyer, 2010, p. 90; author’s translation), control does not mean that “control intentions would be 100% translated into corresponding follow-up actions”, but also include the consideration of side effects of control action and transintentional effects, as well as individual and social mediation steps (Altrichter & Maag-Merki, 2016, p. 6; author’s translation). This goes along with the many times quoted conceptual understanding of governance by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the emphasis of different shaping power and intentions

Governance – the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in the management of a country’s affairs at all levels. Governance is a neutral concept comprising the complex mechanisms, processes, relationships and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their rights and obligations and mediate their differences.

Consequently, *control* in this chapter is understood as the sum of the “transactions of all relevant system players” (Altrichter & Maag-Merki, 2016, p. 6). On the other hand, the target systems of control efforts and the target systems of the stakeholders develop according to their own logic even without systematic intervention. They do not “keep still”, but selectively and actively-constructively take up political, legal or societal demands and translate them into the respective system practices (ibid., p. 4.).

In doing so, many stakeholders try to control developments rationally in terms of their intentions. Also, due to the overlapping of steering processes, “many significant dynamics and effects of their actions are transintentional” (ibid., p. 6) and can – on the same or other levels – entail unintended consequences and create new preconditions (cf. the concept of recontextualization by Fend, 2008). For reform processes in the multi-level school system, this means that they cannot be “steered in/controlled” directly (Altrichter & Maag-Merki, 2016, p. 6). Rather, control should (re)direct this autonomous dynamic of a system in a targeted way, such as preserving structures or changing existing structures (Mayntz, 1997, p. 191).

Inclusive Education has so far only been considered partially and unsystematically in the output management instruments that have been developed (e.g. in German educational standards, standardized school evaluations, Holder & Kessels, 2018; school inspections, Piezunka, 2020, p. 224).

Its normative determination faces the dilemma of “arguing theoretically-idealistically on the one hand, and, on the other hand, often making pragmatic cut-backs already in the definition of what inclusion should contain in order not to expose oneself of being unrealistic” (Heinrich et al., 2013, p. 73; author’s translation).

Thus, the implementation of school-based inclusion takes place in the context of the development and governance of the general school system, which continues to adhere to its separative functions based on achievement and performance assessment, which are only partially compatible with the implementation of an inclusive school system (Budde, 2018, p. 49). Accordingly, even more than 10 years after the ratification of the UN CRPD, inclusion as a norm “by no means follows a uniform understanding” (Tegge, 2020, p. 32; author’s translation), but rather implies “diverse, not always congruent requirements for a school system” (ibid.). The result is not only internationally but also nationally different concepts of inclusion, and subsequently different legislation (Gasterstädt, 2019, p. 3). From this, the following hypothesis can be derived for the German case:

In the context of the guiding ideas of the New Public Management (Hartley, 2003; Langer, 2019) input control is essentially limited to a basic school structure, the training of teachers, educational programs, curricula and job allocations, even for the reform objective of *inclusive education* – while school autonomy exists at the same time (Rürup, 2020). In the course of the reform towards output-oriented management, appropriate instruments (e.g., educational standards, evaluations) are made available, but these do not necessarily relate to inclusive school development. Furthermore, there are no specific implemented standards or quality assurance concepts for inclusive education. Inclusive education thus takes place without the provision of a definition and a corresponding “toolkit” in a school system that contradicts its fundamental/basic intentions.

This hypothesis leads to the question: which control contexts, control possibilities, and control results can be found with regard to the implementation of the UN CRPD in the multi-level system of schools in the four federal states studied? How are these accepted and implemented or further processed by the stakeholder at the respective levels of the school system? The analytical basis for this is described below.

The Multi-Level System of Schools and Its Control

Analyses of governance (control) processes in the school system require approaches that consider the complexity of the system and include both the stakeholders at the different levels with their respective intentions, contexts, and opportunities for action as well as interdependencies and intended or unintended effects. Multilevel models of the school system form the basis for such analyses. They usually include at least a macro (social context, educational policy, educational administration), a meso (individual school) and a micro level (teachers), but are diverse in their design (e.g. there is a second micro level: the students).

The establishment of an inclusive school system offers an attractive use case for the multilevel nature of control in education, and the questions on the policy and practice relation put forward in this book volume: a “constellation shaped by numerous stakeholders with different interests, which could not be controlled and shaped unilaterally by political-administrative stakeholders – and especially not by centrally planned and executed top-down control” (Rürup, 2015, p. 687; author’s translation). In other words, teachers/practitioners and individual schools face a series of dilemmas and contradictions in practice, which are often difficult to solve. They face contradicting policies as a part of their daily work (Clark et al., 1998; Ball et al., 2012).

Control Contexts, Forms, and Results in the Multi-Level School System

Following Fend’s action model – optimization processes of an action level are an expression of rational task management and an expression of the interests that are central at the respective action level (Fend, 2008, p. 36 f.) can be described. It provides a basis on which questions or analyses can be structured and classified (see Table 10.1). Interdependencies between the levels are considered: “On each level of action [...] the specifications on the respective superordinate level are environments of action, which require an implementation to the respective new, level-specific characteristics of the environments of action” (ibid., p. 34; author’s translation). “Actions” are understood in the sense of this paper as “control actions”. In the following, the terms “control contexts, forms and results” are used. The control results of higher levels thus structure – more or less and intentionally or unintentionally – the control context of subsequent levels.

Table 10.1 Action & control contexts, -forms and -results in the multi-level school system, own illustration based on Fend (2008, p. 36 f.) and the 4-level model of school system of Zlatkin-Troitschanskaia (2006, p. 206)

Level (of school system)	Action & control contexts	Action & control-forms and -results
Macro level (education policy)	Social contexts, cultural traditions	Laws/regulations, Personnel and material supply
Exo level (educational administration)	Legal requirements, requirements of school supply, decision-making powers	Laws/ ordinances, implementation regulations, human/ financial resources financial resources (allocation), program development, organizational models
Meso level (individual school)	Organizational Models, Resources, student body, faculty	Forms of school organization, internal school regulations, macro-organization of teaching, timetables, distribution of teaching load, committees, school culture, quality assurance
Micro level (teachers)	legal requirements (curricula, examination requirements), school agreements, characteristics of the class, own resilience	Classroom preparation, teaching, classroom management, education, conflict resolution, assessment and evaluation, lessons taught, classroom climate.

Research Questions and Design

This chapter analyzes the contexts, forms, and results of control (actions) at the different levels of the school system with regard to the deployment of SEN teachers at inclusive primary schools.³ Specifically, it addresses the following questions:


1. Which forms of control are found at the macro and exo level?
2. What control/steering contexts emerge from this for the meso and micro level?
3. With which forms of control do the stakeholders react on the
 - (a) meso level and
 - (b) micro level?

The data used to answer these questions were obtained from the project *FoLiS*, in which data from school administrations (qualitative), primary school leaders (quantitative), and SEN teachers (quantitative and qualitative) from the four federal states of Hesse (HE), North Rhine-Westphalia (NW), Berlin (BE), and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania (MV) were collected (see Table 10.2). These federal states were

³At the time of the survey, at least one student with SEN support was being educated at all the schools surveyed.

Table 10.2 Methods and samples of the research project Folies, geographical location of the four studied federal states in Germany

Method & investigated level	Total	NW	HE	BE	MV
Guideline-based expert interviews Ministries of Education,	4	1	1	1 ^a	1
District governments (Bezirksregierungen) ^b	2	2	0	0	0
School administration (Staatliche Schulämter) ^c	16	4	4	4	4
Online questionnaire Primary school leaders	89	28	19	20	22
Paper pencil questionnaire Special needs teachers	47	47	15	11	10
Guideline-based expert interviews SEN-Teachers	40	12	11	10	7



^aReply per e-mail

^bThe district governments in NW are hierarchically superordinate to the school administration

^cSelection according to willingness to participate: NW: of 53, HE: of 15, BE: of 12, full survey in MV (four of four school offices)

selected because they differ, among other factors, in terms of population and school density, SEN support rate, and their specific federal state “integration history”. The selection was made in order to (re)present a broad perspective on the possibilities of deploying SEN teachers at primary schools. The selection of the school boards included was also made with the aim of achieving the greatest possible heterogeneity. The survey of primary school leaders and subsequently of SEN teachers was conducted without restriction to these school districts.

The teachers, who had been interviewed worked at schools where the primary school leaders had previously been interviewed. Table 10.2 gives an overview of the survey methods and samples in each project phase. The survey instruments were developed or adapted on the basis of the findings obtained in the previous project phase. For more detailed information on project phases, data used, and forms of analysis, see the links to full project information at the end of the chapter. The broad and extensive data of the project are considered here under the above-mentioned questions; the results reported in the following are to be understood as partial results of the overall project. Further results refer, for example, to concrete activities and responsibilities of the SEN teachers and corresponding task distributions with the teachers of the mainstream school as the result of the negotiation processes described here on the micro level (see above).

The extensive data of the project are considered here under the above-mentioned questions; the results presented are to be understood as partial results of the overall project.

Results

Control at the Macro and Exo Levels (Question 1)

The following findings were obtained from the document analysis and the interviews with the experts from the macro and exo levels: Because there are only recommendations (without binding effect) on high-quality teacher training as a steering activity at the federal level (KMK, 2011, 2014), all further control actions lie with the federal states and their educational sovereignty. At the level of the federal states, the stakeholders at the macro and exo levels are responsible for the basic concepts and organizational models of inclusive education, including the establishment of (new) support systems and concrete resource allocation models for teaching staff hours. Corresponding regulations are first laid down in the federal state school laws and then documented in the inclusion strategies of the states, which are continually supplemented and adapted. This also includes the clarification of the SEN teachers' school membership (special school or primary school), an optional deployment as a class teacher and the responsibility (or non-responsibility) for SEN diagnostics.

Corresponding regulations are first laid down in the state school laws and then documented in the inclusion concepts of the states, which are continuously supplemented and adapted. Specifically, this also involves clarifying the school affiliation of SEN teachers (special school or elementary school), the optional assignment as class teacher, and the responsibility (or non-responsibility) for SEN diagnostics.

From the interviews, the following general formal or systematic central forms of action and control of the stakeholders at the **exo level** could be worked out:

- The **assessment of needs** for SEN teacher positions at the primary schools including the required specific SEN qualifications, e.g. special focus “hearing” or “speech”. This is done in consultation with the respective school leader. A job description is created and published.
- The exact creation of the school-specific maximum resource allocation for SEN teachers based on the applicable key figures in the school district. The macro-level control specifications for the resource allocation of the SEN teachers are translated into specific **numbers of SEN teachers per school** and concrete job descriptions (qualifications, weekly working hours, etc.).
- The **request to special schools** as well as mainstream schools, whether and which specific SEN teacher can be released for the deployment in inclusive education of a primary school (part-time or completely). In order to recruit SEN teachers for rather rare specializations such as “sight”, the request is also made over and beyond the school administrators' own area of supervision.
- Fulfilling a **coordination role** to “match” SEN teachers and primary schools. In BE, MV and NW, the final selection of the SEN teaching staff is largely made by the school leaders because of the autonomy they are granted in personnel matters. In HE, the *counseling and support centers* (in the following: BFZ) are also involved in the allocation of teachers.

It can be seen that the forms of control used by the stakeholders on the exo level with regard to the deployment of SEN teachers essentially relate to the allocation of resources within their respective control contexts (cf. Table 10.1). There is no further steering of the deployment at a content-related level. One of the reasons given in the interviews for the lack of control over specific content was the heterogeneity and the conditions of deployment at the schools. This means, that the school administration was unable to provide detailed specifications for areas of responsibility (Interview with school administrator T3). Furthermore, reference was made to school autonomy and the (assumed) leadership competence of each school leader:

Yes, this is also the original task of the school leader. [...] Planning the job profile for teachers. And they know their colleagues and also know what diamonds they have in the staff. (Interview with school administrator T4)

In some interviews, it was reported that the question of a job and role description is often brought up to the school administration by the school leaders (the meso-level in our analyses). During the running time of the project *FoLiS*, it was found that in some cases job and role descriptions were indeed published by stakeholders on the exo level (e.g. Arbeitsstelle Inklusion der Bezirksregierung Köln, 2019).

The guiding principle for the deployment of SEN teachers should always be the effective deployment of SEN expertise. For this reason, it may be profitable to deploy SEN teachers more flexibly within their mandatory teaching hours. Depending on the resources, it may e.g. make sense, to support student groups or whole classes for a limited period of time by the SEN teacher in a co-teaching or epoch education contexts, or to develop flexible advisory concepts. (Manual of the Düsseldorf District Government, published in May 2020, 32; author's translation)

The federal state of Hesse has defined the tasks and responsibilities of SEN teachers in 2020 (HKM, 2020). Overall, however, it can be stated that forms of control at macro and exo levels with regard to the deployment of the SEN teachers in essence comprise the basic deployment structure and the procedure for resource allocation. Recommendations for action (not standards!) are given gradually and presumably mainly at the insistence of stakeholders at meso and micro levels; there is no further definition of possible outputs of inclusive education (i.e. standards). The delegation of responsibility for the design of the work of SEN teachers is partly given an "official character" in the recommendations for action (e.g. in the above-mentioned manual of the Düsseldorf District Government).

In the last few years, new organizations have been founded in all of the federal states studied to promote the development of an inclusive school system together with the mainstream and the special schools. The task of these organizations is to answer any questions primary schools or SEN teachers at inclusive schools may have and to help to find local or individual case solutions, not only for personnel issues but for all school development issues. Their concrete tasks are defined in the inclusion strategies of the 16 federal states. These new stakeholders (e.g. the BFZ-leader or Inclusion Consultants; not interviewed in the project) cannot always be clearly assigned to the exo or meso level.

Control Contexts for the Meso and Micro Levels (Question 2)

For the actors on the meso and micro levels (school leaders and SEN teachers), the control actions on the macro and exo levels result in control contexts within which the deployment of SEN teachers is controlled within the schools. In the following, the assessment of school leaders and SEN teachers on these control contexts (in two selected areas) are presented.

Personnel Issues

More than three quarters (77%; $N = 78$) of the school leaders and about 60% ($N = 47$) of the SEN teachers assess the **staffing with SEN teachers** as (rather) insufficient (no consistent significant differences between the states).⁴ The assessments of the school leaders and SEN teachers are rudimentary reflected in the actual personnel equipment, which was calculated here using the relation between total number of students and total hours worked by all SEN teachers at the school (correlation with the assessment of the school leaders: 0.416, $p = 0.000$; SEN teachers: 0.345, $p = 0.029$) as well as the relation between the primary school teachers and SEN teachers (correlation with the assessment of the school leaders: 0.323, $p = 0.004$; SEN teachers: 0.283, $p = 0.066$).

36% of school leaders (27 out of 75) consider the **criteria used to allocate SEN teachers** positions to schools to be (rather) not transparent.⁵ There are clear differences between the federal states: in HE, transparency is rated significantly higher compared to NW ($p = 0.008$) and MV ($p = 0.007$).

Cooperation with the Relevant School Administration

Table 10.3 shows the mean values and standard deviations for the school leaders' satisfaction with the cooperation with the responsible school administration regarding **overarching questions about inclusive school education** as well as **specific questions about individual SEN**. Overall, the school leaders seem to be quite satisfied. The somewhat more negative findings for the state of HE can be explained by the tasks of the BFZs, which are officially available to the primary schools as contact persons for these questions. Hessian school leaders are

⁴ "Please rate: Is the staffing with SEN teachers sufficient to implement your ideas of inclusive learning?", 1 – no, not at all to 5 – completely sufficient

⁵ "I find the criteria transparent, by which schools are allocated SEN teachers support", 1 – not at all to 5 – yes

Table 10.3 Satisfaction of the primary school leaders with cooperation with the responsible school administration (for HE additionally: BFZ), 1 – unsatisfied, 5 – very satisfied

Item	In Total	NW	BE	MV	HE with school administration	HE with support center BFZ
	M (SD)					
<i>Inclusion, overall (N = 75)</i>	3.47 (1.08)	3.72 (0.89)	3.93 (0.83)	3.05 (1.10)	3.19 (1.33)	4.56 (0.63)
<i>Questions regarding specific special educational needs (N = 72)</i>	3.51 (1.13)	4.00 (0.82)	3.75 (0.87)	3.30 (1.17)	2.80 (1.32)	4.44 (0.89)

comparatively even more satisfied with their support than the school leaders of the other federal states.

In detail, in the case of **overarching questions about inclusive school education**, the primary school leaders in HE (BFZ, approx. 94%), BE (approx. 79%), and NW (68%) feel (rather) well supported; in MV this proportion is significantly lower at 40%. With regard to **specific questions regarding individual SEN**, the school administrators also seem to provide good support for the school leaders in general: most school leaders from HE (BFZ, approx. 88%) and NW (76%) are (rather) satisfied with this, in BE (approx. 67%) and MV (60%) the proportion is somewhat lower.

Within these contexts of action, individual schools and school administrations have various instruments at their disposal to control the deployment of the SEN teachers at their school or to provide favorable framework conditions. This concerns on the one hand the “what” of the SEN teachers’ activities and on the other hand the “how” of the occurrence of these tasks and task distributions, which will be considered in more detail in the following.

Forms of Control on Meso Level (Question 3a)

Which forms of control can be found on the meso level will be answered based on the information provided by the school leaders. One way of creating a framework of orientation regarding the deployment of SEN teachers at the primary school is through **written agreements** within the school on the areas of responsibility of SEN teachers at the school (Arnoldt, 2007, p. 129, p. 132 ff.). Overall, according to the school leaders, such an agreement exists in less than half of the schools surveyed (44.9%, 35 out of 78). In HE – where cooperation agreements between the mainstream school and the SEN teachers’ BFZs are mandatory – this is, with 75%,

clearly more often the case than in the other federal states (MV: 21.1%, BE: 26.7%, NW: 53.6%). It should be critical noted that even in the case of a written agreement, according to the school leaders, not all relevant stakeholders (school leaders, the SEN teachers concerned, primary school teachers) were involved in its creation.

Sufficient **time for meetings and joint planning** is an important precondition for successful interdisciplinary or multi professional collaboration (e.g. Grosche et al., 2020). Especially in cases where responsibilities are not defined in writing, corresponding appointments are likely to play an important role in clarifying individual tasks. According to the school leaders, these appointments are fixed and take place at least weekly in about 42% (36 of 85) of the primary schools. In almost as many schools (a total of about 39%, 33 of 85), such times do not exist at all or only as needed (in particular in MV: approx. 57% not at all/as needed; 12 of 21).⁶ The extent to which SEN teachers are involved in the organization and structures of the primary school is also reflected in the extent to which they are included in meetings in the school. Table 10.4 shows the percentage frequencies of schools in which SEN teachers (almost) always participate in the overall team meetings and also in the school-subject conferences of the primary school. In the other cases (difference to 100%), the SEN teachers do not participate at all, or only if students with SEN are a point of conference conversation, or according to another regulation (e.g. only from a certain hour quota at the school).

The results show that in most schools the SEN teachers (almost) always participate in the **overall teacher meetings** of the primary school, but that this proportion is somewhat lower in the **subject conferences** (conferences for the individual subjects or subject groups). There are also differences between the federal states: in HE, for example, SEN teachers participate significantly less often in the overall meetings, but above all, rarely in the subject conferences. In BE, on the other hand, the SEN teachers' participation in meetings and conferences seems to be the common rule. Reasons for a rare participation of SEN teachers mentioned in open comment fields in the questionnaires are e.g. the use of "time for other tasks concerning the students to be supervised" (primary school leader from MV; author's translation) or "not feasible in terms of working time" (school leader from NW; author's translation).

Table 10.4 Participation of the SEN teachers in meetings in the primary school (data source: project phase 2, cf. Table 10.2)

	Total	NW	HE	BE	MV
Type of meetings	Participation (almost) always, in %				
<i>Overall teachers team meetings (N = 81)</i>	87.7	96.4	68.8	100.0	80.0
<i>Subject conferences (N = 71)</i>	64.8	66.7	15.4	94.1	70.6

⁶"Are there fixed meeting or planning times at your school for collaborations between mainstream (and, if applicable, other pedagogical staff) and SEN teachers (excluding: teacher/general conference)?" (No; as needed; 1/month; 1/week; daily)

Forms of Control on Micro Level (Question 3b)

In light of the findings presented thus far, it is not surprising that SEN teacher deployment practices are often negotiated at the level of individual or cooperating teachers. They may be based, for example, on a long-standing collaboration with established traditions or on a verbal clarification of the assignment that is perceived as sufficient by the school leader. This is shown by a content-analytical evaluation of 37 interviews with SEN teachers, in which four priority **modes of agreement** could be identified (cf. Fig. 10.1): Most frequently ($n = 18$), a *collegial negotiation with the other teachers* of the primary school was mentioned. In eight cases, deployment practices were based on the *own decision* of the interviewed SEN teachers. In six cases, individual job responsibilities were *developed jointly with the school leaders*. In another five cases, the tasks and task assignments were taken from *pre-existing traditions* of the school or taken from arrangements of other SEN teachers (who were already or had previously worked at the school).

There are tendencies for differences between the federal states, but these must be interpreted with caution due to the small sample size: in HE, where written agreements on the deployment of SEN teachers are mandatory (see above), the individual areas of responsibility of SEN teachers are proportionately less frequently negotiated at the level of the cooperating teachers (approx. 27%). Here, in contrast to the other federal states, they are more often developed jointly with the school leader (approx. 36%; possibly in the context of drawing up the cooperation agreement). In MV and BE, on the other hand, negotiation between teachers seems to be the common norm (80% and approx. 64%).

collegial negotiation with the other teachers						own decision				
						NW	HE	BE	MV	Gesamt
						2/9	3/11	2/11	1/5	8/37
						developed jointly with the school leader				
NW	HE	BE	MV	Gesamt						
2/9	4/11	0/11	0/5	6/37						
pre-existing traditions										
NW	HE	BE	MV	Gesamt						
4/9	3/11	7/11	4/5	18/37						
NW	HE	BE	MV	Gesamt						
1/9	1/11	2/11	1/5	5/37						

Fig. 10.1 Priority modes of agreement among SEN teachers on tasks and task distributions; results based on the FoLiS study (reading note (example): NW 2/9 = two out of nine SEN teachers in NW)

The SEN teachers who are most satisfied with the mode of agreement are those who arrange their areas of responsibility collegially with the other teachers in the school (12 of 18). Among the SEN teachers of the agreement mode *Development together with the school management*, two-thirds (4 out of 6) also express satisfaction, among other reasons, due to the great willingness of the primary school leaders to adapt the task areas to meet the needs of students. Three out of eight SEN teachers were satisfied with the mode *Own decision*, among other reasons because the school community fully grants them the competence over the “how” of the support and thus letting them shape their own intervention at the same time.

Summary and Discussion

In this chapter, the forms of control of the stakeholders in the multi-level system of schools were examined with attention to the deployment of SEN teachers in primary schools in four of 16 German federal states. By focusing on regulatory structures in educational systems in particular, representatives of the system levels were interviewed about their control activities and considered in their coupling. Table 10.5 shows – as an extract of the empirical investigation – the respective control contexts, forms and results with regard to the deployment of SEN teachers at primary schools.

Table 10.5 Action & control contexts, -forms, and outcomes regarding the deployment of SEN teachers at primary schools in the multilevel model

Level (of school system)	Action & control contexts	Action & control-forms and -results
Macro level (education policy)	UN CRPD, inclusion as a social requirement	Ratification of and adaptation of legal regulations to the UN CRPD
Exo level (education administration)	Implementation of legal and sub-legal requirements, state-specific action plans/guidelines, inclusion as a task area of school development, task of personnel allocation	Performing tasks in accordance with state law, establishing additional players if necessary, implementing educational policy decisions Needs assessment Calculation of positions Recruitment of personnel Coordination school & special needs teachers
Meso level (individual school)	Use of special needs teachers according to organizational model with given pedagogical school autonomy	Control or delegation of the deployment of SEN teachers, internal school regulations (e.g. conferences, meetings), involvement of the SEN teachers in internal school committees
Micro level (teachers)	Observance of legal requirements and job description, intra-school agreements	Organizing teaching responsibilities (e.g. co-teaching small group support, own teaching) and other duties in consultation with other teachers.

It was found that, contrary to the new orientation towards output-oriented control in the school system (standards-based reform), there is a traditional input-oriented control with regard to the implementation of inclusion and the deployment of special education teachers, which essentially focuses on the provision of resources and organizational models. Definitions of outputs of inclusive school education are not found in the four federal states studied. The concrete design of inclusive education in terms of the deployment of SEN teachers is delegated to the school leaders with reference to school autonomy and (assumed) school management competence: “They know what diamonds they have in staff” (Interview school administrator). This is justified by the need for variable and school-specific deployment at the level of the individual school. At the same time, the stakeholders at these levels are neither provided with concrete formulations of goals nor with corresponding instruments of evaluation of their school-specific implementation of inclusive education (meso level, individual school), or of their special education activities (micro level, teaching staff) as a component and feature of output-oriented control.

This practice, called here “fragmentary control,” leads to a high responsibility of the individual school (and the SEN teachers themselves) for the organization of the deployment of SEN teachers. At the individual schools, the SEN teachers do not participate in the school meetings with the same regularity in all of the federal states studied here, meeting and planning times are not implemented sufficiently and comprehensively, and written agreements to clarify the SEN teachers’ areas of responsibility are rarely used to their full potential due to the lack of involvement of all relevant stakeholders. Professional support for the implementation of inclusion and specific support is provided at the level of individual actors in school administration or intermediary agencies. The actors providing support at this level are, for example, SEN teachers with a specific SEN expertise or expertise in school management positions. School principals perceive support as sufficient, but here too individual actors – legitimized by their expertise – are granted far-reaching powers of action and decision-making (autonomy or delegation of responsibility), without binding quality standards formulated in the sense of output-oriented control. In this regard, these actors represent a field of research that should be given more attention in the future.

From the point of view of the SEN teachers, the low degree of pre-structuring of their work through binding guidelines or fixed agreements requires the ability to find an individual role, which can also be assumed as a challenge of professionalization in the future. They are pushed into the role of a “fragmentation-manager”. The lack of guidelines on what inclusive education should be in everyday school life leads to the fact that teachers translate and implement “inclusive education” in their professional actions either entirely on their own or in intra-school cooperation. By analyzing the interviews of the SEN teachers, we were able to reconstruct two types of changing the own professional role, using the documentary method: we found an expert/knowledge based model and a professional biography contoured model (Ludwig et al., 2023, under review).

The given school autonomy is rather used in the sense of “ad hoc advocacy” than for systematic control of the deployment of special needs teachers and the implementation of inclusive support. This finding, in turn, evidences the need of a

systematic study of the input factors of school administration in the current new handbooks by the exo level written for school leaders and teachers (see above). Follow-up studies could as well focus even more on sensemaking processes (Weick, 1995) to take focus more on the personal attributes of the actors (including individual knowledge, beliefs, and experiences), the situational context (including setting of the argument, existing values within an organization, historical context) and the representation of the policy prescription (question of macro and exo level intention and interpretation by meso and micro levels; see e.g. Spillane et al., 2002; Spillane & Anderson, 2019).

The results of the study show that inclusive education is a very fruitful field of research in the policy-practice nexus. First of all, inclusive education is – at least in the context of Germany – one of the most far-reaching reform projects in school policy since decades. Meanwhile, the elaborated research methods of educational research as well as the meanwhile uncomplicated data exchange, allow bi- and multinational studies and comparative analyses in a historically unprecedented range of possibilities. In this context, the study “FoLis” could show that the policy-practice nexus exists in both directions. The management of the quality indicators for inclusive education by school administration based on a poorly developed conceptual foundation by education policy is low. In the FoLis-study (2018–2021) it also became visible in the interviews with SEN teachers that the “window of opportunity” of a high degree of professional autonomy starts to close and a standardization of the job profile “SEN teacher in a mainstream school” (e.g. on teaching assignment, on the use of special educational diagnostics) is indicated in the case of four federal states studied. As a consequence, it is highly interesting to examine the “pathways” (Sydow et al., 2009) as well as the future evolution as explanatory patterns for contemporary policy and practice nexuses.

Note for readers: Results of the entire research project including reference to further publications, scientific posters, final meeting (video recording) and audio podcast are available at the following links:

<https://qualifizierung-inklusion.de/project/foerderpaedagogische-lehrkraefte-in-inklusionen-schulen-2/>

<https://ufo.reha.tu-dortmund.de/forschung/projekte/foelis/>

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Chapter 11

Conceptualisations of Extra-Curricular Cross-Sector Partnerships in the Context of The Cultural Schoolbag and Physical Activity Health Initiatives in Norwegian Schools



Jorunn Spord Borgen and Bjørg Oddrun Hallås

Abstract Over the past decades, cross-sector partnership and collaborations in schools have been embraced and developed in many countries as a form of joint work that requires mutual engagement across boundaries within the education policy and practice nexus. However, the addition of extra-curricular content into the school by external partners can be challenging, as it requires the restructuring of the kind of content and knowledge that should be ground in school. How those involved in the cross-sector partnerships negotiate the knowledge ground for certain extra-curricular content and practices is influenced by the context-dependent relationships within the research-policy-practice nexus. Building on previous empirical research conducted by the authors and a document analysis, this article investigates the conceptualisations and key events of two empirical examples of such extra-curricular cross-sector partnerships in the context of compulsory education in Norway. The chapter contributes new knowledge about the research-policy-practice nexus in these partnerships.

Keywords Cross-sector partnership · Extra-curricular · Educationalisation · Curriculum · Didactics

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Introduction

Over the past decades, cross-sector partnerships and collaborations in schools have been embraced and developed in many countries as a form of joint work that requires mutual engagement across boundaries within the education policy and practice nexus (Ball, 2009; Eyal & Yarm, 2018; Lillejord & Børte, 2016; Penuel et al., 2015). In such partnerships, external partners come into schools to contribute content aimed at addressing various issues in the public sphere (Eyal & Yarm, 2018). The term ‘educationalisation’ (Depaeppe, 1998) is a key concept in understanding the basic processes in education when certain issues are introduced into the school through reforms, programmes, partnerships, and interventions (Fendler, 2018; Labaree, 2008). Educationalisation forms the basis of much contemporary thinking about curriculum, schooling and social reform today (Brass, 2016). The argument is that school is where children and young people meet and that introducing certain issues in school can help stimulate individual student’s growth and development (Fendler, 2018). However, the addition of extra-curricular content into the school by external partners poses a challenge, as it requires the restructuring of the kind of content and knowledge that should be ground in school. How those involved in the cross-sector partnership negotiate the knowledge ground for certain extra-curricular content and practices is influenced by the context-dependent relationships in the research-policy-practice nexus (Geschwind & Broström, 2013; Locke, 2009; Ohio, 2008). Locke (2009, p. 122) suggests that a historical approach can be enlightening to gain insight into the policy and practice nexus and uses of research.

Although partnerships have many shapes and forms and can be limited by time, situational, and informal, or become more formalised over time, some characteristics are common (Brinkerhoff, 2002; Ng et al., 2017). For example, it is expected that all partnerships will contribute mutuality, reciprocity and added value, and result in the improvement, development and strengthening of education (Coburn & Penuel, 2016; Duncan & Conner, 2013; Penuel et al., 2015). Cross-sector partnerships aim to mobilise the capacity and resources of private, governmental and non-governmental entities to improve school quality (Eyal & Yarm, 2018). However, the additional content that students encounter through such partnership activities in school is not necessarily described in the curriculum. Further, different partners might have a different ideational basis with regard to the content of the extra-curricular contribution by different stakeholders and the consequences of operationalisation (Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016). Partnership studies report that participants may encounter tensions and problems related to ideas and ideology, and this is evident through asymmetries and unbalanced power relations, lack of formalisation of structures, unclear goals, and unclear systems of implementation and evaluation (Brinkerhoff, 2002; Borgen & Brandt, 2006; Lillejord & Børte, 2016; Ng et al., 2017). While several studies have elucidated the downfalls of such partnerships, there are few descriptions of how they can be operationalised to work well (Coburn & Penuel, 2016). In addition, the research-policy-practice nexus within specific contexts of cross-sector partnerships is rarely addressed (Coburn & Penuel, 2016; Geschwind & Broström, 2013).

Building on previous empirical research conducted by the authors (see for example Borgen, 2008, 2018; Borgen & Brandt, 2006; Borgen & Hjørdemaal, 2017; Borgen et al., 2020a, b; Grønningsæter et al., 2007; Hallås et al., 2014; Lee et al., 2022) and document analysis, this article investigates the arts and culture program The Cultural Schoolbag (TCS) and physical activity (PA) health initiatives in school as empirical examples of such extra-curricular cross-sector partnerships in primary education in Norway. TCS and PA initiatives were formally introduced in educational policy at the threshold of the twenty-first century and have over the past 20 years been operationalized into different initiatives and practices in compulsory education in Norway. There are similarities in the policy effort to support the mission of these partnerships, but these cross-sector partnerships have different historic trajectories with regard to policy formation, goals and intentions, formalisation, resources, structures and agency in schools. Here, we have adopted the practice of conceptual history (Koselleck, 1985) to explore conceptualisations of arts and cultural education and PA health initiatives in the research-policy-practice nexus by focusing on TCS and PA cross-sector partnerships in compulsory education over a period of 20 years, that is, from 2000 to 2020.

First, we present TCS and PA as cases. We follow this with a discussion on how arts and PA are both part of educationalisation in modern society and a global trend, and the consequences of bringing issues in society into school. Next, we have discussed of the role of cross-sector partnerships as a form of governance in the research-policy-practice nexus with the potential to bring new resources and change into schools. Subsequently, we present the design and methodology of the study, and follow this with an exploration of conceptualisation in the two cases. The chapter ends with some concluding thoughts on collaboration in cross-sector partnerships in the research-policy-practice nexus and the consequences of educationalisation in the two cases.

Background

The cases in this study are examples of educationalisation and how new content in school is introduced and argued for in a way that is intentionally and rhetorically oriented towards positive transformation and future expectations for individual and for societal development. Internationally, the rationale for promoting arts and culture and PA/health programmes and initiatives in school is to foster democratic citizenship, art experience and appreciation, and healthy behaviour, as well as to obtain more immediate effects, for example, better academic achievement and well-being (Eisner & Day, 2004; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2019; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2016; Winner et al., 2013; World Health Organization [WHO], 2010, 2020). These ideas are embraced rather widely (Alvarez-Bueno et al., 2017; Bamford, 2006; Borgen et al., 2020a, b; Cook & Kohl, 2013; Hetland & Winner, 2004; Reid, 1998) and constitute the ideational and normative basis for TCS and PA in this study.

The Cultural Schoolbag

TCS is part of the government's cultural policy for students in compulsory education 'to experience, become familiar with and develop an understanding of professional artistic and cultural expressions' (White Paper No. 8. (2007–2008)). It is mandated that the activities be of professional quality and cover the entire cultural spectrum—film, cultural heritage, literature, music, performing arts and visual arts. With regard to student outcomes, cultural policy programmes, such as TCS, are supported by certain discourses on art and the effects that art might have on the children who are exposed to it (Borgen & Brandt, 2006; Breivik & Christophersen, 2013). TCS is built on the tradition that aesthetic experience is independent and valuable on its own autonomous premises and as the precondition for our lives as acknowledging and moral beings (Kittang, 1991) and humanistic Bildung (Reichenbach, 2014). However, the literature on arts and cultural education describes tensions between subjective aspects of knowledge, where student participation and students' aesthetic experiences are at the centre, and objective aspects of knowledge, which are communicated to the students as specific and standardised content (Borgen et al., 2020b; Lindgren & Ericsson, 2013; Schou, 2005; Stavrum, 2013). This is regarded as the dual purpose of cultural policy in many Western countries. That is, instead of merely working for the democratisation of the canonised (elite) culture, one also strives for cultural democracy; this requires one to accept other (ordinary people's) cultural forms and participation and can come through as ambivalent policy and practices in general cultural policy as well as in TCS (Duelund, 2003; Mangset & Hylland, 2017; Ruud et al., 2022). TCS is governed by Kulturtanken, which is the national agency of the Ministry of Culture.¹

Physical Activity Health Initiatives

PA health initiatives are part of public health policy measures directed at children and young people during their time at school and aimed at increasing physical activity. Health initiatives in schools include strategies for improving the long-term health of children and youth through exercise and are grounded in physiology and biomedical research claiming that PA interventions may be effective in the development of healthy lifestyle behaviours among children and adolescents that will then translate into reduced risk for many chronic diseases and cancers in adulthood (Dobbins et al., 2009). It is widely accepted that PA comprises 'bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that results in energy expenditure beyond rest level' (Caspersen et al., 1985, p. 126). In 1987, the WHO presented the Ottawa Charter for Action to Achieve 'Health for All' by the year 2000 and beyond (WHO, 1987).

¹For more information about Kulturtanken, see: <https://www.denkulturelleskolesekken.no/english-information/this-is-the-cultural-schoolbag/>

Claiming that its success would depend on the collaboration of all sectors of government, a series of actions among international organisations, national governments and local communities were launched by the WHO. Nordic recommendations based on the WHO's recommendations were published in the 1980s and later revised in 1996, 2004, 2013, 2018 and 2020; they have inspired Norwegian health policy. The recommendation by WHO (2010) that children and young people (5–17 years old) should have at least 60 min of moderate to vigorous intensity PA every day is built on claims that there is evidence of the benefits of this practice for the future health of children and youth (Adab et al., 2018; Heath et al., 2012; Ma et al., 2014; OECD, 2019; Sallis & Owen, 1998; Schenker, 2019; Skrede, 2019). PA initiatives in school are expected to result in good health, long life spans and lifelong joy of movement (Bailey et al., 2009; OECD, 2019). However, critics argue that a notion of health and physical activity that is dominated by a physiological and biomedical science perspective overlooks the complexity of health as a phenomenon in society in general, as well as in school and in understandings of human versatile movement activity (Borgen et al., 2020a; Evans, 2003).

Transforming Content from ‘the World’ into Classroom Events

TCS and PA programmes are examples of how educationalisation of central policy issues takes the form of extra-curricular activities in the school. There is a long tradition of introducing additional content to compulsory education, as education is a site of crucial struggles over authority, identity, the meaning of education, content, and who should control it (Apple, 2018). Differences in education according to contexts, regions and countries (Aasen et al., 2015), as well as contemporary global policy trends (Karseth & Sivesind, 2010; Phillips & Ochs, 2003), affect the relationship between society and school and the actual educational content. However, when TCS and PA, as extra-curricular content that is not part of the curriculum, comes into school, who defines what should be taught and learned, and how it should be taught and why? According to Doyle (2017), the transformation of content from ‘the world’ into the classroom results in curricularisation of that content: ‘Any particular curriculum [...] is first a set of claims about the educative effects of certain contents (i.e. what outcomes can be expected of particular experiences) and the social significance of these effects (i.e. why such outcomes are important for children and youth to acquire)’ (p. 222). Consequently, when TCS and PA enter the school as cross-sector partners, the curricularisation of content is closely related to how actors work, interact and develop in the context of varied research-policy-practice relationships and nexuses. When the extra-curricular activity is not part of the curriculum and is, thus, intended to impact the content students encounter in school and their educational outcome, this challenges what we understand as curriculum. Traditionally, one major difference between the curriculum and didactic traditions is the perspective on content (Doyle, 2017, p. 219). Curriculum, in the Anglo-American tradition, describes content that does not need to be analysed and

is based on the expectation that curriculum practice in schools can be determined by national policy, with little room for school and teacher autonomy (Priestley et al., 2021). Within this tradition, educational policy intentions are normatively expected to occur through linear and hierarchical chains of command from policy to practice (Priestley et al., 2021). Particularly in Nordic countries that historically have a tradition of didactics, curriculum objectives and content are more generally described, and there is space for various local practices and teacher autonomy (Aasen et al., 2015; Hopmann, 2015; Telhaug et al., 2006; Wermke & Prøitz, 2019). According to Hopmann (2007), didactics can restrain teaching in a way that provides opportunities for the individual growth of the student. The meaning of different learning experiences emerges within the learning process, based on the meeting of a unique individual with a matter at hand; further, the objects of teaching are based on the educational content the teacher has planned. In Norway, the 2006 curriculum reform, and the renewal of the curriculum in 2020, describes an outcome-based curriculum model with elements of content-oriented and didactic traditions (Støren, 2022). Within this mixed curriculum model, teachers are responsible for the didactics in relation to content. However, if the content is not part of the curriculum, as is the case of TCS and PA in compulsory education, this can leave room for a manifold of practices among the different stakeholders, schools, and teachers, and also result in little interest in such practices in policy and in educational research (Locke, 2009; Ohio, 2008). Variations in understandings of what is at stake in the two cross-sector partnership cases actualise discussions about content in education in this chapter (Apple, 2018; Ng et al., 2017), and we place conceptualisations at the forefront of these discussions.

Conceptualisation of Partnerships

Partnership has a history as a ‘feel good’ universal remedy for governance encompassing a range of value-based principles, but it is often unclear how it makes a difference in a specific context, according to Brinkerhoff (2002, p. 20). Partnerships may be understood on a relative scale of mutuality and institutional identity, and as these dimensions are subjective, partners are dependent on the development of a common language in their partnership approaches and practices (Brinkerhoff, 2002). Following on these perspectives, Eyal and Yarm (2018) argue that cross-sector partnership in the education policy and practice nexus have certain specific features related to institutional identity that impact partnership relations. The essence of these partnerships is the establishment of co-understandings on a political-rhetorical level, and operationalisations and practices in school. External partners in cross-sector partnerships can put forth a delimited and clear ideology and institutional identity, but the school has a more eclectic ideational foundation based on education policy and questions about the school’s pedagogical values, goals and methods, and protection of the public school’s ethos. Consequently, this often poses a challenge to mutuality and institutional identity. Eyal and Yarm (2018)

suggest two categories of cross-sector partnerships in the education nexus: reproductive mutuality, in which schools effectively accept ideology and programmes from external partners via a form of ‘soft coercion’, and transformative mutuality, in which schools and external partners engage in substantial dialogue on pedagogical values, goals and methods, leading to pedagogical innovation and the protection of the school ethos. The conditions for transformative mutuality in cross-sector partnerships rely on substantial dialogues about the history of collaboration (Eyal & Yarm, 2018). Such collaboration could involve conceptualisation that may be controversial in a school context but not controversial for external partners, and vice versa. In the case of TCS and PA, because subject content in school is regulated in the curriculum, it can be particularly challenging when external partners contribute extra-curricular content that is not part of the curriculum.

As mentioned earlier, we build on Koselleck’s argument (1985) when exploring conceptualisation of TCS and PA in the education policy and practice nexus. Instead of considering concepts as a given and constant, Koselleck (1985) argues that concept formation and interpretation are historical and change over time and contexts. In this regard, Koselleck (1985) introduced the concepts of ‘space of experience’ and ‘horizon of expectation’ as historical categories that connect time and space. His argument was that the transformation of concepts occurs at a socio-political, rather than a political, level and draws attention to possible histories and relations between past experiences and future prospects (Koselleck, 2018). This notion is supported by studies on what is perceived as possible and desirable in education reforms and practices in school subjects (Borgen et al., 2020b). Historical conceptualisation is specifically relevant when TCS and PA represent certain issues in society that already have a long history, nationally and globally, before they entered the school in relation to these cross-sector extra-curricular partnerships (see for instance Grydeland et al., 2013; Bamford, 2006; Sefton-Green et al., 2012). In his writings, Koselleck (1985) emphasised that all human experiences are relational. For instance, when we choose a certain concept over others, we establish an imbalance in how these concepts are linked to other concepts (Junge, 2014). That is, asymmetry occurs, and these counter concepts have their strength in historical-cultural references that are both past and present, and constantly repositioned, although they are used to refer to something unique and constant. Koselleck’s practice of conceptual history is more a procedure than a definite method (Tribe, 2004). Therefore, in this study, Koselleck’s (1985) concepts of the space of experience and horizon of expectations, as well as asymmetries, are used as tools for analysing conceptualisation. Thus, we can spot key events, that is, explicit as well as more implicit and typically overlooked events (Taylor et al., 2001) and conditions that would, otherwise, have been overlooked or been unavailable to us when we seek to understand these phenomena within TCS and PA cross-sector partnerships.

Our interest lies in examining how the cases were conceptualised in the research-politics-practice nexus over time and what has changed. To this end, we seek to answer the following research question: *What kinds of conceptualisations and key events may have had significance during the 20-year period spanning 2000 to 2020 in the research-policy-practice nexus of TCS and PA cross-sector partnerships?*

Design and Method

In this study, we build on data from previous research conducted by the authors, and also build on new data from document analysis. We chose an exploratory design in order to answer the research questions (Hellevik, 1994), inspired by Koselleck's (1985) practice of historical conceptualisation (as mentioned earlier), and focused on metahistorical temporality in written/material sources. Based on our knowledge of the cases from our earlier research, we considered key events as important for the conceptualisation of TCS and PA and, accordingly, searched for key events (Taylor et al., 2001).

We established a timeline of documents through mapping and identification of various influential papers (grey, green and white policy documents) that have proven to be relevant to our two cases (Table 11.1). This gave us an overview of key educational policy events that may have had an impact on the cases over a 20-year period. The governance system in Norway is divided into sectors: the policy areas of arts and culture and sports come under the purview of the Ministry of Culture, and education policy comes under the purview of the Ministry of Education. Official documents on TCS policy, therefore, are available with both two ministries, while documents on PA issues may also be available with the Ministry of Health. We also selected other documents to supplement our analysis, and these specifically included documents on the use of specific conceptualisations to establish co-understandings at a political-rhetorical level. These documents include white papers (Meld. St.), action plans and strategic plans, national reports and evaluations, curriculum for compulsory education, and laws and regulations in the period 2000–2020, and we have tried to gain insight into how the documents stand in relation to further policy formulation necessitated by the curriculum reform The subject renewal introduced in 2020 (LK20) (The Directorate of Education and Training, 2022). See Appendix in this chapter, for *references* to the documents on timeline, Table 11.1.

In this study, we have conducted a practice-oriented document analysis (Asdal & Reinertsen, 2020). Our point of departure is the argument of Asdal (2015, p. 86, 87), who claimed that 'a document is decided by the context of which it is part [and] a document takes part in itself in shaping that context and takes part in modifying it, together with the very issue at hand'. To answer our research question, we started our analysis by reading the influential documents in our established timeline and delineating the research-policy-practice nexus in the two cases. Next, we tried to gain an understanding of how these documents could be viewed in an interaction process where practice was central to the documents' policymaking. We were particularly interested in analysing document locations as an entry point to view the documents' place in the development of our cases over the 20-year period. We also attempted to highlight the kinds of interaction with research that the documents allowed for in the nexus. Asdal (2015) mentions that it would be interesting to identify 'issue-knowers' or 'issue-experts' in policy formation (p. 82); we find this notion important in our cases. We tried to identify those who came to be defined as 'experts', that is, issue-experts in policy formation, and searched for whether 'those

Table 11.1 Timeline of policy documents identified as relevant for the two cases

Doc./ year	Ministry of Culture	Ministry of Health	Ministry of Education
2020	White Paper No. 18 (2020–2021)	The Action Plan for PA (2020–2029)	The National Curriculum, LK20
2019	White Paper No. 8 (2018–2019)	White Paper No. 19 (2018–2019)	Report from the strategy committee for education
2018		Resolution from The Norwegian Parliament (Stortinget), about 1 hour of PA at school (2018)	
2017	Report no. 2, from the strategy committee for sport		
2016	Report no.1, from the strategy committee for sport	Report from the strategy committee of health (2016–2021)	White Paper No. 28 (2015–2016)
2015	White Paper No. 30 (2014–2015)	White Paper No. 19 (2014–2015)	Official Norwegian Report NOU 2015:8
2014			Official Norwegian Report NOU 2014:7
2013	Official Norwegian Report NOU 2013:4	White Paper No. 34 (2012–2013)	White Paper No. 20 (2012–2013)
2012	White Paper No. 23 (2011–2012) White Paper No. 10 (2011–2012)	White Paper No. 16 (2010–2012) Law of Health	
2011			White Paper No. 22 (2010–2011)
2010			
2009	White Paper No. 49 (2008–2009) White Paper No. 23 (2008–2009)		Professional advisory group for PA at school Regulations to the Education Act § 1-1a. Right to PA
2008	White Paper No. 8 (2007–2008) White Paper No. 35 (2007–2008)		
2007			White Paper No. 16 (2006–2007)
2006			The National Curriculum, LK06
2005	Report No. 1 (2004–2005) National Budget	The Action Plan for PA (2005–2009)	
2004			
2003	White Paper No. 38 (2002–2003) White Paper No. 48 (2002–2003)	White Paper No. 16 (2002–2003)	White Paper No. 30 (2003–2004) White Paper No. 39 (2002–2003)
2002			
2001			Report No. 1 (2000–2001) National Budget

who were directly affected’ also became ‘experts’ (p. 83). Documents can reshape a case by redefining, reformulating, reallocating, creating new descriptions, changing concepts, and creating new priorities; thus, they could be considered as modification work that can bring about changes in the characteristics of the case (Asdal & Reinertsen, 2020, p. 114). In our analysis, we tried to understand the policy processes for how, when, why and if research was brought in and used as a basis for document design in relation to the education policy and practice nexus in our two cases. The result section refers to the documents listed in the timeline, (Table 11.1). For *references* to the documents on timeline, see Appendix in this chapter.

Results

A Timeline of Documents on TCS and PA

The timeline in Table 11.1 indicates key policy documents from three ministries² that have had significance during the period of 20 years, from 2000 to 2020, in the research-policy-practice nexus of TCS and PA cross-sector partnerships in education. A first look at the documents revealed that there has been a substantial amount of policy development in relation to TCS and PA in the given period. For TCS, three white papers from the Ministry of Culture and three white papers from the Ministry of Education were released in the introductory phase of the programme, that is, from 2000 to 2008. From 2008 onwards, eight white papers and additional green papers released by the Ministry of Culture mention TCS. The topics of these papers are general cultural policy and specific fields of cultural policy (e.g. film, visual art, theatre, music, library and museums), and TCS is discussed as a distinctive cultural policy instrument for the sector.³ For PA, there were only a few documents in the first period of study. In the period 2010–2020, four white papers on general health policy were released by the Ministry of Health (in year 2010, 2012, 2014 and 2018), and a separate public health law was passed in 2012. PA is also the subject of two NOUs (green papers), namely, Official Norwegian Report (NOU 2014:7, NOU 2015:8), from the Ministry of Education concerning the curriculum reform The subject renewal (LK20) (The Directorate for Education and Training, 2022). However, TCS is not mentioned in these documents. PA is also a central topic of two strategy documents concerning sports policy from the Ministry of Culture (Fjørtoft et al., 2016, 2017). PA as a health initiative in schools is mentioned in all these documents.

²During the period of our study, the names of the ministries changed several times. We have chosen to use abbreviated names that clearly indicate the sector responsibility for each ministry. The full name of the ministries at a given time point can be found in the reference list in Appendix 1.

³St. Meld. No. 49. (2008–2009), St. Meld. No. 23. (2008–2009), Meld. St. 23. (2011–2012), St. Meld. No. 10. (2011–2012), St. Meld. No. 30. (2014–2015), NOU 2013:4.

In the same period, three white papers and two official Norwegian reports from the Ministry of Education mention PA health initiatives in schools.

The Cultural Schoolbag

Documents that Laid the Ground for TCS

The context for TCS is the Norwegian cultural policy of the 1990s, which marked an important investment in art and culture, creativity and aesthetics in society, in general, and for children and young people, in particular, as well as placed new emphasis on the democratisation of culture; it was also a continuation of the dual culture policy from the 1950s (Mangset, 2012). The Prime Minister first suggested TCS in 2000 at a national conference as part of the government's cultural policy for students in compulsory education; however, the programme had already been conceptually established as a metaphor for specific arts and culture programmes in some municipalities and counties since 1995. A key document for the development of these trial programmes was 'The Bridge and the Blue Horse' (Ministry of Church Affairs, Research and Education, 1995), an action plan for aesthetic subjects and the cultural dimension in primary school; this document represented a collaboration between the two ministries that aimed at 'building a bridge between school and culture'. The rhetoric was that of bridge building between the culture and school sectors and collaboration at all levels of government: 'By linking the different areas together in a binding collaboration, one will have a good starting point for creating a more holistic growing up environment for children and young people' (p. 1). Another document that laid the ground for the future TCS was the curriculum reform of 1997 (L97) (Ministry of Church Affairs, Research and Education, 1996) which emphasised democratisation of culture and challenges for the school system with regard to giving students 'cultural experiences.' The document text was supported with pictures of art works and references to canonised culture, and it was edited by an art historian. The metaphors used for TCS were The Cultural Rucksack, which was used in a trial programme in the city of Sandefjord, and Kulturnista (culture lunch bag), which was used by the trial programme in three municipalities in the county of Møre og Romsdal. Both these metaphors are reminiscent of the basic elements of everyday school life.

From Seed Funds for Collaboration and Innovation to Cultural Sector Wealth

In the National Budget for 2001 (Report no. 1, 2000–2001), the government proposed the allocation of NOK 15 million for TCS to the Ministry of Culture's budget, under the item General Cultural Purposes (p. 125). Municipalities and counties could apply for these seed funds for innovative collaborations under TCS between schools, school

owners, and art and cultural institutions. This paved the way for diverse transformative partnerships (Eyal & Yarm, 2018) around the country. At an ‘idea conference’ in 2001, the Minister of Culture stated that ‘the government wishes to take responsibility for ensuring that all school children, no matter where they live, bring a cultural rucksack on the way into youth and adult life’ (Borgen & Brandt, 2006, p. 32).

In 2003, the government launched a national TCS programme through collaboration between the two sectors that was presented in two separate white papers to the Parliament—White Paper No. 38 (2002–2003) from the Ministry of Culture and White Paper No. 39 (2002–2003) from the Ministry of Education. At the launch of the programme, the Minister of Culture proclaimed that TCS is ‘unique in the world context’ (Kulturtanken, 2022). Yet, collaboration between the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education was conceptualised differently in the two white papers. The white paper from the Ministry of Culture, which was named *The Cultural Schoolbag*, emphasised how the professional arts and culture sphere should support the school and curriculum (White Paper No. 38 (2002–2003)). According to this document, arts and culture in TCS can inspire students to learn and help them develop creative competence and the ability to be curious and innovate. White Paper No. 39 (2002–2003) from the Ministry of Education has a title that is a quote from the theatre world⁴ and can be translated as ‘Not purely for pleasure’. It reflects the power of theatre to educate, in addition to providing immediate pleasure. The document text refers to the importance of schools in strengthening their ordering and user competence and emphasize on their responsibility in collaborating with TCS and planning based on the curriculum. Thus, the documents describe different conceptualisations of TCS and the actors responsible for operationalising of the programme.

When TCS found a place in the state budget proposal document, it marked a key event, as national budget resources played a role in the continuation of the programme. The Norwegian state betting company, Norsk Tipping, has contributed to ‘social beneficial causes’ since its inception in 1948. From 1987, the lottery funding was under the Ministry of Culture, and the profits from the lottery fund were earmarked for cultural purposes. In 2002, amendments to the law on gambling funds from 2003 stated that 40% of the profit should be earmarked for cultural purposes, with adjustments every year. As a result of this amendment, TCS received substantial national funding, and the allocated amount has increased substantially from 2003 to 2020.⁵ From 2004, TCS had earmarked funding for ‘professional cultural communication to children in primary school and an expanded collaboration

⁴ *Ei Blot for Lyst*, inscribed on the stage at The Old Stage, the original Royal Danish Theatre built in 1874.

⁵ The budget allocated to TCS was NOK 60 million in 2003, and it increased to NOK 288 million by 2019. Additional funding of NOK 260 million was allocated through other culture funding from the Ministry of Culture the same year (Kulturtanken, 2022).

between school and culture' (Report no. 1. (2004–2005)). Within a few years, TCS changed from being a programme where both sectors could together apply for seed funds for mutual collaboration and innovation to a cultural sector with wealth that was managing large resources for TCS—funding over which the school had no influence.

From Building Bridges to Balancing Power Between Sectors

When TCS was announced in 2000 and the scheme was mentioned in the state budget, questions arose about how the pilot schemes worked and which organisational models for TCS would be best suited to the purpose of the programme. At the idea conference in 2001, the school's representatives pointed out the need for participant perspective and student activities, whereas the arts and culture field representatives pointed out the need to ensure high-quality art experiences with a high level of intrinsic value (Borgen & Brandt, 2006). An advisory body under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture initiated research into the TCS model in Sandefjord municipality (Lidén, 2001, 2004) and in Møre og Romsdal county (Lidén, 2004). The Sandefjord model was free for all compulsory schools, and two visits a year were scheduled. According to the report, the challenge in this model was to create a less fixed structure and arrangements that were not 'too pedagogical and one-dimensional' (Lidén, 2004). The Møre og Romsdal county model was a tour organisation model without resources for the schools. According to the evaluation report, the challenges with this program were related to anchoring the Kulturnista programme more in the school's activities, and the recommendation was 'little more pedagogy, but not too much' (Lidén, 2004). This evaluation is a key event, as it confirms an already well-established conceptualisation of asymmetry between arts and culture, represented by artists and cultural institutions, and pedagogy, represented by the school and the teachers. The conceptualisation of an art-versus-pedagogy asymmetry in TCS seems to be established as rhetoric oppositions between art and school, artists and teachers, aesthetics and pedagogy, the extraordinary and the everyday, and celebration and routine in the different document texts.

Other key events related to TCS were the evaluation of TCS in compulsory education in 2006 (Borgen & Brandt, 2006; see also Breivik & Christophersen, 2013, p. 21) and White Paper No. 8 (2007–2008) from the Ministry of Culture. Borgen and Brandt (2006) conducted a national research evaluation of TCS after 3 years of its initiation. The evaluation pointed to opportunities and challenges in the programme and suggested a downgrade of the administrative structure and resources and a closer dialogue between arts and culture and schools to increase the benefits to students. However, in White Paper No. 8. (2007–2008) the Ministry of Culture rejected the evaluation, and more enthusiastic statements from the public

hearing were emphasised. In the white paper, the role of artists in TCS was strengthened, and a clear division of roles between artists and teachers was established. TCS is now described as consisting of different parts or phases, as there is ‘content’ and ‘artistic expression’, and then there are ‘forms of communication’ (Ruud et al., 2022). The paper also clearly differentiated between the tasks of the two sectors by clearly stating how TCS contributes to professional art and professional artists entering the school and mentioning that the role of the school and teachers is to do the pre- and post-work to secure communication with students. In 2013, Breivik and Christophersen conducted a new evaluation and found similar opportunities and challenges in the programme as was reported in the 2006 evaluation.

Certain conceptual asymmetries seem to be strengthened in TCS (Junge, 2014), and this is evident throughout policy document texts (see Table 11.1; e.g. Ministry of Education, 2007, 2019; White Paper No. 8. (2007–2008); White Paper No. 38. (2002–2003); White Paper No. 39. (2002–2003); White Paper No. 18. (2020–2021)). However, reports, research and research-based evaluations express great enthusiasm for the arts and culture sector and a reluctance to debate the weaknesses of TCS. Despite this, a number of improvement measures have been proposed over the years for further work in TCS with regard to collaboration in the partnership between the two sectors (for instance, Bamford, 2012; Borgen & Brandt, 2006; Breivik & Christophersen, 2013; Kleppe, 2009; Lidén, 2001, 2004). The national agency Kulturtanken was established in 2016,⁶ and in their first annual report in 2016, they mentioned that the field is in need of coordination ‘between art, culture and school’. According to Kulturtanken (2022), the TCS programme still aims to interact with school curricula, although ‘this does not mean that the content is pedagogical in nature’. Further, TCS should be viewed in relation to the school’s general objectives regarding education. However, any attempt at balancing power between the sectors eventually favours the culture sector, which has control over funding and safeguards the conceptualisation of asymmetry between art and pedagogy.

Physical Activity Health Initiatives

PA—An Important Prerequisite for Development of the Whole Human Being

The context for PA is the Norwegian health policy and the application of WHO’s global health initiatives from 1987 onwards to education policy and schools during the 1990s. The curriculum from 1997 specified that the school should facilitate versatile PA, and that students should enjoy PA via activities and experiences that are tied to nature appreciation (L97) (Ministry of Church Affairs, Education and

⁶Kulturtanken is the national agency responsible for TCS, distributing lottery funding (from profits earned by Norsk Tipping, the Norwegian state lottery operator), obtaining reports, and preparing the national annual report for TCS.

Research, 1996). These are conceptualisations that we also find in the curriculum for physical education, a school subject that has been mandatory for all students in Norway since the 1880s (Borgen et al., 2020c; Reichenbach, 2014).

PA—Prescriptions for a Healthier Norway

In the first few years of the twenty-first century, we find parallel document processes concerning PA within health and education policy, and there seems to be a national commitment in the World Health Report of 2002 titled ‘Reducing Risks, Promoting Healthy Life’ from the WHO (2002). White Paper No. 16. (2002–2003), ‘Prescriptions for a Healthier Norway’, from the Ministry of Health, emphasises the importance of PA for the population’s health and well-being, and the chapters are written like a medical diagnosis and prescription document. This is a key event in health policy in education. The document text focusses on the developmental features of PA related to lifestyle and a conceptualisation of causal relationships between diet, inactivity, cardiovascular disease and cancer, as well as between physical activity and young people’s mental health and healthy lifestyle choices. The prescription is presented under the heading ‘More physical activity in the school’ (p. 31).

White Paper No. 30. (2003–2004) ‘Culture for Learning’ from the Ministry of Education preceded the curriculum reform in 2006, ‘Knowledge Promotion’ (The Directorate for Education, 2022) and contains the headings ‘Room for physical activity and meals’ and ‘The school should facilitate daily physical activity for all students.’ Thus, PA is conceptualised together with dietary recommendations for children and young people and is in keeping with the ‘prescriptions’ of the health policy (White Paper No. 16. (2002–2003)). As a follow-up, a research project invited researchers and schools to plan, implement and evaluate intervention projects on PA and meals in schools (Samdal et al., 2006). This led to diverse partnerships around the country, and by the end of the project period in 2006, 180 schools had applied to the project. The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health cooperated on the initiative and an evaluation (Samdal et al., 2006). The ‘Action Plan for Physical Activity 2005–2009’ (Ministry of Health, 2004) served as a cross-sector national mobilisation tool for better public health (Lillejord et al., 2016). Nevertheless, the evaluation report asked the question ‘Interaction without direction and means? Who should activate whom?’ Thus, it seems unclear whether there had been any cross-sector partnership collaboration (Rasmussen et al., 2009).

PA—The ‘Right to Regular PA for Health’ in School, outside of Physical Education

When the Ministry of Education appointed a government PA advisory group in school that comprised researchers, a teacher educator and three former elite sports leaders and athletes in 2009, the policy rhetoric emphasised the right to regular PA

over the health policy concept of individual responsibility. The members in the advisory group were issue-experts in policy formation (Asdal, 2015), and a well-known sports leader, a former successful national team coach for the women's handball national team, was the leader of the group. Their recommendations included providing teachers with more knowledge about PA and ensuring that PA would be facilitated and led by pedagogically qualified staff; further, they stressed on the importance of involving school leaders in the implementation of PA programmes (Breivik et al., 2009).

A regulation introduced in Norwegian schools, in addition to the current L06 curriculum, granted primary school students in grades 5–7 the right to a scheme of 76 school hours per year outside of physical education for the specific purpose of benefitting learning, supporting a learning environment, and maintaining physical and mental health (Ministry of Education, 2009). However, the requirements concerning teacher competence and plans for implementation of the regulation were not established. For instance, there are no requirements for the competence of those responsible for PA initiatives in schools, and the roles of teachers and school leaders are not defined. While researchers were invited to partnerships with primary schools to implement the decision, an evaluation report released 5 years later found that local school authorities perceived the measure very differently and had implemented widely varying practices (Skjåkødegård et al., 2016).

Traditionally, the Ministry of Culture is responsible for sport affairs in Norway and related funding in the state budget. In 2015, the Ministry of Culture established a strategy committee for Norwegian sports policy, with a former successful football player as leader. The committee submitted its first report in 2016 and highlighted the WHO (2010) recommendation of 60 min of physical activity every school day for all students, led by educated teachers (Fjørtoft et al., 2016). In their second strategy report in 2017, they advised that schools and local sports clubs establish partnerships (Fjørtoft et al., 2017). In response to this, extra funding was introduced as financial compensation to sports teams that contributed to activities in collaboration with schools, but this resulted in an asymmetry concerning resources between the partners. The sports advisory group also comprised issue-experts in policy formation (Asdal, 2015), representing elite sports.

Another key event in 2017 was the Norwegian Parliament calling on the Norwegian government to facilitate 'one hour of daily physical activity' for all students in grades 1–10 (The Norwegian Parliament (Stortinget), 2018). The decision led to major debates that were due, in part, to the one-sided randomised controlled trials used as arguments for the decision (Borgen et al., 2020b). It appeared that Norwegian schools' long tradition of *Bildung* was not considered; instead, one-sided physiological and biomedical research findings were used as arguments to implement the measure. These PA health initiatives were mainly based on research related to biomedicine, health and physiology, and did not take into account movement activity for learning, education and gaining experience as a social being.

PA—Creativity, Joy and Commitment for Health and Life Skills

The Ministry of Education delivered a completely new way of conceptualising PA in the strategy document ‘Creative Joy, Commitment and the Urge to Explore Practical and Aesthetic Content in Kindergarten, School and Teacher Education’ published in 2019. In this policy rhetoric, PA is chained to all levels and areas of education policy. However, PA seems to be an ‘alien’ in the context of creativity, joy, commitment and practical and aesthetic content. While PA is separate from curriculum measures, there are no content descriptions, except that it should be part of all subjects in school. This strategy document also links itself to the health policy document ‘Action Plan for Physical Activity’ published in 2020, as well as to the new curriculum LK20 for Norwegian schools, implemented from August 2020, in which health and life skills is one of three interdisciplinary topics that aims to provide pupils with competence, deep learning and an interdisciplinary perspective. Thus, PA as a health initiative is conceptualised as relevant for and part of all education, as well as something other than education.

Discussion

Conceptualisations and key events have played a significant role in the research-policy-practice nexus of TCS and PA cross-sector partnerships in education over the 20-year period from 2000 to 2020. While a document is decided by the context that it is a part of, it also shapes that context and takes part in modifying it, together with the issue at hand (Asdal & Reinertsen, 2020). Within the context of TCS, key events, for example, new white and green papers, are conceptualised differently depending on whether the political context is the Ministry of Culture or the Ministry of Education. An ambivalent cultural policy in the 1990s (Mangset & Hylland, 2017) seems to be an implicit historical reference and a typically overlooked key event (Taylor et al., 2001) for the trial programmes at the threshold of the twenty-first century and the establishment of the national TCS programme in 2003. Aesthetic experience, which is independent and valuable on its own autonomous premises, is another historical reference related to TCS that supports conceptualisations of asymmetry between arts and pedagogy in cultural policy documents. These historical references provide a basis for the expectations of different stakeholders about what TCS may become in the future; however, they are not recognised as a common ground for the exploration of transformative mutuality in TCS cross-sector partnerships. Rather, we find that asymmetry is maintained when the cultural sector has the upper hand ideologically, organisationally and financially. Key policy events seem to support the expectation that facilitating aesthetic experience in school will lead to expected student outcomes in terms of the overall goal—that is, that students should ‘experience, become familiar with and develop an understanding of professional artistic and cultural expressions’ (White paper no. 8. (2007–2008)). Key events within research and evaluation studies on practice in TCS (e.g. Borgen & Brandt,

2006; Breivik & Christophersen, 2013) provide suggestions for the transformation and development of TCS; however, this is reflected only to a small extent in the design of cultural policy through the period.

In the period we have examined, PA seems to have been brought into education policy documents through continual new health policy initiatives and conceptualisations that are agreed upon in society, as well as through targeting daily practices in schools. While there are cross-sector initiatives—for instance, action plans and the establishment of a national centre to support implementation and practices in schools—because of global, Nordic and national health recommendations, the policy documents have a common reference in physiology and biomedical research, and evidence-based studies on school interventions. Within the context of PA, typically overlooked key events that support this discourse and conceptualisations of asymmetries include new WHO reports and new recommendations in national white papers from the Ministry of Health. In the case of PA, too, there are several key policy events including health policy documents that are followed up by education policy documents and action plans. In addition, advisory groups with members from elite sports have recommended PA in schools and provided support to improve the competence of teachers (Breivik et al., 2009); such groups have also recommended that PA be instructed by external partners in sports (Ministry of Culture, 2016, 2017). However, there are few key research and evaluation events that provide empirical insight into how schools, teachers and external partners operationalise PA in everyday practice in school, and potential proposals for the development of such practices.

Balancing Mutuality and Institutional Identity to Create Something New

In cross-sector partnerships, the construction of mutuality is dependent on those involved and the identification of their institutional identity as a common ground for constructing something new together, and it is also linked to the hope that something will be improved, developed and created together (Brinkerhoff, 2002; Eyal & Yarm, 2018). However, the conditions for transformative mutuality (Eyal & Yarm, 2018) in TCS seem to be weak. In the TCS documents, we see continuation rather than moves that enable action towards exploring new forms of collaboration.

Counter concepts become asymmetrical only when they distinguish between ‘speakers, types of people, their groups or social roles’ and when the use of the concept pair is not approved across the dividing lines they create (Junge, 2014, p. 36). Thus, socially agreed forms of reduction of dissonance could be central to collaboration in the two cases, as the need for agreement is a basis for possibilities

for social interaction in the partnerships. In TCS, the history of collaboration and hope for change is created in a context of tension, where asymmetric counter concepts gain stability. Within the cultural sector in TCS, there seems to be a reluctance to consider the research and evaluations and improvement measures that have been proposed through the years. While research and evaluation reports constantly refer to tensions and conflicts in TCS, they also report that schools accept and welcome artists and other issue-experts (Asdal & Reinertsen, 2020) in TCS as external partners through a form of 'soft coercion', which can be classified as reproductive mutuality (Eyal & Yarm, 2018).

Within the PA context, we see conceptualisations of asymmetry between health policy and research and teachers. That PA is a common good which is necessary for the future health of students is an evidence-based 'truth'; however, teachers need more competence and the guidance of issue-experts to support the implementation of PA practices school.

In the context of PA, there are several initiatives for cross-sector partnerships between external partners, issue-experts, and schools. For instance, the national project for physical activity and meals, established in 2004, was designed to bring researchers and schools together in collaboration, and the scheme for grades 5 to 7 grade, launched in 2009, was a collaboration between the two policy sectors. When the sports advisory group proposed 1 hour of PA every day in schools in 2016, it was expected that this would happen in collaboration with sport clubs and schools. However, while the issue is shared in documents between the two sectors, there are few, if any, research reports that can inform the constructions of the 'history of the collaboration' in these partnerships (Eyal & Yarm, 2018). Rather, there seem to be several projects that are quite informal and time limited in shape and form. Newer documents concerning TCS and PA also seem to refer to well-established understandings rather than bring in new perspectives through transformation and modification work and 'contexting' (Asdal & Reinertsen, 2020). Altogether, there seems to be a good ground for forms of reproductive mutuality rather than transformative mutuality partnership models in the two cases (Eyal & Yarm, 2018).

A common trait of the political documents related to TCS and PA is the rhetoric of change and hope for the future, but there are few explicit references to earlier programmes and initiatives. Without reference to previous experiences with similar programmes and initiatives, the dimensions of time and space seem underestimated when the partners are to formulate expectations for the future in their development of collaboration in the partnerships (Eyal & Yarm, 2018; Koselleck, 1985). The reform rhetoric that TCS and PA contribute something new has been going on for 20 years; however, the measures appear as continuations of previous policies (Datnow, 2002). TCS and PA are rooted in general, as well as very specific, ideas about what topics in modern society are important to bring into the school such that all children can be reached (Depaepe & Smeyers,

2008). For instance, in the latest curriculum reform in Norway, LK20, the general issues of public health and life skills are introduced as something new to be included in all subjects. In keeping with this notion, as we have shown in our PA case, for 20 years, the aim of policymaking based on global health policy trends has been to establish PA initiatives in the schools in a way that reflects health issues in society.

Conceptualisations in the Research-Policy-Practice Nexus in the TCS and PA Contexts

How actors work, interact and interpret policy to generate practices has not been considered in the TCS and PA policy documents. While documents provide direction, they do not prescribe how this can be operationalised into practices in schools. In addition, partnership collaboration constellations are prerequisites for change. Thus, in the policy-practice nexus, these documents do not provide guidance on the complex balancing act of introducing something new in school and safeguarding the school's ethos in meetings with external partners.

TCS and PA cross-sector partnerships seem to have little room for integrated processes, interaction through all stages of the alliance, partner participation in activities, and equality in decision-making, which are dimensions of transformative mutuality (Brinkerhoff, 2002). Rather, TCS and PA are characterised by reproductive mutuality in which schools effectively accept ideology and programmes from external partners through a form of 'soft coercion' (Eyal & Yarm, 2018).

Research can have different functions in policy formation when measures that involve partnerships between different actors inside and outside the school are translated into practices in different contexts, as is evident from this study on the research-policy-practice nexus in TCS and PA. Biesta (2015) argued that the wide variety of value-laden beliefs about transformation powers competes with the evidence-based discourse within education. When it comes to arts and cultural programmes, as well as physical activity health initiatives, studies refer to the paradox that policy rhetoric is often confused with scientific evidence (e.g. Alvarez-Bueno et al., 2017; Bamford, 2006; Bailey et al., 2009; Borgen & Hjordemaal, 2017; Borgen et al., 2021; Gee, 2004; Winner et al., 2013). At the root of arts and cultural programmes and PA health initiatives in schools is the notion that cultural and sport activities build on traditional practices rather than on research (Eisner & Day, 2004; Lillejord et al., 2016).

Research ambitions in the TCS context seem to confirm existing assumptions rather than explore currently unknown issues; this reflects a strained relationship between policy formation, knowledge in the teacher profession, teaching practices and research (cf. Stavrum, 2013). Similarly, newer PA initiatives seem to be

continuations of known conceptualisations which are based on a physiological and pathological understanding of health and how physical activity can prevent diet, diseases and avoid early death, while studies of practices in school are scarce (cf. WHO, 2010, 2020; White Paper No. 16. (2002–2003); The Norwegian Parliament (Stortinget), 2018; see also Borgen et al., 2021).

TCS and PA are not part of the curriculum, but they are brought in by external partners who have clear perceptions that the school and teachers lack competence in the areas they represent. Thus, these cross-sector extra-curricular partnerships require negotiation about ‘something’. When content is brought from the world into schools, this process of transformation into pedagogical material and enactment as a classroom event is a process of curricularisation (Doyle, 2017). TCS brings with it substantial resources and professional artists and culture mediators, but PA does not bring in such resources. Yet, teachers are expected to bring content from TCS and PA into their subject teaching. Within the didactic tradition, what teachers can do is restrain teaching in a way that provides opportunities for the individual growth of the student, and learning experiences emerge within the learning process via teachers and students as they meet the content (Hopmann, 2007, 2008). However, when there is content that is not supposed to be didactically translated, it becomes disruptive to the teachers’ practice and professional autonomy.

Instead of providing room for the didactisation of content, as described above in relation to TCS and PA, in the documents, new paths and rhetorical moves are constantly attempted to make these cases ‘work’ as something new. Here, asymmetries seem to be powerful conceptual tools. According to Junge (2014, p. 42), there are two criteria for establishing asymmetric counter concepts. First, there must be a status of difference or situation of conflict; second, the relationship in question that is captured in the counter concepts must lack mutual ratification/mutual recognition from the various parties involved in the relationship. In the TCS and PA cases, we have identified different purposes, different dynamics and different centres of gravity and how actors work, interact and develop in varied and intended policy and practice relationships and nexus contexts. TCS and PA are programmes that target something that is related to, but is not part of, the curriculum. This is reflected in the fact that experts from other sectors are the ones who are allowed to speak and be listened to, whereas teachers and schools are the ones who implement and take responsibility for translation into practices. This imbalance in the relationship between professional teachers and external professionals and issue-experts is conceptualised in the asymmetries in these cases.

It is possible that there is silent acceptance in the form of not caring at school. In other words, these measures may be perceived as something that must be present but do not have to be prioritised because they are not part of the formal curriculum. When there are many, overarching aims for the school, distinctions between ideational and operational matters and the criteria for choosing content become blurred. On the other hand, external partners, who are not responsible for the school ethos,

can bring in their content and leave its application in practice to the teachers and school leaders, as described in the key policy documents for TCS. In the education research-policy-practice nexus, it may also appear that educational researchers are not very interested in the application or consequences of extra-curricular content in school. Thus, TCS and PA may be perceived as practices that are supplementary to the curriculum which external partners and issue experts can manage. In such a scenario, when educational researchers do not contribute knowledge about the practices in TCS and PA, the school and the teachers are left without knowledge-based support in their work with the didactisation of such content.

Conclusion

In this study, we have observed variations in the understandings of what is at stake in different cross-sector partnerships. Such variations actualise discussions about content in education (Apple, 2018), and for our study, we have placed conceptualisations at the forefront of our discussion. Depaepe and Smeyers (2008) argue that the processes of educationalisation construct a child in the manner of ‘secularized Christianity’ (p. 380). When education is considered as the mechanism for solving social problems, the purpose of education is to ‘save’ the child from antisocial behaviours and immoral dispositions. In our study, we find that TCS is characterised by substantial use of the counter concepts of arts and pedagogy. The establishment of this asymmetry gives room for a striving towards the liberation of the pedagogically disciplined child who has been deprived of the opportunity for art and cultural encounters by bringing in aesthetic experience, through encounters with professional artists and their art. Similarly, the PA initiatives build on the counter concepts of physical activity and inactivity. That is, by scheduling time for physical activity, dietary information, and so on, the PA policy and initiatives aim to save the undisciplined child from inactivity, ill health and premature death.

TCS and PA initiatives have been under development for 20 years. A special feature of these cases of cross-sector partnerships in schools to enhance extra-curricular activities in particular areas is that in the research-policy-practice nexus, there are many active asymmetries between actors and the understandings of what the purposes of the partnership are. The stories about the collaboration, as we encounter it in the documents and in our earlier research, are largely based on different partners and stakeholder institutional identity and conceptualisations and on understandings of how policy is operationalised and transformed into practices in schools. In these cross-sector partnerships, there is a lack of dialogue about didactics. Thus, the curricularisation of content from the world into didactic practices in the classroom is dependent on a transformative partnership that appears to not yet have been realised in the case of TCS and PA cross-sector partnerships.

Appendix

Complete references to the White papers (Norwegian Government), Official Norwegian Reports (NOU), Acts, Strategic plans and Action plans from three ministries, listed in Table 11.1.

Year	Ministry of Culture/ Ministry of and Equality
2020	Meld. St. 18. (2020-2021). Experience, create, share — Art and culture for, with and by children and young people. Ministry of Culture. https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/meld.-st.-18-20202021/id2839455/?ch=1
2019	Meld. St. 8. (2018–2019). <i>The power of cultural policy. Cultural policy for the future.</i> Ministry of Culture. https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/meld.-st.-8-20182019/id2620206/
2015	Meld. St. 30. (2014–2015). <i>A future-oriented film policy.</i> Ministry of Culture https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/meld.-st.-30-20142015/id2413867/
2013	NOU 2013:4 (2013). <i>The cultural investigation 2014.</i> Ministry of Culture. https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/nou-2013-4/id715404/
2012	Meld. St. 23 (2011–2012). <i>Visual art.</i> Ministry of Culture and Equality. https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/meld-st-23-20112012/id680602/ Meld. St. 10. (2011–2012). <i>Culture, inclusion and participation.</i> Ministry of Culture and Equality. https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/report-no.-10-2011-2012/id666017/
2009	St. Meld. No. 49. (2008–2009). <i>Museum of the future — Management, research, dissemination, renewal.</i> Ministry of Culture and Equality. https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/stmeld-nr-49-2008-2009/id573654/ St. Meld. No. 23. (2008–2009). <i>Libraries – Knowledge Commons, Meeting Place and Cultural Arena in a Digital Age.</i> Ministry of Culture and Equality. https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/report-no.-23-to-the-storting-2008-2009/id555516/
2005	Ministry of Finance. Report No. 1. (2004–2005). National Budget.
2008	St. Meld. No. 8. (2007–2008). <i>Cultural schoolbag for the future.</i> Ministry of Culture and Equality. https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/Stmeld-nr-8-2007-2008/id492761/ St. Meld. No. 35. (2007–2008). <i>Aim and meaning — A healthy Norwegian language policy.</i> Ministry of Culture and Equality. https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/stmeld-nr-35-2007-2008/id519923/
2003	St. Meld. No. 38 (2002–2003). <i>The Cultural Schoolbag.</i> Ministry of Culture and Equality. https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/stmeld-nr-38-2002-2003/id197053/ St. Meld. No. 48. (2002–2003). <i>Cultural policy until 2014.</i> Ministry of Culture and Equality. https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/stmeld-nr-48-2002-2003/id432632/
Year	Ministry of Health and Welfare/Ministry of Health and Care Services
2020	Ministry of Health and Welfare. (2020). <i>Together for active lives.</i> Action plan for physical activity 2020–2029. https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/43934b653c924ed7816fa16cd1e8e523/handlingsplan-for-fysisk-aktivitet-2020.pdf
2019	Meld. St. 19. (2018–2019). <i>Good lives in a safe society.</i> Ministry of Health and Welfare. https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/meld.-st.-19-20182019/id2639770/

(continued)

Year	Ministry of Health and Welfare/Ministry of Health and Care Services
2018	The Norwegian parliament (2018). <i>Physical activity in compulsory education. One hour of physical activity every day for pupils in 1st to 10th grade within school hours.</i> The Standing Committee on Health and Care Services. https://www.stortinget.no/no/Saker-og-publikasjoner/Publikasjoner/Innstillinger/Stortinget/2017-2018/inns-201718-051s/?all=true
2016	Ministry of Health and Welfare (2016). <i>Strategy (2016–2021). Youth health – the government’s strategy for youth health.</i> Report from the strategy committee of health. https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/838b18a31b0e4b31bbfa61336560f269/ungdomshelsestrategi_2016.pdf
2015	Meld. St. 19. (2014–2015). <i>Mastering and possibilities.</i> Ministry of Health and Welfare. https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/meld.-st.-19-2014-2015/id2402807/?ch=1
2013	Meld. St. 34. (2012–2013). <i>Public health report – good health – shared responsibility.</i> Ministry of Health and Welfare. https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/meld-st-34-20122013/id723818/?q=fysisk%20aktivitet%20i%20skolen&ch=3#kap3-4-1
2012	Meld. St. 16. (2010–2012). <i>National plan for health (2011–2015).</i> Ministry of Health and Welfare. https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/f17befe0cb4c48d68c744bce3673413d/no/pdfs/stm201020110016000dddpdfs.pdf Public Health Act (2012). Act-2011-06-24-29. https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/2011-06-24-29
2005	Ministry of Health and Care Services. (2004). <i>Action Plan for physical activity (2005–2009).</i> <i>Handlingsplan for fysisk aktivitet 2005 – 2009 – regjeringen.no</i>
2003	St. Meld. No. 16. (2002–2003). <i>Recipe for a Healthier Norway.</i> Ministry of Health and Care Services. https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/stmeld-nr-16-2002-2003-/id196640/

Year	Ministry of Education and Research/ Ministry of Education
2019	Ministry of Education and Research. (2019). <i>Creative joy, commitment and desire to explore. Practical and aesthetic content in kindergarten, school and teacher training.</i> Strategy document.
2016	Meld. St. 28. (2015–2016). <i>Subjects – Specialization – Understanding — A renewal of the Knowledge Promotion curriculum.</i> Ministry of Education and Research. https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/meld.-st.-28-20152016/id2483955/
2015	NOU 2015:8 (2015). <i>The School of the Future Renewal of subjects and competences.</i> Ministry of Education and Research. https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/da148fec8c4a4ab88daa8b677a700292/en-gb/pdfs/nou201520150008000engpdfs.pdf
2014	NOU 2014:7 (2014). <i>Pupils’ learning in the school of the future — A knowledge base.</i> Ministry of Education and Research. https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/NOU-2014-7/id766593/
2013	Meld. St. 20. (2012–2013). <i>On the right track – quality and diversity in the community school.</i> Ministry of Education and Research. https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/53bb6e5685704455b06fdd289212d108/no/pdfs/stm201220130020000dddpdfs.pdf
2011	Meld. St. 22. (2010–2011). <i>Motivation – Coping – Possibilities – The youth stage.</i> Ministry of Education and Research. https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/meld-st-22-2010%2D%2D2011/id641251/?ch=1

(continued)

Year	Ministry of Education and Research/ Ministry of Education
2009	Regulations to the Education Act § 1-1a. (2009). <i>Right to physical activity</i> . http://www.udir.no/regelverk-og-tilsyn/finn-regelverk/etter-tema/Innhold-i-oppleringen/Udir-11-2009-Rett-til-fysisk-aktivitet/
2007	St. Meld. No. 16. (2006–2007). <i>Early efforts for lifelong learning</i> . Ministry of Education and Research. https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/a48dfbadb0bb492a8fb91de475b44c41/no/pdfs/stm200620070016000dddpdfs.pdf
2003	St. Meld. No. 30 (2003–2004). <i>Culture for learning</i> . Ministry of Education and Research. https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/stmeld-nr-030-2003-2004/id404433/ St. Meld. No. 39. (2002–2003). “ <i>Not just for pleasure</i> ”. Ministry of Education and Research. https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/stmeld-nr-39-2002-2003/id197064/
2000	Ministry of Finance. Report No. 1. (2000–2001). National Budget.

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Chapter 12

Regulatory Support Activities in the Swedish Policy and Practice Nexus: Inclusive Culture of Education Policy in Different Contexts



Gabriella Höstfält and Barbro Johansson

Abstract The policy and practice nexus in this chapter aims to investigate how Swedish regulated support activities, inspired by an inclusive approach, are theoretically designed in governance, interpreted in policy documents and put into practice in the classroom. The inclusive culture of education policy face multiple demands which makes it necessary to elaborate with a deeper and more detailed explanation for understanding how inclusive support activities are formed and are presently functioning. Drawing from the characteristics of the culture of policy embodying culturally-bound beliefs, we explore regulatory support activities through three analytical lenses of: (i) the principles for educational governance that guide the agencies that produce national policy, (ii) regulated support activities as problems that have to be solved by policy intervention, and (iii) how teachers guided by subject matter and teaching activities in the classroom end up resisting national policy guidelines. The result indicates that the policy of support activities for students defined with special needs can have various meanings both within and between policy contexts. In the discussion we emphasize that the distance between inclusive policy and practice widens the closer we come to the classroom. It is also concluded that inclusive support activities have to be understood in the context where they appear, which is where they create meaningful content for each actor in the policy and practice nexus of inclusion.

Introduction

[T]he closer we come to educational practice and results, the more demanding it is to define what inclusion is actually about. (Haug, 2010: 207)

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The particular policy and practice nexus in this chapter investigates how inclusive support activities are expected to be performed at the policy level and how they may be performed in practice. More specifically, we focus on the relationship between regulatory support activities expressed in contemporary Swedish inclusive education policy and performed in education practice in schools and classrooms. By examining the transmission of inclusive education policy, instantiated by support activities at three levels: public authority, policy administration and teaching in school, we aim to highlight the various nexuses where policy and practice are translated and put into effect. As Prøitz et al. (2017) states, inclusive support activities are framed by students, teachers, policy administrators and policy makers in different and often contradictory policy and practice contexts. It is also obvious that the why of inclusion is a lesser problem than how to actually do inclusion (Wermke et al., 2020). From an international perspective, the two biggest trends within education policy are the movement towards an inclusive school for all, represented by the 1994 declaration of Salamanca, and the trend towards standardisation reflected in the global testing culture, expressed in ubiquitous testing practices such as the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) (Hamre et al., 2018). Deriving from these two trends, a field of tension occurs in the nexus between the aim of goal-achievement for all students resulting from the increased level of standardization and standards, and the aim to include all students independently from their ability to meet such standardized prerequisites (Ainscow, 2016). Internationally, professional teachers feel that there are many barriers to inclusion, however teachers' understanding of inclusion is critical for inclusive education to be successful (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). There is also a lack of a firm research base for inclusive education to support either whether this is a preferable approach in terms of outcomes, or how inclusion should be implemented (Lindsay, 2007). Mitchell et al. (2010) complicates the policy and practice nexus further by stating that inclusive education tends to serve multiple purposes, in such different contexts as pedagogic documentation, legal documentation, documentation for performance or quality accounting, to provide resources, as planning documents or to serve administrative purposes. Further knowledge about the contemporary educational policy culture is greatly needed for a deeper and more detailed explanation of the complex relations within the school of the twenty-first century, and contribute to further development towards a genuine school for all (Ainscow, 2020).

Regulatory Support Activities in the Swedish Policy

There are two contemporary regulatory support activities in Swedish education. First, additional adjustments, meaning alternative or supplementary assignments which enable students to participate in general educational programs. If these additional adjustments prove to be insufficient, the second support activity is the individual education plan (IEP) for students with special educational needs (SEN). In contemporary Swedish education, these two support activities are governed by requirements for concretisation of goals into

various kinds of planning documents. Legislation and accompanying support materials with the intention of promoting support activities are a clear feature of the emerging culture of inclusive individualisation in the public sectors in Sweden and other Western countries. Support activities aimed at students' individual knowledge development were first advocated in a Swedish publication in the early 2000s, in the Swedish Ministry Publication Series *The Student's Success – The School's Responsibility* (Ds 2001: 19) with the statement that planned documentation for special support e.g. additional adjustments and individual development plans, can serve as a strategic pedagogical activity in order to prevent school problems and educational difficulties. In contemporary education policy, the notion of a strategic pedagogic activity can be understood as based on the idea of organising public activities according to market principles with “clearly formulated goals, a conscious strategy, governance and management in order to achieve the goals, and clear follow-up and evaluation” (ibid: 37).

Individual education plans (IEP) have been mandated since 1994, and before that, from 1980, they were recommended in the national curriculum for compulsory schools. Their origin can be traced to the USA and the 1975 Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Mitchell et al., 2010). Individual development plans (IDP) for all students in the Swedish compulsory school were mandated in 2006, and supplemented by a 2008 regulation on written reviews in all school subjects, which in 2013 expired in grades six to nine, supplemented by grades. The individual education plan (IEP) has been revised on several occasions since 1994. Initially, an IEP had to be made for all students at risk of not achieving the national goals in grades 3 and/or 5 and/or 9, but this act was replaced in 2014 by additional adjustments for students at risk of not achieving the knowledge requirements and individual education plans when additional adjustments proved to be insufficient.

The requirement for performing an educational investigation currently covers teachers' and special educators' pedagogical work with additional adjustments and individual education plans. The investigation includes an individual assessment in which the teacher, according to Chapter 3, §4 of the Educational Act, shall make an individual and extended assessment of the students' knowledge development. If the assessment shows that the student will not reach the minimum knowledge requirements, the student must be supported by additional adjustments in the ordinary educational setting (ibid., §5). If the additional adjustments are estimated to be insufficient and an investigation proves that the student is unlikely to reach the minimum knowledge requirements, special support shall be provided and documented in an individual education plan (ibid., §9). The student and the student's legal guardians participate in the design of the individual education plan.

Support Activities as Culture of Inclusive Education Policy

Requirements to register, measure, compare, calculate, quantify, standardise, weight and weighing seem to be constantly increasing within the contemporary school. Rather than communication and reflection, it is now about performance and documentation.

The professional culture that emerged just over ten years ago has today been replaced by a culture of documentation. (Alexanderson, 2007: 33. *Translation by the authors*¹)

... teachers often viewed IEPs as an administrative task, rather than as a tool to develop more effective instruction and learning [...] the same IEP document is expected to serve educational, legal, planning, accountability and resource allocation purposes. (Mitchell et al., 2010: 15)

The first quote above states that the contemporary educational policy is largely governed by requirements for the breakdown of goals in planning documents of various kinds. The second quote comments on specific documentation – i.e., individual education plans (IEP) – and the multiple purposes of a culture of policy simultaneously functioning in such different contexts as pedagogic documentation, legal documentation, documentation for performance or quality accounting, in order to provide extra resources, such as planning documents, or to serve administrative purposes. The results of schools and teachers as well as students are assessed in accordance with quality requirements relating, in particular, to the achievement of goals which are aligned with the knowledge requirements and equivalence expressed in the national goals.

What, then, is the idea behind support activities in schools based on achievement of goals and equivalence? On the basis of the Swedish Education Act (SFS, 2010: 800), equivalence is a central policy concept and a common policy definition of the concept is “equal access to education, equal education and the equal value of education” (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2009: 125). According to the principles of the economic market, one consequence of this definition is that students’ choices ideally should be decided between qualitatively equivalent schools (Norén, 2003). The ideal of establishing quality-equivalent schools gives meaning to the concept of quality and how it should be controlled. Instruments for monitoring, measuring and evaluating results and knowledge requirements have thus become more and more important for education and instruction. Following this idea, we argue that inclusive support activities constructed as additional adjustments and individual education plans within the framework of current governance, are at risk of being understood as targeted assessment and control of the student decided to be in special need as a designated policy beneficiary. This is of importance because educational institutions frame professions and the different ways in which professionals interpret and work within this framework based on their professional understanding of their assignment. It is worth noting that students within this context can in many ways also be considered as professionals, i.e., professional policy benefactors, as they are part of an institutional setting where they are expected to be active participants responsible for, designing and understanding their assignments and learning trajectory (Biesta & Burbules, 2003).

¹All quotes in the chapter are translated by the authors.

Theoretical Points of Departure

Popkewitz (2009) describes a number of rules and standards which frame students and teachers within a curriculum practice. He explains that these rules and standards are culturally and historically shaped, constituting a cultural norm for how students and teachers ought to be. Within a cultural context of tracking the students' knowledge development, Popkewitz (ibid.) emphasises that if the student is at risk of not achieving one or more subject goals, many categorisations will be verbalised simply by making agreements on what to do to prevent this. To point out that a student is at risk of not achieving the goals, presents, within the current education policy, an understanding that it is possible for all students to achieve the goals. The student who is at risk of becoming a policy beneficiary is therefore distinguished – differentiated – from the others with a visible sign of the exclusion by regulated support activities. In this way, Popkewitz (ibid.) argues that a curriculum embodies culturally-bound beliefs that distinguish students with the ability to take responsibility for their own knowledge development, to achieve the goals of the curriculum and syllabi, and with the competence to make deliberate choices from students who exhibit deficiencies in one or more of these abilities. The paradox that occurs, is that students who lack these abilities have to be excluded in order to be included.

Sandra Stein (2004) also defines policy as cultural construct. The culture of education policy, she states, pinpoints students who need special support or special programs to overcome their cultural disadvantages. The basic idea is that students defined as policy beneficiaries are deviant from a perceived norm, and that government institutions can fulfil a corrective role in the lives of these deviant students. Stein (ibid.) describes the characteristics of the culture of policy as follows:

- Policy beneficiaries are problems that government intervention can solve
- The government can mitigate the problems through funding allocation and bureaucratic design
- As policy mechanisms are implemented, government agencies interpret, formulate and reformulate the culture of policy in the language and rituals of practice

The culture of education policy constructs cultural theses about the individual student and how to live. Mass schooling produces the individual who embodies the principles that often are codified in narratives that link the individual to the citizen of a nation. Today there is a language of globalization and freedom of choice and the current reforms of schooling aim to enable students to become successful in the new global world. The culture of education policy values individual freedom of choice and useful knowledge. These ways of seeing policy can be made available through analysis of “language and behaviours of policymakers and practitioners at various stages of the policy process” (Stein, 2004: ix). The language of education policy carries words and concepts about goal fulfilment and knowledge requirements which function as cultural theses about student behaviour and of what a student

should become (Popkewitz, 2009). The analytical method draws on Stein (2004) and Popkewitz (2009) and consists of the following steps:

1. Identification of the contextual backdrop and the principles for educational governance that guides the agencies that produce national policy
2. Analysis of regulated support activities as problems that have to be solved by policy intervention guided by the National Agency for Education
3. Analysis of how teachers guided by subject matter and teaching activities in the classroom end up resisting national policy guidelines

Methods and Materials

Our design in the study discussed in this chapter aims to link educational policy and practice. We use a multiple approach design, with qualitative multilevel methods which in a three-level procedure combines contextual backdrop, policy text analysis and field notes sampled from classroom observations, followed by informal conversations with students and teachers. The design aims to illustrate a governance-policy-classroom transmission route where regulated support activities for students with special needs are transmitted in the current culture of education policy. The contextual backdrop draws on an organisational theoretic perspective where the public choice market is the politicians' tool to control the production of services in the direction of choice and efficiency (Norén, 2003). At the next level, policy text analysis is performed on national policy guidelines, followed by observations and focus group interviews that provides data for analysing an inclusive teaching environment (Table 12.1).

The selection of policy documents for analysis is limited to the two most recent guidelines for regulated support activities: *General guidelines for working with additional adjustments, special support and individual education plans* (The National Agency for Education, 2014a) and *Support activities in education: guidance and stimulation, additional adjustments and special support* (The National Agency for Education, 2014b). These documents were chosen because of their heavy policy weight regarding regulated support activities for students defined with special needs in the Swedish compulsory and upper secondary school. They are also

Table 12.1 Governance-policy-classroom transmission route

Governance context: principles guiding the customer choice market	National policy: guidelines for regulated support activities	Classroom practice: teaching as resistance to policy guidelines
Transmission of governance and managing from the customer choice market to the National Agency for Education	Transmission of national policy guidelines for regulated support activities from the National Agency for Education to schools, teachers and students	Transmission of national guidelines for regulated support activities into the classroom where they are transmitted into teaching activities

an example of the National Agency for Education's (NAE) way of "speaking to" teachers and students as well as parents in the Swedish school.

The last step focuses on data from an upper secondary classroom. Two researchers and a teacher jointly followed a class of 20 students in the school subject Image and Form, an art course for 5 weeks. The teacher had noticed that many students were bothered by stress-related symptoms. Many students had difficulties getting started with their assignments and this was documented as a need for additional adjustments by individual instruction. The researchers performed participatory classroom observations (Bradbury, 2015) in an art class and performed focus group interviews with the students, followed by reflective conversations with the teacher (Halkier, 2010). The focus group interviews included four recorded interviews from 20 students in groups of four to five students. Each group interview lasted between 35 and 50 min. Semi-structured interview questions were designed after reading the students' individual education plans, after they were anonymized, specifying support activities and the grading criteria for the course. The content of the focus group interviews then addressed issues that all students wrestled with but which were perceived by students in need of support to be linked to their specific support needs. Based on field notes from the participatory observations, transcriptions from focus group interviews and reflective conversations with the teacher after each observation session, changes were implemented in the teaching.

The design is based on Stein's definition of an educational policy problem whose solutions are transmitted between and among various policy agents (Stein, 2004). Transmission among policy agents at different levels, constitutes a recursive relationship which makes it possible to consider adaptation of and resistance to policy problems and solutions. Our methodological framework is presented in Fig. 12.1.

The culture of policy has a set of characteristics that includes policy beneficiaries – i.e., the subjects of regulated support activities – as problems that have to be solved by policy intervention. The primary focus for characterising the policy beneficiaries is by individual attributes and behaviours, instead of structural or institutional conditions. The culture of policy acknowledges the impact of structural and institutional conditions by following the transmission of regulated support activities in policy and practice.

In the following section, with contemporary educational governance as a contextual backdrop, we will describe, analyse and discuss Swedish regulatory support activities in policy and practice in terms of: (1) how governance of regulatory support activities is represented in the Swedish National Agency for Education's General Council and recommendations (2014a) with supplementary support



Fig. 12.1 Methodological multilevel procedure of analysis

material (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2014b), and (2) how regulatory support activities can be performed on the basis of educational changes in the social context in which the student is a member, i.e. support activities actively and consciously based on the learning environment as the main resource for support.

Regulated Support Activities and School Governance: Contextual Backdrop

It can be said that rational choice markets emphasise one goal, which is individual freedom of choice. (Norén, 2003: 22)

Teachers have probably always used different strategies to compile information about their students' knowledge development, even before the implementation of grades or "developmental" conversations with students and their guardians. However, this has been handled within professional contexts without being regulated by law and educational policy. Contemporary governance has led to a change in this professional tradition. Today, public welfare is essentially based on a theoretical model from economic market management. Norén (2003) describes how a rational choice marketplace rationale is intended to work within public areas, where schools are significant actors. The models are based on the idea that the citizen is awarded a school voucher that transforms her into a consumer of society's services. According to Norén (*ibid.*), politicians have a central position in the rational choice market, with responsibility for regulating and designing the school market by legislation, in order to achieve the policy goals of efficiency and freedom of choice. However, customers are not the only actors in the public market. Politicians are also a part of a representative democratic system where they are expected to serve public interests. Governance is based on freedom of choice, but politicians are forced into regulations if and when the freedom of choice threatens public interest.

Thus, the freedom of choice is regulated, which leads to frequent regulations and re-regulations of the marketplace. In theory, Norén (*ibid.*) explains, the marketplace is framed by three principles. The first principle is to affirm the customers', in this case the citizens', self-interest, the second is to create independent producers – i.e., schools – that compete with each other, and the third principle is to create an autonomous administration of the market, in this case, the Swedish National Agency for Education, which ideally should be independent of both students and parents (i.e., the customers in this construction) as well as of teachers and school management (i.e. the producers).

When politicians regulate and re-regulate the educational marketplace, they also weaken the theoretical principles. The independent status of the National Agency for Education is for example of the utmost importance in order to maintain competition. This institutional regulation, however, states that the goal of equivalence is governed by national legislation emphasising that all schools should be equal and guarantee the democratic rights of all citizens, while the goal of individualisation

should offer students freedom of choice and efficiency, and allow them to make informed decisions. The consequence of these conflicting goals is that public markets often become a mix of market and management, they become quasi-markets (Bartlett & Le Grand, 1993: 10) which lack credibility because they both regulate and deregulate schools.

Since the institutional regulation is expected to be detached from customers and producers, the governance of the market is perceived as a rational process with a rational organisation that is a tool for targeting the goals efficiency and rational choice.

Norén (2003) states that one characteristic of welfare markets, as opposed to the financial market, is that customers and producers do not really exist and have to be created and framed in the marketplace. Students and parents need to be persuaded to acquire identities as autonomous consumers of welfare services, and teachers and school management have to inform them about possible choices to make and what impact they may have. One way is to inform the individual student about available options and students and parents about evaluations of the school's performance. Within this context, regulated support activities in schools can be understood as a form of support that regulates students and parents right to be informed in order to make the right choice.

Support activities in Schools: Transmission of Advice in Policy

Transmission of policy texts among agents in the rational choice public marketplace influences the way we look upon and understand teachers and students as actors in the marketplace. General guidelines with comments and support materials published by the Swedish National Agency for Education (NAE) concerning additional adjustments and special support with individual education plans were introduced in 2014. The texts (NAE, 2014a, b) have an overall design according to which they first formulate advice as guided by legislation and regulations on support activities in schools, such as additional adjustments, special support and individual education plans, and then follow up this advice with comments. This emphasises, for example, that the teachers should always be aware of signs from their students implying that they need, or will need, additional adjustments or special support.

It is important that teachers and school staff pay attention as early as possible to signs and signals that a student may be in need of additional adjustments or special support. (NAE, 2014a: 22)

The signs and signals are the students' deficiency in attaining the minimum knowledge requirements (i.e., the lowest grading scale on a scale from A to E), or lacking the capacity to develop the required knowledge. The general guidelines are presented as both general and specific as they are to be followed in all forms of schooling:

This general advice, with comments on work with extra adjustments, especially support and individual education plans, applies fully to the preschool class, the recreation center, the primary school, the special primary school, the special school, the Sami school, the upper secondary school and the special upper secondary school. (NAE, 2014a: 7)

Mediation by the Student Health Service

Both texts stress the importance of the Student Health Service at the school's organisational level for performing assessment studies and support activities. The Student Health Service (SHS) is a multi- and/or interdisciplinary team with medical, psychological, sociological and special educational competencies. This team is responsible for undertaking

The investigation of the student's possible need for special support [which] aims to provide the school with sufficient documentation to understand why the student has difficulties in the school situation and what support activities the school needs to put in place. The school health service often plays an important role in the work with investigations. (NAE, 2014a: 13)

The *investigation's* aim is to develop routines and modes to follow students' learning and knowledge development. The requirement for teachers and the school in general is to have a common approach, common procedures and common modes of documentation, as well as the ability to cooperate on the individual students' development.

It is important to find ways at the individual school for teachers and other school staff involved in the work on the additional adjustments to collaborate and transfer information about the additional adjustments and the student's development. (NAE, 2014a: 23)

This implies that teachers in their profession ought to be aware of each student's individual learning trajectory: how every student learns, when learning takes place for each student, and make adjustments on basis of this knowledge. When the importance of collaboration is emphasised, it may imply that the NAE assumes that teachers lack adequate and common methods to the extent that the general goal fulfilment requires. This deficiency can however be "remedied" if collaboration between teachers, other staff and the SHS is developed. The focus here is exclusively on teachers' behaviour: to design their teaching so that all students reach the minimum knowledge requirement.

Mandatory Duty to Provide Information

Teachers' main assignment, besides paying attention to and observing which students may be in need of support activities, is to inform. As previously stated with the support of Norén (2003), information is extremely important in the rational choice

market, because the customers – the students and their parents – should be stimulated to make use of their freedom of choice through information. Further indication that the NAE wants to emphasise the importance of information is that the teacher's approach to students and parents is almost regulated in detail.

... it is important that teachers and other school staff inform and interact with the student and the student's legal guardian about regulated support activities. Here, it is important to listen in to the knowledge and experience that the student and the student's guardians have about the student's situation. Similarly, when teachers or other school staff have noticed that a student may be in need of regulated support activities, it is important to as soon as possible inform the student and the student's legal guardian. (NAE, 2014a: 25)

The teacher should apparently also create respect and mutual trust in the relations with students and parents in order to clarify the goals to be achieved by the student, all with the aim of structuring a development plan that will guide the students towards continuous responsibility for their learning. In order to comply with the provisions of the School Act, the school has to create a conversational context where the student has the opportunity to express his or her views. The general guidelines state the importance of, but lack clarifications on how, the student's opinions should be given importance in the design of support activities. Instead, the NAE declares the importance of

making it clear to the student that the activities carried out in connection with different tasks within the education are linked to the knowledge goals in the curriculum or to the knowledge requirements that are at least to be achieved. The teacher is responsible for leading the teaching and to clarify how different parts of the teaching are linked to the abilities that the student should be given the opportunity to develop. Clarifying how the activities in the teaching are linked to the knowledge goals or knowledge requirements can make the student more involved in the work, which is important for motivation and willingness to learn. (NAE, 2014a: 43f)

Teaching Linked to the Minimum Knowledge Requirements

The national goals have to be aligned to the actual teaching and teachers need to be reminded of the importance of relating the national goals and knowledge requirements to their teaching. How teachers should design additional adjustments and special support in practice, mainly consists of stressing the importance of information and individual-bound activities. Additional adjustments may be performed when students need clearer instructions, guidance to understand subject content or to plan and structure the chronological planning of a task.

The teacher takes the students' different needs into account in all the learning environments and throughout the whole teaching process, i.e., in planning, implementation, assessment and grading, follow-up and documentation. (NAE, 2014b: 12)

In the text as well as in the schematic working model for the design of support activities, comments regarding the importance of giving the student conditions for

learning in interaction with the rest of the students in the learning environment are lacking.

The support material *Support activities in education – guidance and stimulation, additional adjustments and special support* (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2014b) gives an example of how a pedagogical investigation guided by the agency's template can be carried out. Under the heading "pedagogical assessment", it is proposed that the student "Johan" shall be given a number of individualised interventions that are consistent with the individualised additional adjustments in the support material. All proposals are based on the notion that learning occurs without considering the importance of promoting interaction with classmates.

The teachers need to understand why the student has difficulties in the school situation in order to assess what the student's needs are, and decide which additional adjustments will best benefit the student. (NAE, 2014b: 20)

The solutions, or concrete suggestions, for changing the student's study situation are all about training abilities and skills outside the classroom. The student "Johan" in the example has difficulty participating in sports and the proposal for support activities is to offer teaching in a less imposing context. The proposed activities do not provide guidance for in-depth analysis of why the student finds the situation difficult, nor do they have active participation in the learning environment as a stated goal

The student may, for example, be in need of special support in the form of regular special educational interventions, and at the same time need additional adjustments within regular teaching in the form of, for example, special teaching materials and digital technology. In some cases, the student may need many different additional adjustments, which all together become so extensive that the student is deemed to be in need of special support. If the student is in need of special support, an assessment is made of the specific support needed and the extent to which it is needed. (NAE, 2014b: 44)

The student's voice in the pedagogical investigation is almost non-existent besides an introductory section in which "Johan's" perception of a teacher he appreciates is used as an example to express his opinion of his situation in school.

Support Activities Linked to the Minimum Knowledge Requirements

What is evident, is the epistemological approach in the policy texts, i.e., the perception of knowledge. Knowledge is something that should be assessed, and the assessment should be made in relation to both subject specific goals and knowledge requirements. The standard for assessing the knowledge requirements is the national high-stake tests in grades 3, 5 and 9. The text depicts the student as being involved in his or her own knowledge development. The purpose of support activities in the

school is that student and parents receive clear and concrete information about the student's knowledge development.

It is important to make it clear to the student that the activities carried out within the different parts of the education process are linked to the knowledge goals in the curriculum or to the minimum knowledge requirements that are to be achieved. The teacher is responsible for the teaching and for clarifying how different parts of the teaching are linked to the abilities that the students should be given the opportunity to develop. (NAE, 2014a: 43f)

The activities should increase the student's ability to take responsibility and develop towards the curriculum goals, simultaneously increasing participation in his or her individual learning trajectory, thus facilitating lifelong learning. The students shall develop the ability to assess and understand their results and, according to the policy guidelines, they have an internal will and motivation to learn and to develop and grow.

To what extent students achieve the specific curriculum goals by the end of the third and fifth school years respectively, is an indication of whether the teaching leads students to develop their knowledge in accordance with the intentions of the curriculum and syllabi. The goals that the student should have achieved by the end of the ninth school year describe a minimum level of knowledge that the school should have to provide. Helena Korp (referred to in the Swedish National Agency for Education, 2009) highlights an equivalence problem regarding the use of high stakes national tests as a basis for assessment. The epistemic belief expressed by national tests is based on the approach to knowledge in the syllabi's core subjects, which are the theoretical school subjects. Hence, learning is mainly seen as a cognitive activity that can be expressed in writing. This approach to knowledge can thus legitimise additional adjustments, especially special support and individual education plans as an understanding and expression of equivalence. Support activities, with the national tests as reference, are thus at risk of becoming a new technology to legitimise students' exclusion and prevent access to upper secondary and tertiary studies.

Support Activities in Schools: Transmission of Advice in Practice

The aesthetic program in the upper secondary school, which is part of our study, is attractive to many students. A portfolio as well as high grades are required for entering the program. Despite this, almost fifty percent of the students have a neuropsychiatric diagnosis, e.g., ADD, ADHD or dyslexia and the School Health Service (SHS) defined many of them as policy beneficiaries for additional adjustments and/or individual education plans. Most of the students planned for a future in some creative profession, and thus it is important to receive high grades in the subject "Image and Form". The teachers received pedagogical assessments from the SHS suggesting adjustments like the right to extended time on tests, individual

instructions and accommodations, in other words, proposals taken directly from the Swedish NAE's general advice for additional adjustments.

The situation was, however, stressful for both teachers and students alike, since so many students needed individual support in order to commence working with their tasks. The teachers perceived an unsustainable work situation where they had to devote substantial time only for "firefighting". Their understanding of the problem did not correspond with that of the SHS, so they initiated a joint project with researchers to investigate how additional adjustments could be framed within the aesthetic program. The aesthetics teachers described the actual problem as follows:

In recent years, my colleagues and I have noticed that students find it difficult to run their own creative processes from start to finish. Can this depend of the increased demands from the national curriculum, increased mental illness or something else? As a teacher in the aesthetics program, I wonder if I can make adjustments that are more subject-specific? Will it create a more sustainable work situation for me as a teacher, if I change my way of working with additional adjustments?

Students Defining the Problem

The class of 20 students included nine students with additional adjustments. As it turned out, the students shared the teachers' perceptions of the problem and they presented important reflections on the causes and solutions. In the focus groups, students reasoned about running their own creative process in a goal-driven school. The knowledge requirement to "take risks" has different meanings depending on the student, but regardless of interpretation, the concept permeates their way of performing the task. Therefore, it was not the task per se that created uncertainty, but how a process-oriented task should be performed and assessed in relation to the concepts in the knowledge requirements.

I'm thinking that you have to be able to present your thoughts, visualize the connections you make and which conclusions you have. How you chose to develop the feelings that occurred. It has to be stated so clearly that the person reading your text understands the connection to the original work.

One of the students' interpretations of "working in experimental forms" involved doing something without previous experience.

I'm a person who gets stressed about grades, but I decided from the beginning that I wanted to do something new [...] but it was very hard and I was not sure if the teacher would like it.

Here, we can see the difference between the SHS's way of describing additional adjustments by giving the student individual instructions of the assignments. However, most of the students didn't want the teacher to address them individually, out of fear of appearing helpless:

When you ask questions, it is sort of proving what you know and what you don't [...] maybe it also depends on what you ask? I believe I'm quite stressed about the grade and when I get stressed, the teacher doesn't understand what I want to say with my work. The teacher asked me a lot of questions and listened very thoroughly and I thought she would probably use this later for grading me.

Most of the students were very concerned about how to handle assignment related to the knowledge requirements. The student in the following example easily puts instructions into action, but trouble occurs when peers start to judge the person behind the work.

The risk of doing something that you don't feel completely safe with is that you know that there are a lot of other people who are going to see this... And that there is a risk that this will not be so cool? People will think I'm weird.

The introductory part of the project was structured by a collective learning process among peers. Thereafter, the students were dedicated to individual work. Once the students had expressed their opinions about their school lives, the teachers became aware of the importance of getting confirmation from peers and decided to enact additional adjustments in the students' learning environment. When students with extensive need of support activities reflected on their own development with peers, it became clear that they were all struggling with the same issues, regardless of receiving or not receiving support. The embarrassment of feeling different disappeared and was replaced by joint interpretations of the knowledge requirements in relation to the teacher's instructions. Assessment became a collective experience. This situation made it easier for the teacher to understand how all students perceive the knowledge requirements as formulated. Once the teachers took part in the deidentified student interviews, they gained a deeper understanding of their perceptions of teaching.

Teachers and Students Solving the Problem

The first step into educational change should ultimately not be to follow the recommendations from the SHS, i.e., from the National Agency for Education. To reduce student stress and difficulties is an ongoing creative process where the teacher's starting point is to use subject-specific knowledge and competencies to design the classroom as a safe place for learning. Many of the students' concerns have to do with how their peers will react to their work in progress. It also seems important to find ways for students to gain an understanding of process-oriented tasks in relation to the knowledge requirements. Students testified that they are constantly trying to decode the teacher's instructions as an imagined end product in disguise.

The modified teaching from individualised instruction into collective process-oriented instruction, led in fact to more time to support students in their work. The teacher concluded the changes she had made by emphasising the importance of explaining what one learns during a process-oriented work, as important as giving students instruction on the current stage of the task. Furthermore, the teacher emphasised the importance of confirming that the students are working correctly in the moment, rather than providing forward-directed, product-related feedback. Besides this, the teacher introduced a 20-min rule, which means 20 min work without evaluating themselves and their work, also she constantly reminds them that "you are not your pictures". A form of teaching that does not follow the general

policy guidelines, but is instead based on the teacher's subject-specific competence, proved to reduce the need for individual adjustments from nine students to one. When the teacher summarised the most important change for gaining a deeper understanding of process-oriented assignments, she emphasised the work-related common conversations when lessons were introduced. The teacher now made additional adjustments followed by professional subject knowledge and supervision.

Support Activities in Policy and Practice: Final Discussion

In this chapter, we aimed to highlight the various nexuses where policy and practice are translated and put into effect in policy documents and classroom practice in Sweden. The following questions were used: How is governance of regulatory support activities represented in the National Agency for Education's general guidelines with supplementary support material? How can regulatory support activities be performed on the basis of educational changes in the social context in which the student is a member?

Several dilemmas emerge in the nexuses between theory, policy and practice. As we can see in the study presented in this chapter, the same policy – here the policy of support activities for students defined with special needs – can have various meanings both within and between policy contexts. As Stein (2004) points out, practitioners that aim to serve students in need of support activities in ways that build on their assets and abilities, often must act in resistance to the culture of policy to do so. We can also see how contradictory meanings within the current educational policy culture in fact contribute to a situation where teachers' professionalism is at risk of becoming degraded.

The state's pedagogical advice will be: "be careful and follow our advice", hence the responsibility of teachers for planning instruction in order to meet students' various needs is replaced by a perspective where various special needs are the main responsibility of the students themselves, school health service-team and school management.

Governance as Barriers to Learning

Regulated support activities in the theory and policy nexus works with the support of a rationale choice theory developed by and for the economic market. Unfortunately, a linear relationship between theory and practice in such an ideal type is difficult to find. This can almost be stated as fact, proven by the frequent regulations and re-regulations that are constantly taking place in the economic market as well as in the public. One consequence of the way in which the policy texts address teachers and students, is that support activities in schools are at risk of being simplified and individualised within the framework of this form of governance. The transmission of the policy texts mediates that additional adjustments and individual education plans are something

that teachers obviously should be able to deal with if they only follow the advice given to them. Another consequence is that it is not possible for teachers to be professionals, if they were only to follow the advice and recommendations of the Swedish National Agency for Education. This is triggered by the current system of governance, which requires producers, i.e., schools to be independent. However, there is still room for maneuver – or resistance – for teachers, even if pressure obviously falls on teachers and students due to a rational choice education marketplace.

Goal Requirements as Barriers to Learning

When we approach the policy and practice nexus, the distance between inclusive policy and educational practice is even greater. It is hard to overlook the aspect of the creation of a regime, implied by the regulatory support activities. Each and every student's results should be thoroughly audited as well as their approaches and actions in the future. If general learning instructions constantly need to be supplemented with individual support, the students labelled as in need of support activities are at risk of being ostracised from their regular peers' learning group. Furthermore, the knowledge requirements in the national curriculum, which are the norm and must be met, do not necessarily have to be relevant to either the teacher's or the students' way of understanding a specific field of knowledge. Therefore, it is also quite possible that the goal requirements within the framework of certain interpretations may constitute an obstacle to the students' learning; i.e., the controlling function becomes counterproductive.

The requirements for achieving the goals are also in conflict with the requirements for equivalence and equity. As with many other concepts in education, equivalence and equity acquire different content on different levels in the system (Haug, 2010). Popkewitz (2009) explains this as a divide between what science tells us about value-charged concepts like equivalence and individualisation, and the problem-solving of the student in practice. The principle of equivalence presupposes that the centrally defined knowledge requirements and centrally designed national tests constitute a standard for equivalence, which makes it more difficult for teachers to perform the design of autonomous support activities where they are able to make independent interpretations of national knowledge goals and requirements. Additional adjustments and individual education plans are presented as instruments for evaluating and ensuring equivalence in the policy texts, but they are not able to individualise to the fullest extent, as the standard of equivalence must simultaneously be observed.

Goal fulfilment, on the other hand, requires individualisation in the sense that each student should develop the ability to be responsible and act independently. The idea of individualisation is carried to extremes and it is necessary for students to be stimulated to develop the abilities necessary to manage their individual freedom. In this context, support activities in schools can be considered as a tool for developing individual abilities framed by the welfare design of our time. In other words,

excessive individualisation is hard to reconcile with the demands for equivalence. Individualisation and equivalence are simply two divergent values. The dilemma that teachers and students have to handle is that when the language of teaching is about participation and empowerment, while the language of policy is about stating what is given as the stable and consensually defined reality (Popkewitz, 2009).

Educational Alliances as Support for Teaching and Learning

The way of perceiving the current market-oriented governance, framed by laws and regulations, i.e., regulatory support activities interpreted and explained by general advice, as a linear relation, teachers as well as students are assumed to be actors in a perfectly rational process. Provided that teachers and students partake in their roles in this setting, goal achievement, understood as attaining the minimum knowledge requirement, will be achieved. However, in the practice of schooling, it is obvious that students who avoid being defined as in need of support activities, are able to develop in stronger and more independent ways about their experiences of school work. Our study from the educational practice shows that students with experience of being dependent on the teacher's support in order to succeed, gain new insights from listening to their peers who are perceived as successful. This is also a kind of support activity, bringing forth the insight that similarities between different students' perceptions of school quality were stronger than the differences. Educational alliances can thus create new opportunities for students to put past failures behind them and look forward to the future. The example shows, that in order to experience school assignments as meaningful, students need to feel confident both in their peers and in the learning environment.

This is a different solution from the NAE's (2014a) proposal to investigate the individual students' needs of support as a starting point. This procedure would endanger the students as at risk of being defined as problem students who first must be excluded in order to be included in the learning environment. The work of creating a genuine inclusive learning environment, entails those activities and adjustments must be implemented in the classroom. There is also a contradiction when goal-oriented knowledge requirements are introduced in situations where students are expected to work with process-oriented tasks.

Finally, the policy and practice nexus in the initial quote in this chapter, underlines the complexity in defining value-charged policy concepts and predict how the actors will operate in practice, especially when re-regulations constantly are made in the market. On the other hand, knowledge of the principles of the marketplace's design and how it is regulated, provides increased opportunities for teachers and students to be active participants in order to control and take responsibility for their opportunities. Support activities, understood in the context where they appear, entails the possibility to create meaningful content for each actor in the policy and practice nexus of inclusion.

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Chapter 13

Competing Policy Ideas in Classroom Practice: The Case of Student Group Work



Christine R. Stenersen

Abstract In this chapter, the policy–practice nexus is empirically studied by examining an example of student group work trajectory in the context of Norwegian classrooms. Research and policy highlight the importance of developing student collaboration skills in the school setting. At the same time, contemporary education is marked by a focus on the individual learner and the measurement of the learning outcomes of individual students. This chapter explores this apparent dilemma by contrasting the political and pedagogical ambitions related to desired outcomes of student group work with empirical actualisation of authentic student group work. A conceptual framework informed by discursive institutionalism and the theory of cooperation and competition provides a multilayered lens for exploring the policy–practice nexus and scrutinising how policy intent might turn out in practice. As such, the study can serve as an example of how policy ideas, the school as an institution and the agency of teachers and students interact in the complex field of educational practice.

Introduction and Background

Researchers have long argued for the positive academic, cognitive and social impacts of being able to learn and work as a group, both in educational settings and in working life (Akkerman et al., 2007; Brown et al., 1989; Derry et al., 1998; Gillies, 2003; Lou et al., 1996). In addition, major policy organisations like the OECD (2018),¹ the

¹ The OECD emphasises that students need a broad range of skills, including social and emotional skills like collaboration.

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247

European Union (2002),² and UNESCO (2014)³ also emphasise collaboration and teamwork as being central skills in the twenty-first century, and several governments have incorporated a focus on developing skills in working with others in their national curriculum frameworks (OECD, 2015). Yet in the contemporary education system, there appears to be a clear focus on the individual student's learning and measuring individual learning outcomes (Apple, 2018; Bjordal & Haugen, 2021; Dovremark et al., 2018; Youdell, 2004; Aasen et al., 2014). This development is also addressed as a culture of measurement in educational policy and practice (Biesta, 2016). The discourse of individualism in the contemporary education system works to legitimate practices that place the responsibility for educational outcomes on the individual student (Youdell, 2004). Moreover, students compete for good grades, respect from the teacher, and study positions in the context of school choice, establishing a competitive learning environment (Aronson & Bridgeman, 2011; Bjordal & Haugen, 2021; Dovremark et al., 2018).

These developments can clearly be seen in the context of the current study because Norway has undergone a reform-intensive period since 2006, where an outcome-oriented educational policy has been introduced (Aasen et al., 2012; Prøitz, 2014), along with an emphasis on collaboration as an important aspect in school development (Stenersen & Prøitz, 2020). A recent study of the use of concepts and ideas in educational governance indicates that more process-oriented ideas of schooling, such as creating a culture for learning, can be difficult to define and operationalise for teachers and school leaders in educational practice and may lose ground to concepts like learning outcomes, which are more concrete and easier to implement in practice (Stenersen & Prøitz, 2020). Hence, educational policy may have a downside, where goals that require more process orientation, such as creating a culture for learning or developing group work skills in students, may lose ground to more concrete tasks like working with learning outcomes in everyday pedagogical practices.

The policy developments in Norway are in line with an international shift in focus from the content of teaching to student learning, which have been partly influenced by the EU and OECD. In the Nordic countries, a transformation in teaching practices has emerged from individualised teaching to teaching of individuals, where the individual self-reliant learner is at the centre (Carlgren et al., 2006). During this shift, a discourse that emphasises the individual student as responsible for their own learning and new teaching practices such as 'own work', 'responsibility for learning' or self-regulated learning have also emerged (Bergqvist, 2012; Carlgren et al., 2006; Meland, 2011). Own work refers to the desired virtues of self-mobilising and flexible learners that can put themselves to work and evaluate their own results (Bergqvist, 2012; Carlgren et al., 2006, pp. 319–320; Meland, 2011). Further, the Norwegian government launched a renewal of the core curriculum in 2020 that details: 'Everyone must learn to cooperate, work with others and

²The European Commission refers to key skills such as teamwork, problem solving, project management and others.

³UNESCO refers to competencies such as cognitive skills, social skills and behavioural capacities like being able to act collaboratively and strive for the collective good (p. 17).

develop the ability for co-determination and co-responsibility' (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 10). Hence, the policy message is clear: there are national ambitions for developing student collaboration skills in the school setting. Yet this renewed focus on collaboration skills has been introduced in a well-established individual, competitive, result- and outcome-oriented education context. As such, both research and policy advocates for teaching practices with a built-in tension between collaborative and individual performance.

The literature on student group work based on interview or survey studies is comprehensive (see, e.g., Ellis & Han, 2020; Freeman & Greenacre, 2011; Le et al., 2018; Pauli et al., 2008), finding, for example, that the teacher's focus on cognitive aspects of learning could lead to the neglect of collaborative aspects. A cognitive framing can be seen when the teacher's focus is on individual students' academic learning and on the final product, for example, *how to* analyse problems and search for information, not on collaborative skills like *how to* argue constructively or the collaborative performance or process (Le et al., 2018). Few studies have reported on authentic collaborative settings (Dahl et al., 2017; Patterson, 2016). Some studies zooming in on shorter episodes of student collaboration can be found (see, e.g., Dahl et al., 2017; Patterson, 2016), while the literature on intervention (experimental, correlational, design-based) studies is extensive. These studies are often conducted by researchers introducing teacher or student training in relation to group work, finding that certain methods or pedagogy give the best student outcomes (see, e.g., Gillies & Boyle, 2010; Johnson & Johnson, 2009; Wegerif, 2011); however, the actualisation of student group work in authentic everyday pedagogical practices in general remains understudied, especially following a longer teaching and learning trajectory. Hence, the current study supplements and extends prior work in three ways. First, the study is based on authentic classroom situations, meaning that there was no intervention or training of the teachers or students. The researchers collected data on ordinary classroom situations and behaviours in their everyday context. Second, the study follows a teaching and learning trajectory spanning the whole group work process in the classroom. Third, the study pays attention to the policy framing of the classroom practice. This is important because the empirical knowledge of how group work in the authentic classroom setting unfolds is scarce, and research calls for more knowledge about the conditions required for group work to have the desired positive outcomes in classrooms (Derry et al., 1998; Johnson et al., 2007; Slavin, 1996, 2014). Therefore, the aim of the current study is to explore potential tensions and challenges in educational policy ideas by investigating student group work in authentic classroom practice. In the present study, ideas are understood as the foundation for teachers' interpretive frameworks, which presents some aspects as more important than others (Béland & Cox, 2011). Furthermore, the concept of framing refers to how a package of pre-existing set of ideas can be used to win more adherents to one's position; hence, framing is one element in a broader battle over problem definition (Mehta, 2011, p. 33). The framing of a problem legitimises particular paths of action and delegitimises others; in this way, the framing processes of local actors shape how policies play out in practice (Coburn, 2006).

In this study, video data, audio data and teaching materials related to teacher-initiated student group work in six Norwegian lower secondary classrooms is analysed to answer the following empirical research questions: *How do teachers' discursive expressions of policy ideas frame student group work by means of instruction and assessment? How does this influence the dynamics and outcomes of student group work?*

Conceptual Framework

The current study draws upon discursive institutionalism (DI) for a contextual understanding of the interplay of policy-relevant ideas, discourse and institutions (Schmidt, 2015). DI is a framework for theorising about the dynamics of institutional change and continuity and how institutional frameworks create constraints and opportunities for actors (Schmidt, 2010, p. 2). Building on DI, the current study adopts the concept of *sentient* agents, that is, thinking and speaking actors whose *background ideational abilities* explain how they create and maintain institutions. Background ideas are often unspoken and taken for granted. This could, for example, be well-established policy ideas of how schools should be organised and what is valued and important in schools. An example could be the focus on individual student learning and measuring the learning outcomes of the individual students. The concept of *foreground discursive abilities* refers to more conscious perceptions and the agent's ability to communicate critically about institutions to change or maintain them (Schmidt, 2008), which here is analysed by zooming in on the teachers' framing of student group which is communicated both in text (written assignments and assessment scheme) and in the teachers' instructions and interactions with the students. The agents' ideas, discourse and actions must also be seen as a response to the material realities that affect them, for example, the unintended consequences of their own or others' actions (Schmidt, 2015). This is important to consider when dealing with a study of classroom practice because teaching situations are complex, with many actors involved and a lot happening at the same time (Archer et al., 2015).

In the analysis of the present study, DI is complemented by concepts from the theory of cooperation and competition (TCC) (Deutsch, 1949, 2014),⁴ which addresses factors that can influence the dynamics and outcomes of student group work. TCC builds on two basic ideas: interdependence among goals and the type of action that members of the group take (Deutsch, 1949, 2014). Interdependence is the key factor for cooperative outcomes, and it exists when the outcomes of individuals are affected by their own and others' actions. There are two types of

⁴The theory of co-operation and competition was initially developed by Deutsch (1949) and much elaborated by David W. Johnson and Roger T. Johnson (See for example: 2009). Johnson and Johnson have refined and extended the theory (The theory of social interdependence) and created Cooperative learning, a procedure for teachers based on the theory.

interdependence: positive and negative. *Positive interdependence* is based on cooperative conditions, where the goal attainment of the group members is positively correlated, meaning that each member can only reach their goals if the others also reach their goals. This will lead to a solidarity orientation and effective action of the group members, a mentality of ‘we swim together or sink together’. In contrast, *negative interdependence* is based on competitive conditions. For example, group members are rewarded according to their contributions to the work. Negative interdependence will lead to the bungling action of the group members, meaning ineffective, rival or individual-oriented actions (Deutsch, 1949, 2014). However, there are few purely cooperative and competitive situations; for example, a basketball team can be cooperative with respect to winning the game but competitive in relation to who is the star of the team (Deutsch, 1949, p. 132). The basic premise of TCC is that how a collaborative situation is structured has an impact on group dynamics and outcomes. Given the perception of positive interdependence, individuals will act to facilitate each other by helping, explaining, elaborating, encouraging and supporting when the group members have the collaborative skills to do so, out of recognition that they will benefit themselves. When social interdependence is established in the outcomes and means, the participants share the responsibility for the joint outcome, and each group member is expected to contribute and help group members do likewise. However, a competitive process shows more bungling action like impaired communication, lack of helpfulness, being unable to divide the work, disagreement and rejection of others’ ideas (Deutsch, 2014).

In the present study, the teachers are understood as policy actors while the students are also recognized as policy actors, especially noticeable through their interaction with the teacher (asking questions and suggesting alternative ways to work). TCC provides a toolbox for understanding how the discursive framing through the use of policy ideas in classroom activities can affect group dynamics and outcomes. The framework is presented in Appendix, which is partly inspired by the conceptual framework but also adjusted and tested against the empirical data material. The two categories are not mutually exclusive. During the analysis, the two idea dimensions have been used to theorise about which idea is at the fore and how the ideas interact in the different phases of the teaching and learning trajectory.

Method and Analytical Approach

The data were collected in one school and comprised video data, audio data and working materials from the Norwegian language school subject.⁵ Six classes of 20 students in ninth grade, aged 14–15 years and two experienced teachers have been

⁵This study builds on and extends the finding of the larger LOaPP research project that finds students seldom sit alone or work alone, here based on observations of teacher-initiated student collaboration in 12 classrooms across three schools (Prøitz, 2020; Prøitz et al., 2019).

included.⁶ In addition, data from interviews with the two teachers were used as background information. The student group work was related to a teaching and learning trajectory in which the students worked in groups with an assignment of multimodal text analysis and prepare for a presentation and conversation in an oral group assessment situation.⁷ The assessment was arranged in groups of three to four students and one teacher. The students received both collective feedback and individual final grades. The student group work and assessment took place in the final stage after a period of teaching and working on multimodal text analysis, a central part of the subject curriculum. A combination of purposeful and convenience sampling strategy was used in the selection of the schools and classrooms studied, meaning that the selected cases were the best cases to answer the research questions from a larger dataset (Leavy, 2017).

In the selected classes, student group work is a familiar way of working, which makes this a good case to study to learn more about how teachers' discursive expressions of policy ideas framed student group work. The use of video recordings in classroom research enables the study of complex classroom processes because it allows the analysis to capture more detail than is possible in live observations or teacher or student self-reports (Janík & Seidel, 2009). The goal of the data collection was data generation of typical everyday classroom activity. Still, there is no guarantee against the observer effect (see, e.g., Klette, 2009, p. 62). The video material consisted of a total of 7 h and 39 min recorded over a period of 8 days. The material covers whole-class instruction by the teachers, student group work in the classroom and group instruction by the teacher related to the group work task. The audio data consist in total of 26 recordings of the assessment situation, lasting on average 30–40 min, including assessment and reflections on the group work process. The working material comprises the assignment and assessment scheme handed out to the students and used throughout the trajectory. As illustrated in Fig. 13.1, the

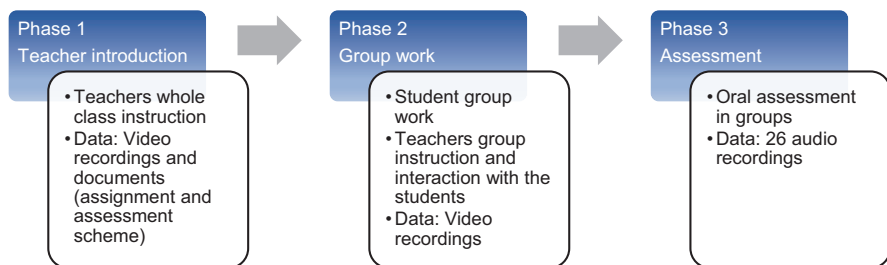


Fig. 13.1 Phases of the teaching and learning trajectory and an overview of the data material

⁶All students and parents had been informed about the research project and had given their written consent to participate.

⁷Subject talk: see Wiig et al. for more detail: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FjT4S6wIZMQ&list=PLpffZV5CcJDR4tOcnpiezMa-Cpwlv0X&index=2>

teaching and learning trajectory are organised into three phases to provide structure and overview of the data during analysis and presentation of the findings.

Findings

Phase 1: Combining Individual and Collaborative Ideas in Instruction and Assessment

The teachers start with whole-class instruction, explaining what the students are to do, including what is expected to gain a good grade with reference to the assignment and assessment scheme. From the beginning, both teachers declare that the assessment is organised in groups and emphasise that the students will get individual grades. The written assignment and assessment scheme are read aloud by the teacher and/or the students in class. The assignment has two pages and two attachments, exhibiting explicit collaborative framing:

It is important that everyone in the group participates actively and that everyone can answer questions of every part. You have joint responsibility for the final product, and we expect everyone to have an overview of the task. So you cannot simply distribute parts; you must work together. (Author's translation)

Six central goals from the national subject curricula are quoted in the assignment. Four of the goals are related to individual, cognitive outcomes, such as describing, reflecting, assessing relevant information and analysing. Two of the goals are related to more collaborative outcomes, such as participating in discussions with reasoned opinions and factual argumentation and evaluating one's own and others' oral presentations based on professional criteria.⁸ Attached to the assignment is the assessment scheme, in which four criteria are described in relation to three levels of goal achievement. The four criteria are learning objectives, collaboration, content and assessment. Regarding high goal achievement (high grade), the student must show good collaborative skills and participate actively in the work. An operationalisable description of how the students can show 'good collaborative skills' is lacking. The three other criteria that are more individual and cognitive oriented are described in more detail, for example, show the ability to reflect on how one can be affected by sound, language and pictures and being able to talk freely without a manuscript.

After going through the assignment, the teachers ask the students what they think is important to focus on. In several of the classes, the students suggest collaboration. However, the teachers typically respond by moderating the importance of the collaborative aspect and frame collaboration as a tool for reaching a better result:

⁸In the Norwegian national subject curriculum, the goals are found under the following subheadings: three goals from 'oral communication', two goals from 'written communication' and one goal from 'language, literature and culture'.

Good student collaboration, I agree. However, it is not the collaboration I am assessing. Usually, the final product is better when the group has collaborated well. (Teacher 1)

Here, we can see that the teacher communicates a contrasting message than what is written in the assessment scheme, where it is clearly stated that collaboration will be assessed. In addition, a focus on the result in the form of the final product is explicitly expressed as the desired outcome of the group work process, downplaying collaborative aspects such as the process where the students can gain group work skills. In parallel, the teacher emphasises the collaborative aspect by stating that the groups should not simply divide the tasks; *the groups should work together, and all students should understand the entire analysis so that the students can help each other out during the oral assessment*. Giving mutual help is a central aspect of collaborative ideas. However, the teachers continue to explicate that *this is what the highest-achieving groups have done before*. This can be interpreted as a shift in the framing from collaborative ideas like the process of working together and giving mutual help, to individual ideas with a focus on how collaboration can function as a tool for achieving a good final product, i.e., high grades. In the following examples, the group work is further reframed in an individual direction, which could counteract the collaborative aspects by downplaying positive group interdependence (Deutsch, 1949, 2014). For example, the teacher states, *the grading will be individual, so if one member of the group does not contribute, in the end it will be their own problem*. This could lead to a situation where the work of the other students in the group does not necessarily affect the others, which weakens the initial collaborative goal framing and may lead to a more individual and even competitive view on how the students can reach their goal within the groups.

When analysing the teachers' framing in this first phase using the theoretically inspired dimension of two somewhat competing policy ideas, individual and collaborative, it becomes clear that the assignment communicates a focus on both. However, how the actual collaboration should be conducted is not described in the assignment or in the teachers' instructions, not even when the students pose direct questions related to the collaboration process. The assessment scheme merely refers to showing good collaboration skills and active participation without elaborating on what this means. In contrast, the individual, cognitive goals are described in more detail, both in the written assignment, assessment scheme and teachers' instructions. Based on the students' questions, the collaboration aspect of the assignment remains unclear. The teachers' answers to these questions further overlook the collaborative aspects, pointing out that it is not the collaboration that will be assessed, but the final product, which contradicts what is stated in the assessment scheme. Yet another aspect shown in the analysis is the complexity of the assignment, which includes instructions and six goals quoted from the national subject curricula. Attached is also the assessment scheme, with both individual and collaborative aspects.

Phase 2: Student Interactions and Teachers' Reframing in the Complexity of Classroom Practice

After whole-class instruction, the students are instructed to start preparing for the oral assessment in groups. The students sit around four to five classroom desks, facing each other. The students have expressed in advance who they want to work with, and the students have mainly had their wishes fulfilled. They have approximately three school hours over a period of 1 week in total to prepare. In the early stage of the group work, some trouble can be seen in most of the six classrooms. Some groups have conflicts, resulting in students physically removing themselves from the group. Other students do not want to participate in the group work at all. Some of these students create a lot of turmoil, arguing and disturbing other students, while others withdraw from the group more quietly. The teacher uses a lot of time attempting to get these students to work with their group, without making any observable progress. Both teachers emphasise individual, cognitive aspects like progress in completing tasks and the consequences for the final product and assessment when interacting with the students in conflict. The teacher does not directly discuss or help the students handle challenging situations as a group. The following example shows the teacher's response to one student who does not want to work with the group:

The assignment is half of your final grade this year ... do you want to work all alone? Because you must do the assignment! How should I assess you? ... This means that you will get a warning letter. (Teacher 2)

This example shows the teacher's concern with the consequences for the individual assessment of the student if the student does not work with the group. Another example shows the teacher addressing a group where one student left the group after a conflict. The teacher's focus is on task completion; however, talking well together is also mentioned, but an elaboration on how the group can do this is missing:

... You all must get over the disagreement about the commercial now so you can talk well together. Ok? That is the way it is with collaboration; you must compromise... I hope you all look at that analysis now because that is the most important thing. (Teacher 1)

These examples show how the teacher attempts to secure the start of productive work by responding to ill-functioning groups. In addition, when the teacher has the opportunity to guide the group on collaborative aspects, the teacher's focus is on individual, cognitive aspects like completing the tasks and potential consequences for the assessment.

In later stages of the group work process, it is typical that the teacher moves between the groups, answering questions from the students. Overall, few students ask for help with the actual analysis. Based on the questions the students pose, it seems like they find it hard to get started because of unclear instructions about what they are supposed to do and how to plan and organise the group work in the 'right way'. The following is a typical example:

Teacher 2: Have you arranged the assignment? Who takes which part?

Student 1: But I thought you said we should not do it like that?

Teacher 2: Yes, but you must know each other's parts. You can answer each question together, and one of you can write up the answers; that is a clever way to do it.

The teacher leaves this group; however, the group returns to this question later, indicating that they still struggle with how to organise the group work:

Teacher 2: Who is writing?

Student 1: I do not know

Teacher 2: ... You are supposed to answer these questions [points to the assignment].

Student 1: Should we write a text answering the questions?

Teacher 2: It can be keywords because you are not supposed to hand in a text; you have an oral assessment.

Student 2: But are we supposed to work on this now?

Teacher 2: Yes, you have this school hour and one more to prepare.

Student 2: Okay, so then we take one question each?

Teacher 2: Yes, but remember to know each other's parts.

Student 1: Ok, but then we can just read each other's answers?

Teacher 2: Yes, but then you must remember to do that.

The interaction shows that the students seem reluctant to work on the task until they have found out how the teacher expects them to work as a group and how the process will be assessed. Due to the student's questions and reluctance to work under unclear terms, the teacher reframes the terms of the group work in several cases. This is seen in the example above, where the teacher agrees to the student's suggestion that they could just work on different parts and read each other's answers. This contradicts what is written in the assignment and downplays the collaborative aspect. It seems that the teachers' focus is on progress with the assignment, not the group work process per se. Consequently, the teacher reframes the group work by emphasising progress and individual goals, overlooking the collaborative aspect and important opportunities to practice and enhance collaborative skills. This can be understood as an expression of prioritising individual ideas potentially at the expense of collaborative ideas in the reframing of the group work process.

Overall, many students solve the conflicting messages from the teachers in the framing and reframing of the group work by working individually in their groups. It is typical for each student to look at and work on their computers. As a result, the students have trouble establishing face-to-face interactions, which likely influences shared attention and the dialogue of the groups. On several occasions, there can be seen attempts of one student to orally communicate with the group, often without getting any or satisfying response. It is questionable if this way of framing student group work facilitates the development of collaborative skills, like the curricula goal to 'participate in discussions with reasoned opinions and factual argumentation'.

Phase 3: The Challenging Task of Balancing Competing Policy Ideas in Assessment Situations

This section focuses on how the teacher frames the assessment process in terms of individual and collaborative ideas and how this influences the student groups. A recurring topic in the teachers' feedback to the students is related to each student's individual contribution to the group, which, according to Deutsch (1949), could promote negative interdependence. The teachers often point out that one or two of the students in the group do most of the talking:

I wish that all of you talked a bit more ... Student 1 talked a lot; in the beginning you all contributed, but after that, the three of you drifted out a bit. (Teacher 1)

The teacher points out that an important part of the collaboration is the exchange of words and helping each other out during the assessment. This is in line with the written assignment and the initial collaborative framing. However, the teachers also refer to developing strategies for how to reach individual goals within the group setting:

You must have some strategies for how to work together ... You disappear a little here, Student 3. Because it is an individual assessment, there is also something about developing strategies to reach our goals. How can we exchange words and help each other during the conversation? (Teacher 1)

There are several examples where the teacher points out that the students have done a good job in helping each other out during the assessment:

Teacher 1: I really like that you also try to draw each other in. It is good, Student 3, for example, that you help Student 4 to explain a little. Student 4, It is Norwegian [language] that is a little difficult still, right? So it is great that you [Student 3] take that into account and that you try to make each other better.

Student 1: We try to help him remember, or if he does not remember anything at all, we say it for him.

However, when analysing the group dynamics, there seems to be a fine line between 'sharing the word', 'helping' and 'taking the word out from someone'. Here, more able students have little patience with students who struggle. For example, non-native Norwegian-speaking students are 'helped out' a lot by their peers and permitted little time to answer questions. On several occasions, the teachers repeatedly interfere in the conversation, trying to regulate the group so that all the students could speak. However, this has a limited impact; the other members of the group typically do not let struggling students speak for long. This may be a result of the framing of the group work by including both goals of collaboration and individual goals. In particular, the individual grading based on the individual student's contribution to the group seems to complicate the group work in the assessment situation. A logical implication is that the students struggle with the balance of the aspects of collaboration, like sharing and helping and their individual goals. In the analysis, competition within groups is also evident when the students

strive to show their own knowledge in the likely effort of gaining the best possible individual grade.

The teachers often ask the groups what was challenging in the group work process, creating a good opportunity for group processing and to improve group work skills when talking about what behaviour to continue or change in subsequent group work. Several groups reflect on difficulties related to disagreements and that it is hard to accept and handle different opinions in the group:

Teacher 1: I have been a bit worried about how the collaboration has worked. Because it looked like you worked well in periods, and in other periods, it looks like you have not ...

Student 2: Yes, it has been a bit like that when we have decided to work, then we have worked hard, but when we did not it is tiring...

There are some examples of the teacher trying to give advice on how to handle disagreements in the group, focusing on both the individual and collaborative aspects. However, the collaborative aspects are unspecified and undercommunicated:

Teacher 1: Making groups is always difficult. I think this group will work well eventually. But something you must work on is when you disagree, you must have some strategies on how to move forward so that you do not spend a lot of time and energy disagreeing ... Because you spent an awful lot of time deciding which advertisement to analyse that you could have spent on other things. And then at some point, you must put aside your egos, also in a way, simply decide quickly... You must have some strategies for how to work together.

Despite being a group marked by disagreement and division, this group manages to find a way to work together and perform well in the assessment. This group also states that they wish to continue to work together, making this group a good example of the positive effect that group work can have on desired policy outcomes, such as the development of social competences and creating an inclusive learning culture.

The students are asked to assess their own work at the end of the assessment situation. A salient feature is that most students start by reflecting on the collaboration process, not subject-related goals (like the analysis of the commercial), indicating that the students perceive the collaborative aspect as important to discuss and something they want to work on. However, the analysis shows that it varies if the teachers give the students feedback or guidance on how to improve their group work skills.

Discussion and Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, the aim has been to present a study of how teachers' discursive expressions of policy ideas frame student group work in the classroom and how this influences the dynamics and outcomes of student group work. The analysis shows how teaching and learning trajectories where different types of goals are set in motion at the same time can be challenging for both teachers and students. Furthermore, the study exemplifies how individual cognitive goals becomes

prioritised over goals related to development of collaboration skills, like sharing, and supporting each other's learning processes. This is exemplified by how the teachers frame the final product and the assessment of individual students as the most important outcome. Hence, this focus seems to hinder opportunities to, for example, work on collaborative skills, like conflict management and communicative skills. The tensions in the group work process seem to originate in the teachers' framing of competing curricula goals in the assignment and assessment scheme, the result is a complex and divergent assignment. However, a conundrum is that even though the process of student group work seems challenging and frustrating at times for students and teachers because of confusion, disagreements and trouble with coordination of effort and division of labour, most students express that they wish to continue with student group work, explicitly stating that they would like to become more skilled in this form of working.

Students as Micro Policy Agents in Classroom Practice?

The current study exemplifies how the students take a prominent role in untangling the complex tasks in a contemporary school culture marked by high complexity. The students face a multifaceted assignment, with six curricula goals directly quoted from the national subject curricula and an assessment scheme emphasising both collaborative and more cognitive and individual aspects. In addition, the teacher sometimes provides conflicting instructions. Some students negotiate clearer, more operational criteria for the group work process and assessment with the teachers by asking questions and/or suggesting alternative ways to work on the assignment. This somewhat novel role may be referred to as students as micro policy agents, who, through interaction with each other and the teacher, are trying to make sense of the ambivalent assignment. The potential problem with students as micro policy agents is that work with more meta-cognitive tasks can put the students in stressful situations, as exemplified by the disagreements within the student groups related to how to proceed with the group work. This might decrease the students' (and teachers') feeling of control of the situation. In addition, the study exemplifies that the issues related to how to operationalise the assignment takes a lot of time for both students and teachers. Resulting in less time to work on the subject content (doing the actual multimodal text analysis). At the same time, the study shows that the students could benefit from more explicit guidance on group work skills, while the teachers' focus seems to be on progress with the assignment. The student's role in negotiating clear terms for their own work and assessment also serves as an example of how the policy-practice nexus can be manifested in students' work in the classroom.

Current Challenges and Further Research

Both research and policy emphasise the development of collaborative skills in students. There is a question about whether these ambitions consider the reality of contemporary school culture, where student group work can be complex to organise and places high demands on teachers and students. If the group work is to have the desired effects, many factors must be considered, for example, students do not have intrinsic collaborative skills at the age of 14; this is something they need to work on with their teacher's guidance. It is important that students and teachers work on collaborative skills; however, the current study suggests that a framing of the work with the main goal being to assess the final product in terms of the individual student's performance may be a disruptive element.

This study contributes to the policy–practice nexus discussion by tracing the policy idea of student group work and exploring what happens in everyday classroom practice when combined with well-established policy ideas related to the importance of measuring individual students' learning outcomes. The study shows some unintended consequences that may occur when different policy ideas are simultaneously at play in classroom practice, providing insights into what is going on in these six classrooms and their 120 students and two teachers. As such, the study serves as an example, contributing to empiric, analytical and theoretical development. Further, this is a study of policy in classroom practice and discourse; hence, the study does not consider the rationale of the actors directly, which could be an interesting question for further research. Moreover, the current study focuses on the teachers' work in framing the group work process throughout a teaching and learning trajectory; however, the study finds the students as impactful actors. Further research with a focus on the students' processes in classroom work, in groups or individually, along with their role in framing their own learning processes, would bring valuable knowledge to the field. Another interesting topic illuminated is related to the transnational desired outcomes of student group work, further research could explore more closely how to create a good culture for the development of group work skills within the contemporary education culture.⁹

⁹This chapter has been subject to double blind review in addition to the reviews of the editors of the book and the peer review process of the book manuscript.

Appendix

Framework for Analysing by Means of Two Categories of Policy Ideas: Individual Ideas and Collaborative Ideas

Educational policy ideas	
Individual ideas	Collaborative ideas
The focus is on the learning of the individual student and the measurement of individual students' learning outcomes. For example, emphasis on cognitive goals like analysing and searching for information	The focus is on promotive interaction and group work skills. For example, listening to others, accepting different viewpoints, constructive feedback, encouraging, giving mutual help and constructive management of conflict
Focus on output, the result or the final product. For example, completing tasks and productivity	Focus on the process, working together as a group, gaining group work skills and group processing
Student actions are marked by negative interdependence: competition and bungling action (within groups and/or between groups). The emphasis is on individual grades and/or rewards according to the students' contribution to the work	Student actions marked by positive means interdependence (all group members have significant roles in the work) and positive outcome interdependence (linked goals). The group receives the same reward for successfully completing a joint task

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Chapter 14

Tracing Policy in Practice. Exploring the Interactional Exercise of Oral Assessment



Astrid Camilla Wiig

Abstract By empirically zooming in on oracy as an area of educational reforms, this chapter illuminates how a new oral assessment phenomenon that has been observed in practice meets, overlaps, and, more recently, challenges educational policy in the Norwegian educational context. Conducted in three lower secondary schools, the study draws on audio-recorded materials capturing authentic teacher–student dialogues in group subject talk tests. By exploring authentic assessment practices, the chapter analyzes (1) which aspects of competence students are made accountable for and (2) how the introduction of learning outcomes and oracy as one of five core skills can challenge the interactional exercise of oral assessment in educational practice. The results illustrate how subject talk evaluation practices through the organization in social groups go beyond assessing students in terms of assessment criteria or scales. The oral assessment situation becomes a setting where teachers share professional judgments and approve specific oral initiatives for groups of students. In this nexus of group subject talks and recent policy on learning outcomes and oracy as a core skill, students become competent contributors through retrospective evaluations of their own performance, making themselves accountable for the group’s community, subject-specific knowledge, and the norms and rules of reasoning in the group’s subject talks. The findings raise several questions about how we understand actors as the coconstructors of educational policy when certain educational practices seem to be in front of policy uptake in the nexuses where policy and practice conflict, overlap, and meet.

Keywords Oral assessment · Oracy · Student evaluation · Accountable talk · Group dialogues · Learning outcome · Social interaction · Policy uptake

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265

Introduction

By empirically zooming in on oracy—here as an emphasized area of political educational reforms over the past 20 years—this chapter will illuminate how group subject talks as a new oral assessment phenomenon that have been observed in practice meet, overlap, and challenge the educational policy of assessment in the Norwegian educational context. By exploring authentic assessment practices in a lower secondary school, the chapter investigates which aspects of competence the students are made accountable for, along with how the introduction of learning outcomes related to oracy as a core skill seems to challenge the interactional exercise of oral assessment in educational practice.

Andrew Wilkinson first introduced the term “oracy” as a way to refer to “the ability to use the oral skills of speaking and listening” (Wilkinson, 1965, p. 13). He created the term “oracy” to give spoken language skills the same status as reading, writing, and counting. Oracy has a long tradition in the Norwegian school system, dating back to the oral hearings in confirmation ceremonies in 1736. First beginning as a rhetorical recitation of literature in the first schools, the practice has moved toward today’s consequential position as one of five core skills enacted through the National Knowledge Promotion Reform of 2006 (LK06). In conjunction with the National Knowledge Promotion Reform (Ministry of Education and Research, 2006), a sharper focus on learning outcomes and assessment practices became visible in policy documents. For instance, the description “to be able to express oneself orally” changed to “oral skills”; hence, focusing on the interactional collaboration with others and the ability to listen to and assess others’ oral competence became consequential in classroom practices (Kverndokken, 2017). Additionally, across subjects, the introduction of learning outcomes related to oracy were described using common instructional verbs, such as interacting, discussing, interpreting, arguing, listening, telling, performing, and explaining. As a result, the new focus on the interactional aspects of learning outcomes became important for the organization of collaborative oral assessment exercises in Norwegian school practices.

International Research on Oral Assessment

In major international reference works on assessment, there has been only a minimal focus on oracy (see Andrade & Cizek, 2009; Andrade et al., 2019; Howe & Abedin, 2013; McMillan, 2013). Even so, the assessment of oral skills has been a longstanding component of secondary school examinations in education systems around the world (Skovholt et al., 2021). For instance, the value of assessing oracy and the issue of how to assess fairly has been debated for many years (Brooks, 1989). Barnes (1980) argued that, while assessing children’s oral skills, teachers’ need a wide range of contexts in which to gather evidence. Following this line of argumentation, Howe (1991) described three main challenges for assessing oracy:

the fact that spoken language is ephemeral, the restriction on the number of students who can be assessed at a time, and the context specificity of speech acts. Additionally, Mercer et al. (2017) underlined that speech involves the integrated activities of two or more people, so how can individual performance be isolated while assessing oral skills? The debates regarding the assessment practices of oracy have led to the development of diagnostic assessment schemes for teachers by, for instance, the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency in the UK (QCDA) or the Common Core Standards for English Language Arts (CCSI, 2015) in the US, both of which provide a set of guidelines showing the expected standard for spoken language use at the end of each grade of schooling. However, most previous approaches to assessing oracy have relied on performance criteria related to specific situations, such as public speaking or group work, not on assessing what students said or did (Mercer et al., 2017).

Norwegian Research on Oral Assessment

In Norwegian literature studies, the assessment of oracy is seldom examined (Børresen et al., 2012; Fjørtoft, 2017; Skovholt et al., 2021). In the Norwegian school context, students' learning outcomes are assessed through final "disciplinary oral competence exams" (DOCEs) in Year 10 (age 15) in lower secondary school and Year 3 (age 18) in higher secondary school. Even though DOCEs are widely used, we know very little about their quality in terms of their validity, reliability, and fairness (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019; Pellegrino et al., 2001). Critiques have documented the weak construct of language oral tests (Okada, 2010), a lack of research focusing on trouble management in nonstandardized test talk (Nyroos et al., 2017), and how teachers struggle to manage students' insufficient answers in authentic oral examinations (Vonen et al., 2022). Also, there seems to be a growing gap between classroom realities of oracy and theories on development and learning, which underscores the significance and consequences of social interactions in various forms of classroom dialogues (Alexander, 2012; Wiig et al., 2018). In Littleton and Howe's (2010) seminal work on educational dialogues, criticism was raised toward educational research for treating oracy and the conception of language as a unitary tool:

The apparent 'gap' between what theory construes as being of significance, and the apparently bleak picture emerging from actual classroom practice, gives pause for thought. (...) What is needed are research-based accounts of educational dialogues, and productive interaction, that are sensitive to the variety of forms and functions of language as used in pursuit of teaching and learning in classroom settings (p. 5).

Rooted in classroom realities, this chapter will explore a new oral assessment phenomenon called "subject talks," which are 20–30 minutes structured and graded dialogues where teachers and students engage in talks about subject-specific topics as an alternative approach to more conventional ways of individual oral

examinations. In particular, the chapter zooms in and investigates group subject talks in the subject Norwegian in a lower secondary school, a type of institutional interaction that until now has received little attention in the policy–practice nexus.

Oracy in Practice

Historically, oracy, rhetoric, and oral examinations have a long tradition in the development of the Norwegian educational system. In 1736, the Danish–Norwegian government introduced the religious ceremony of confirmation as a mandatory ceremony, which politically meant that a very general requirement was made for schooling. The new political significance of confirmation made the practical preparation for the oral hearing far more important because no children would be admitted to confirmation until they had gone to school and acquired the necessary knowledge about Christianity. In places where there were no schools, political governance decided that priests and traveling schoolmasters were still to oversee teaching. The educational aim was to teach students to read, and then, the students would be held accountable to use their new reading skills to learn and present good Christianity in the confirmation ceremony (Elstad et al., 2022). The schoolbook used for almost 150 years was Pontoppidan’s (1737) *Sandhet til Gudfryktighed* (i.e., “Truth to Godliness”). The book was written in the form of 539 questions and answers elaborating on Martin Luther’s little catechism, with frequent references to the Bible, such as the Ten Commandments and explanations in detail what these are about. On the day of confirmation, the priest would conduct an oral hearing where all the children were held accountable for displaying their knowledge about Christianity by reciting what they could memorize from the 539 questions and answers in front of the church community. Confirmation was extremely rigorous and meant an important change in social status. As a political educational decision, it marked the transition from child to adult, thus coinciding with changes in clothing, lifestyle, and job opportunities. Confirmation was also a political condition for entering marriage. If one was not able to pass the oral hearing of confirmation before the age of 19, the individual would be punished with penitentiary and social exclusion.

Later in the nineteenth century, when educational systems were established in Norway, great emphasis was placed on reading and recitation exercises in Norwegian Latin schools (Aksnes, 2017). These oral exercises had a dual policy aim: they should give students the practical opportunity to understand and communicate texts, such as poems, while also providing them with training in performing in public (Steinfeld, 1986). In 1883, the first oral examination was introduced by the Norwegian Ministry of Education as a traditional oral exam, where teachers asked questions related to subject matters and the students were made accountable to answer by reciting facts from the schoolbooks. Several guides in the art of recitation were published, and as a result of the educational practice, rhetoric was introduced and used primarily as a doctrine of external eloquence and performance style. Until the latter part of the twentieth century, oracy as a discipline gained an increasing

focus in educational policy and practice. A fundamental change in oracy as an educational discipline came with the new National Knowledge Promotion Reform of 2006 (*Kunnskapsløftet*, LK06). With LK06, oracy became one of five core skills, together with reading and writing, calculation, and digital skills. Consequently, oral competence became something the students were required to develop across all subjects and during the entire educational system (first to tenth grade). In the 2013 revision of LK06, rhetoric became a central topic, especially in Norwegian language training (Aksnes, 2017). In the nexus of policy and practice, rhetoric changed from being an analytical tool for performing text analysis to becoming a tool for practical work with oracy both in ordinary classroom interactions across subjects, such as in whole-class discussions, presentations, or subject talks, and in formalized individual oral exams, such as in the school subject Norwegian. According to Bakken, “the introduction of rhetoric as a topic must be said to be one of the major changes that occurred in the school subject Norwegian in connection to the Knowledge Promotion Reform” (2009/2011, p. 2). Thus, a practical consequence of the policy-initiated reform on oracy as a core skill was that the means for the proof of rhetoric, such as ethos, pathos, and logos, should give students the appropriate amount of support to create oral texts and a language to talk about oracy as a way to fulfill the introduction of the learning outcomes of oracy. Consequently, detailed directions and practical guidelines were developed, particularly in the school subject Norwegian. As this chapter will show, these guidelines of oracy became consequential for educational practice and empirical observations of new forms of assessment practice called subject talks. Thus, the current chapter will focus on oracy as an area of educational reform, discussing the nexus in which policy and practice meet, conflict, and overlap.

Untangling the Nexus

The present study employs a sociocultural perspective on the ways educational policy is partly brought up and used as cultural tools in schools, along with how policy formalizes the popular practices developed in schools. From a sociocultural perspective, learning and assessment activities in school practices are interactional endeavors that are shaped by cultural and historical activities (Daniels et al., 2007). The underlying premise in these sociocultural perspectives on assessing learning activities is that when teachers design dialogues by drawing on how students explicate their reasoning and bring forward arguments for what they claim, challenges arise regarding accountable methods of engaging in these new practices. Thus, *accountability* can be studied as “elements of situated knowing-in-practice, i.e., as elements of knowing how to behave” (Mäkitalo, 2003, p. 496). This implies that when, as groups, students are invited into new assessment practices, discrepancies exist in the views of learning. What is considered relevant or accountable and the goals of measurement (i.e., elaboration of knowledge, recitation of facts, presenting group work) can lead to tensions and practical challenges (Wiig et al., 2019).

The empirical material forming the foundation of the analysis was collected during structured 30-minute subject talks in Norwegian language (L1) at a lower secondary school in Norway. Subject talks in lower secondary education can take many forms; they can be trial exams in various subjects in preparation for national examinations or “practice conversations” before oral exam (Vonen et al., 2022), oral classroom assessment with grades, oral presentations finalizing assignments or projects, organized as group work, or as individual conversations making use of the various tools available for meaning-making (Prøitz et al., 2020; Wiig et al., 2020). Thus, subject talks serve different purposes in lower secondary education. The data corpus for the present chapter represents the final oral test in which a grade was given for the subject and that ended a period specializing in analyzing multimodal advertisements in eighth grade. During subject talks, the teacher would assess the student’s participation by asking questions, making notes, and keeping a record of the students’ performance based on written assessment criteria. Immediately after the students’ presentation and group dialogue, there would be an evaluation of the subject talk, which led the way to opening up for teacher’s feedback, students’ reflection, and communication of the results in terms of a final grade put into a digital system. Thus, in the present chapter, I investigate what students are made accountable for when participating in group subject talks, that is, which aspects of knowledge are highlighted and rendered visible as important in teachers’ evaluation of students’ oral performance. Specifically, the analytical focus is on the idea that the teachers’ framing of accountable ways of engaging within the subject talks has a strong guiding influence on how the students participate and what students focus on in their retrospective reflections over what counts as meaningful assessment and learning practices in this nexus of policy and practice.

Assessing Own Performance Through Accountable Talk

In the current study, the notion of “accountable talk” has served as the analytical lens (e.g., Michaels et al., 2008; Resnick et al., 2018; Sellberg et al., 2022; Wiig et al., 2019). Although accountability in educational policy refers to evidence or assessment, performance data, and the indicators by which policy makers monitor the performance of students and schools, this chapter uses sociolinguistic and dialogic approaches. Thus, accountable talk means those discursive practices that “support and promote equity and access to rigorous academic learning” (Michaels et al., 2008, p. 283). Hence, those studies on accountable talk have focused on how the dialogues between teachers and students go beyond being able to reproduce what is known as established facts in the discipline, hence directing the analytical interest toward how instructional dialogue may foster better reasoning and understanding of complex and ambiguous problems that require students’ judgment (Resnick et al., 2018). Accountable talk takes place in the educational practices that carefully

combine designed tasks with teacher-led discussions and the other activities in which students are encouraged to explicate their reasoning and bring forward arguments of what they claim and do. Michaels et al. (2008) suggested that, in academically productive classroom talk, three broad dimensions are critical features: accountability to the community, accountability to knowledge, and accountability to the accepted standards of reasoning. The three facets of accountable talk—community, knowledge, and reasoning—are analytically separable, but in practice, they are interdependent and must co-occur if the discourse is to promote academic learning (O'Connor et al., 2015). These dimensions will be applied as analytical tools to explore the social interactions of negotiating the situated practice of knowing how to behave as well-informed students in subject talk settings in classroom interactions. Combining the three dimensions of accountability can provide a general picture of the overall function of subject talk in the data corpus, as well as more detailed accounts of subject talk practices.

Accountability to the Learning Community

The first dimension is related to the *learning community*, in which productive discussions take place. This type of accountability is related to mastering the forms of talk, ways of acting, and making sense that are relevant within the community. In the present study, the learning community can be contextualized as the group subject talks in Norwegian L1 in a lower secondary class in Norway. In this learning community, teacher and student groups make use of students' presentation and analyses of a multimodal TV advertisement. During the subject talks, the teacher orchestrates discussions, and the groups of students are invited to engage in the dialogue, that is, to listen to others in the group, share their reasoning, and explicate their analysis to display their knowledge of literate analysis as a collaborating endeavor. Thus, accountability to the learning community is coconstructed and negotiated through the discursive practices among the groups of students and the teacher in situ.

Accountability to the Norms and Rules

The second dimension relates to the accepted standards of reasoning in a learning community, such as within group subject talks. Here, accountability is associated with the norms and rules of how the students explicate their reasoning orally and bring forward their arguments in relation to the given assessment criteria for the school subject Norwegian. In the group subject talks, these standards are both the criteria from the teacher describing what is expected in an analysis of a multimodal

TV advertisement and the ways for sharing responsibility, knowledge, and the more invisible youth standards of what are acceptable activities within the group. Thus, being a member of a youth group, which has its own accepted standards of reasoning, might conflict with the teacher's standards of what it takes to achieve good results for the group in subject-specific matters. Consequently, what is at stake in these discursive practices might show layers of standards within a group that can conflict with the schools' norms, rules, and principles.

Accountability to Knowledge

The last dimension regarding the accountability for knowledge is related to understanding and making use of the relevant knowledge in situ. Michaels et al. (2008) underlined that accountability to knowledge goes behind the recitation of facts. Rather, Michaels et al. (2008) highlighted the role of discursive reasoning in which the participants made explicit the evidence behind their claims. In a subject talks setting, accountability to knowledge is demonstrated through a structured oral group process of 30-minute conversations in which the students' skills are tested in a formal sense and graded individually by the teacher. Thus, the current study is in line with previous research on accountable talk that has focused on those school subjects where the students are expected to master a body of authoritative knowledge such as formulas, symbolic tools, facts, or accepted theories (Michaels et al., 2008). The empirical material in the present chapter offers a different point of entry to the issue of accountable talk, putting on display a new discursive practice called subject talks, in which little research has been done. I will further elaborate on what this means in the nexus of policy and practice in the analysis of authentic audio-recorded group subject talks, since the assessment situation the teacher provide for in-group subject talk can be seen as a demanding task. By encouraging the students to make themselves assessable by balancing among the various layers of accountability to community, knowledge, and reasoning, the teacher and students socially interact in situ to elaborate on students' thinking and reflections.

Research Design

The examined subject talks can be classified as *a defined summative classroom assessment situation ending a period of student work with a given assignment and a final grade set by the teacher* (Wiig et al., 2020). Because the current study explores a phenomenon first observed in practice in schools that have been limitedly researched and described by policy, the analysis takes the empirical data from schools as its point of departure.

Data Corpus

Data were collected from a lower secondary school called North School (pseudonym) in Norway during the school year of 2017–2018. The selected school was a public school in a medium-sized Norwegian city. The participants included a teacher in the Norwegian language and about 50 ninth and tenth grade students. All teachers and students volunteered to participate and provided informed consent. For the present study, a corpus of 17 audio-recorded group subject talks in Norwegian was used for the analysis. In addition, field notes and artifacts, such as video clips, assignments, assessment criteria, and self-assessment criteria, were collected and used as secondary material. The 17 subject talks were fully but roughly transcribed totaling 8.5 hours of audio-recordings.

Analytical Process

During the preliminary analysis, all episodes were subjected to thematic coding (Braun & Clarke, 2012). This technique gave an overview of the organization and content that were particularly relevant to the research questions, enabling me to select episodes of relevant interaction. In this process, NVivo software was used. In the next step, interaction analysis (Jordan & Henderson, 1995) was applied to analyze how the students negotiated and co-constructed explanations and what the teacher emphasized while evaluating the performance of the groups. This analytical tradition has stressed the importance of analyzing meaning-making as sequentially organized in encounters between participants. Moreover, it helps emphasize the need to analyze activities as interactional achievement happening in a sociocultural practice (Mäkitalo & Säljö, 2002). Here, sequentially refers to meaning-making as a chain of utterances and events that are sensitive to each other.

The analytical focus was on how groups of students and the teacher responded to each other's utterances turn by turn and how they coconstructed the meaning of the situation so they could negotiate the ways to behave and interact. At this time, the transcriptions were revisited with attention to detail to confirm the correct transcriptions has been reported verbatim. Therefore, the analysis was developed with information on the teacher–student talk, the level of interactivity with the participants, and the engagement of the participants during the talks. As a result, the inner functions of subject talks in these specific assessment practices were rendered visible. At this time, the transcribed talk was elaborated on with information on time, content, participants, and composition. To understand how the teachers and students negotiated the elements of knowing how to behave in the subject talks, the analysis focused on the types of accountabilities the teacher found accurate and significant while structuring the subject talks.

The three broad dimensions of accountable talk were applied to analyze how the participants oriented themselves concerning what counted as accurate and relevant ways to behave and talk: (1) *accountability to the community, in which the participants listened and built their contributions in response to others*; (2) *accountability to the accepted standards of reasoning, which emphasized logical connections and drawing reasonable conclusions*; and (3) *accountability to knowledge, that is, talk based explicitly on facts, written texts or other public information* (Michaels et al., 2008; Wiig et al., 2019). In the present study, the accountable talk dimensions worked together as a conceptual lens to derive meaning from the interaction data. Thus, they should not be understood as comprehensive or mutually exclusive categories for analysis.

When narrowing down the analysis, two excerpts were chosen to represent the data corpus, here illustrating what students are made accountable for when participating in group subject talks, that is, which aspects of knowledge were highlighted and rendered visible as important in teachers' evaluation of students' group performance.

The Empirical Case

The subject talk was part of the students' final grade, ending a period specializing in analyzing multimodal advertisements. The data corpus for this chapter represented the final test of the period, which assessed 17 groups of students' preplanned analysis of a TV commercial, their knowledge of linguistic means, ability to work in groups, and reflections on their own participation in subject talks. According to the assessment criteria, the students should be able to demonstrate knowledge in the following areas: (a) present an analysis of a TV commercial with a focus on aesthetic means and reflect on how they can be affected by sound, language, and pictures, (b) participate and collaborate during the group work, (c) display knowledge about the theme with a clear structure and answer the questions in the assignment, (d) use scientific concepts during the subject talk and display an overview of the material, engage with the material, and talk clearly, articulated, and with passion (Appendix). During the subject talks, the teacher assessed the student's participation by asking questions, making notes, and keeping a record of students' performance according to the above assessment criteria. Immediately after the students' presentation and group dialogue, there was an evaluation of the subject talk that opened up for teacher's feedback, students' reflection, and communication of the results in terms of a final grade, which was put into a digital system. Although the students worked in teams of three or four, the final evaluation was an individual grade. The 30-minute structured subject talk was performed in their classroom, and the groups of students were assigned different time slots over the course of 2 days.

At an overall level, the subject talks were organized into four different sequences, as shown in Table 14.1.

Table 14.1 The organization of group subject talks (Wiig et al., 2020)

Organization of group subject talks	Time
1. Teacher introduction	2 min
2. Student presentation of their advertisement and literate analysis	5 min
3. Student–teacher dialogue	15–20 min
4. Reflection and evaluation	Last 10 min
A. Reflections of own participation in the subject talk	
B. Teacher feedback	2–3 min
C. Student self-assessment according to aims	
D. Teacher instruction of students’ self-assessment in digital app and information about final grade	1 min

In the analysis below, the teachers’ introduction and reflection and evaluation parts have been analyzed, here with a focus on the teacher and students’ coproduction of retrospective accounts.

Introducing the Group Subject Talk

Before the students’ PowerPoint presentation began, there was a short introduction where the teacher explained the conditions for the upcoming subject talk. This was done in an overarching way, hence not introducing much detail or information about time, form, or procedures. Rather, each subject talk was slightly different, but they were all similar in their structure and in the design of the assessment criteria. Two typical introductions have been exemplified in the below excerpts.

The first episode started with a group of four female students who had chosen a commercial called “Kolonial” (i.e., Colonial). When the group entered the classroom, they were told to upload their presentation, and while they quietly oriented toward their presentation, the teacher explicated her intentions by saying the following:.

Teacher	The more you control the conversation, the better. But I jump in and ask about things if it standstills or there are things I wonder about or things like that. So it is important to remember that this is a conversation. I’m not trying to upset anyone; I’m looking for what you guys know.
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At the start of the excerpt, the teacher explicated that, in subject talks, it would be better if the students took over the control to display what they knew and that she would ask them to elaborate if there were things she wondered about, but her task was not to upset or dig into things they did not know. Rather, she emphasized that subject talk was a conversation where students should be given the opportunity to take control and show what they know. Hence, through this first introduction, the teacher was seeking to establish a shared understanding of her role in the situation

and position students as active contributors and leaders of the conversation. Thus, in this discursive assessment practice, the teacher carefully combined designed tasks with teacher-led discussions, fostering opportunities for engaging in instructional dialogues to explicate their reasoning and display what they claimed and did.

In the next excerpt, a group of four boys entered the classroom while whispering and mumbling. When they were asked to upload their PowerPoint presentation about a kebab pizza advertisement, they struggled with some technical issues, and it took some time before the presentation was visible on the screen. Here, the teacher explicated the intentions with the subject talk by elaborating more about the intentions and addressing the schedule by saying the following:

1.	Teacher	We'll start with you to tell a bit about the advertisement you have worked with and why you have chosen to work with it. And then we go into that section of conversation. (<i>Sounds from the computer and whispering about technical issues</i>) But eh do you also remember from the last time that the best starting point is that the more you talk, the better?
2.	Student	Yes
3.	Teacher	So you know I'm gonna jump in and ask if there's anything I'm wondering about. And it's not scary.
4.	Student	Not at all...
5.	Teacher	It's not scary at all. And you have worked with our kebab pizza? Do you intend to start by saying something about the advertisement or?

In this excerpt, the teacher constructed a carefully designed task similar to the template students were offered while preparing for the subject talk: present the advertisement, state why you choose it, and then begin the conversation. She highlighted that the best starting point was that, the more they talked, the better it would be and that it was nothing to be afraid of, underlining that "*it is not scary at all*" (line 5). Thus, during this introduction, the teacher was seeking to establish a teacher-led structure, positioning the students to follow the support given by the template, schedule, and her prompts. By underlining that it was not scary to engage in the instructional dialogue, the teacher was showing her concern for facilitating an oral assessment situation about which some of the pupils felt anxious. Here, she treated them as boys she trusted would accomplish the situation—talking about the kebab pizza advertisement; she did this by explicating that she would support them with prompts, questions, and further elaboration, as long as they engaged in the talk. Thus, in this discursive assessment practice, the teacher was seeking to establish a shared understanding of a safe learning community that could support and promote equity and access to rigorous academic learning for all kinds of students, here going beyond being accountable to reproduce what is known as established facts in the discipline.

Accordingly, the analysis of the two excerpts of introductions displays how the group subject talks were organized as carefully designed tasks, here with teacher-led discussions and activities in which the students were encouraged to explicate their reasoning and various understanding while bringing forward arguments of what they claimed and did to foster equity and access to rigorous dialogues.

Thus, bringing in the three dimensions of accountable talk as analytical tools, the teacher sought to position students toward an interactional process of *knowing how to behave* as well-informed students in subject talks (Mäkitalo, 2003). More specifically, the introduction displays how the teacher framed what they would be held accountable for when it came to the three dimensions of accountability to the learning community, to knowledge, and to reasoning. More specifically, the introduction of the subject talk displays how the teacher framed what they would be held accountable for when it came to the three dimensions of accountability to the learning community in the group, to knowledge about commercials, and to reasoning explained as mastery levels of learning outcomes in which I will explore next.

The next subsection focuses on the evaluation and reflection part of the group subject talks to set the analytical focus on which aspects of knowledge were highlighted and rendered visible as important for engaging in accountable ways in the oral assessment practice, along with how the nexus of policy and practice met, overlapped, and conflicted.

Evaluating Group Subject Talks

The excerpt below was chosen to display a typical teacher–student evaluation of a group subject talk. Following the four boys analyzing the commercial of a kebab pizza, the teacher and students summarized the conversation by talking about how to conduct a self-assessment. Underlining that individual self-assessment was necessary before they received their grades, the teacher brought in her record with notes, here presented as a paper sheet describing the characteristics of goal achievement in a table. Interestingly, these criteria were directly copied from the policy document based on the Knowledge Promotion Reform (2009/2011), which characterizes mastery levels and learning outcomes for how to read and analyze a complex text in the school subject Norwegian. As a collaborative matter, the excerpt displays how the teacher and students interacted and discussed the assessment criteria, which gave the students support to create oral texts and the language to talk about oracy as consequential for subject talks as a new educational practice. Thus, the excerpt can be seen as an example of how educational practice and policy meet, how educational policy is enacted and taken up in oral assessment practices, and how educational practice invites collaborative and interactional assessment activities that extend the structures of educational policy of oracy (Table 14.2).

Looking at this excerpt, the teacher and students pointed toward the scheme of criteria, discussing how the boys would evaluate their own oral performance related to the descriptions of mastery levels and the scoring system of one to three (low–high):

Table 14.2 Scheme of criteria directly copied from the policy document based on the Knowledge Promotion Reform (2009/2011), here characterizing mastery levels and learning outcomes for how to read and analyze a complex text in the school subject Norwegian

Criteria	Mastering level 1	Mastering level 2	Mastering level 3
Learning objective: Read and analyze a complex text and convey possible interpretations describe the interaction between aesthetic means in multiple texts, and reflect on how we are affected by sound, language, and images	Present a short analysis of a complex text, can answer simple questions about aesthetic means and about the influence of sound, language, and images	Present an analysis of a complex text, can talk about some aesthetic means, and can reflect somewhat on how we are influenced by sound, language, and images	Present a conscious analysis of a complex text, can talk about aesthetic means, and can reflect on how we are affected by sound, language, and images
Collaboration	Participates to a small/no degree in the work.	Participates to some extent in the work.	Shows good collaboration skills. Participates actively in work.
Content:	Shows little knowledge of the subject. The subject matter is poorly structured. Does not answer the task.	Shows some knowledge of the subject. The subject matter is well structured. Have partially answered the assignment.	Shows good knowledge of the subject. The subject matter is very well structured. Have answered the assignment.
Subject talk:	Present some important elements of the topic's content. Focuses mostly on the script, and not the audience. Speaks in a "normal" voice, and often a little too fast or a little incoherently.	Present several important elements from the theme's content. Using some own words and freeing oneself to some extent from the script. Speaks clearly and is engaged.	Use new words that are specific to the topic in the presentation, and show a good overview of the topic speak freely and with empathy is independent of the script. Speaks clearly and articulately, is engaged.

1.	Teacher	Now I wondered if you can look at those points and try to reason with me; where do you think you are now?
2.	Student B	Mm. Number three is best, right?
3.	Teacher	Number three is best (laughter.) So we can imagine ehm that mastery level 1 corresponds to grades 1 to 2. Mastery levels 2, is 3 to 4 and mastery levels 3, are approximately 5 to 6.
4.	Student O	Maybe somewhere between mastery levels 1 and 2?
5.	Teacher	Mm, why do you think that, O?
6.	Student O	No ehm, that the presentation was really short, it was ehm we talked about language aesthetically and ehm we participate to a decent extent in the work, we show knowledge of what we have talked about and we have presented several and important elements from the content of the topic.

(continued)

7.	Teacher	Mm, what do you three others think then?
8.	Student A	Between 1 and 2, the same. (...)
9.	Teacher	What do you think you have done well in this subject talk?
10.	Student A	Came with a lot of good content. And said something.
11.	Teacher	What do you others think has been good?
12.	Student B	Eh, everything?
13.	Teacher	What do you think you need to work on then?
14.	Student C	Writing because O wrote almost everything.
15.	Teacher	(...) I think that ehm I think you are very good at judging yourself and I very much agree with everything you say. I think very much was good at this subject talk. First, all four are in place, all four participate, everyone has talked a bit eh and I also see that all four know very much about this topic. Right? That's great. In addition, I completely agree that what you say is essential; that you cooperate, that everyone is involved in some writing, that everyone is involved in the entire process. So looking at us now, I think that everyone has conveyed parts of this topic and, additionally, that everyone manages to answer when I ask for something, because I have examined everyone about slightly different things, and ehm you respond.

In this case, the teacher invited the students to think together with her to evaluate their own performance related to learning outcome characterized as mastery level one, two, or three, as copied from LK06 and its directions for oracy in the subject Norwegian L2. She asked where they considered their own performance, and after discussing how the scale related to grades, student O picked something between levels 1 and 2 (line 3). The teacher asked if the group members agreed with their performance. At this point, the teacher encouraged the students to elaborate on their judgments to explicate why their performance may fit this level. This can be seen as interesting because the teacher positioned the students as competent contributors to explicate their claims and direct their reasoning toward an instructional dialogue opening for their understanding of what they were made accountable for as related to the learning outcomes of oracy in LK06. Student O described their presentation as really short, but they showed knowledge about literate analysis of advertisements exemplified with language, aesthetic means, and other important elements (line 6). In addition, he mentioned that they all participated to a decent extent in the work, upon which the other boys agreed. Thus, the analysis displays that the students acknowledged they were made accountable toward the learning community, knowledge, and accepted standards of reasoning (O'Michaels et al., 2008). This was related to mastering the forms of talk, ways of acting, and making sense that are relevant in subject talks and within the norms and rules of how to interact in a group and display their knowledge of literate analysis described in LK06, specifically as related to oracy as a core skill. As a result, these utterances display how the teacher's questions fostered students to reflect over and use language to talk about oracy. Thus, like the claims of Bakken (2009/2011), the practical consequence of the policy-initiated reform on oracy as a core skill became visible in the subject talk through a proof of rhetoric. Consequently, the excerpt indicates how the

policy-initiated reform of oracy, here as a core skill in Norwegian L1, has become consequential for the new educational practice of group subject talks.

Continuing the analysis of the reflection and assessment of the group subject talk, the teacher wanted the boys to reflect on what they managed well (line 10). Student A highlighted that they presented good content and that they talked a lot. This can be interpreted as a direct answer to the teacher's introduction, underlining that, even if they found the subject talks scary, they would be held accountable for engaging in the conversation; the more they talked, the better. The teacher encouraged the boys to illuminate what they should work with in the future (line 13), and student B recognized that they needed to better share the writing job because O had done almost everything. In this setting, the ways of sharing responsibility, knowledge, and youth standards of what are acceptable activities within the group were rendered visible. The boys agreed upon the fact that they did not follow the norms and rules of an accountable way of collaborating and needed to work on this in future school assignments. The teacher shared her professional judgments by building on the students' reflections. She underlined that she agreed upon their judgments and appraised their contribution in judging themselves (line 15). Being less critical, she brought in new topics that she considered great; all four students were in place, participated, talked, and knew a lot about the topic. Additionally, she highlighted and built upon what the boys said was essential: that they cooperated, were involved in writing, and contributed during the entire process. Finally, she revealed her strategy in examining each one of them with slightly different topics, in which all managed to answer based on their reasoning and understanding. According to Resnick et al. (2018), studies of accountable talk focusing on how dialogues between teachers and students have gone beyond being able to reproduce what is known as established facts in the discipline, directing the analytical interest toward how instructional dialogue may foster reasoning and an improved understanding of multifaceted and rigorous problems that require students' judgment. As documented in this excerpt, the teacher and students interactively discussed what the group was being held accountable for.

Interestingly, the teacher went beyond the levels of mastery, grades, and ability to recite facts given in the criteria scheme, which can be seen as a policy artifact, to appraise students' oral reflections, claims, and contribution of their own judgment of performance as important means in group subject talk. In this way, the pedagogical practice of framing group subject talks that opened the way for rigorous dialogues on subject-specific topics seemed to meet, overlap, and conflict in this nexus in which educational policy on oracy as a core skill and subject talk practices could meet. The educational practice conflicted with the educational policy on oracy in the sense of creating an interactional space for sharing professional judgments and approving specific oral initiatives on the part of the group of students, here rather than the teacher's assessment of individual students' contributions in traditional oral hearing, such as in confirmation or regular oral exams. However, the assessment situation the teacher provided for in-group subject talk can be seen as a demanding task, encouraging the students to make themselves assessable by balancing among the various layers of accountability to community, knowledge, and reasoning.

To promote academic learning within the subject talk situation, the teacher and students socially interacted in situ to elaborate on students' thinking, building on each other's contributions in the retrospective reflections on what counts as meaningful assessment and learning practices in this nexus of policy and practice.

Discussion and Conclusion

By empirically zooming in on oracy as an emphasized area of political educational reforms over the past 20 years, this chapter has illuminated how subject talks as a new oral assessment phenomenon observed in practice meet, overlap, and challenge the educational policy of assessment in the Norwegian educational context. By exploring authentic assessment practices in a lower secondary school, the chapter has investigated which aspects of competence students are made accountable for and how the introduction of learning outcomes related to oracy have changed the practices of oral assessment toward collaborative, interactional practices. The empirical analyses of the teacher's introduction of group subject talk show that the teacher combined carefully designed tasks in groups with teacher-led discussions and evaluations in which the students were invited to explicate their reasoning and bring forward arguments of what they claimed and did. Thus, in these new assessment contexts, which were first observed in practice, the students were held accountable for collaboration, displaying their subject-specific knowledge; this assignment was engaged within the accepted norms and standards of reasoning while being implemented in the policy-initiated reform of oracy as a core skill.

In this nexus of policy and practice, the history of oracy developed and changed from oral hearings in confirmation ceremonies, here via rhetorical recitation of literature in the first Norwegian schools, toward today's consequential position as one of five core skills enacted through the National Knowledge Promotion Reform of 2006 (LK06). Thus, the consequences of recent policy of oracy as a core skill and educational practice exemplified by group subject talks have displayed how different and contradictory policy and practice contexts open for teacher's agency in continuing to build on more interactional relations between teachers and students in group oral assessment situations. Coburn (2006) argued that the actors in schools realize and frame education policy in the classroom through their individual practices as the coconstructors of educational policy. As such, the empirical analysis of authentic group subject talks has rendered visible an interactional oracy practice not visible in policy documents of how teacher's make students' accountable for assessing their own performance, building on interactional endeavors where the teacher shares professional judgments and approves specific initiatives such as the students' ability to reflect and evaluate what counts as relevant knowledge, hence positioning students as competent contributors in the evaluation of their own oral assessment participation. Consequently, group subject talks are an example of an educational policy and practice nexus in which the learning outcomes on oracy in educational policy documents such as the national curriculum are directly used as tools for

assessment; this also shows the teacher and students' interactions in situ go beyond the subject-specific content, assessment criteria, or scales. The oral assessment situation becomes a setting where teachers share professional judgments and approve specific oral initiatives, while students are invited to share their reflections and understanding on rigorous problems. The policy-practice nexus exemplified by oracy, might illustrate how the roles of teachers and students have changed towards more collaboration and coconstruction of how to make yourself accountable in new assessment practices such as group subject talks.

In this nexus of interactional assessment practice and recent formal policy uptake, the students have become competent contributors to the oral evaluations of their own social and academic knowledge. The findings raise several questions about how we understand change in the reform of oracy in between policy structure and educational practices and how certain educational practices seem to be in front of policy uptake and push forward reforms in the nexuses where policy and practice conflict, overlap, and meet.

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Appendix: Evaluation Criteria

Criteria	Mastering level 1	Mastering level 2	Mastering level 3
Learning objective: Read and analyze a complex text and convey possible interpretations. Describe the interaction between aesthetic means in multiple texts and reflect on how we are affected by sound, language, and images.	Present a short analysis of a complex text; can answer simple questions about aesthetic means and about the influence of sound, language, and images.	Present an analysis of a complex text, can talk about some aesthetic means, and can reflect somewhat on how we are influenced by sound, language, and images.	Present a conscious analysis of a complex text, can talk about aesthetic means, and can reflect on how we are affected by sound, language, and images.
Collaboration	Participates to a small/no degree in the work.	Participates to some extent in the work.	Shows good collaboration skills. Participate actively in work.

(continued)

Criteria	Mastering level 1	Mastering level 2	Mastering level 3
Content	Shows little knowledge of the subject. The subject matter is poorly structured. Does not answer the task.	Shows some knowledge of the subject. The subject matter is well structured. Have partially answered the assignment.	Shows good knowledge of the subject. The subject matter is very well structured. Have answered the assignment.
Subject talk	Present some important elements of the topic's content. Focuses mostly on the script, not the audience. Speaks in a "normal" voice and often a little too fast or a little incoherently.	Present several important elements from the theme's content. Using some own words and freeing oneself to some extent from the script. Speaks clearly and is engaged.	Use new words that are specific to the topic in the presentation and show a good overview of the topic. Speak freely and with empathy. Is independent of the script. Speaks clearly and articulately and is engaged.

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Chapter 15

Actor Roles in Research–Practice Relationships: Equality in Policy–Practice Nexuses



Tine S. Prøitz  and Ellen Rye

Abstract This chapter offers insights into an education policy–practice nexus operationalised in a recent nationwide government initiative for the development of solid and stable research–practice relationships (RPRs) in education. Among the main challenges for productive RPRs are physical, linguistic, work-related, financial and cultural distances, which characterise and separate education research and education practice. Governments and universities alike have introduced initiatives aimed at strengthening these relationships through practitioner involvement in education research. Although practitioner involvement in research is not new, today’s expectations of newer ways of working collaboratively in education research bring forward several issues regarding the roles of the actors involved. In this chapter, we study and discuss the roles of practitioners in successful RPRs and the requirements for developing ownership and relevance in these research collaborations. The analysis shows that the equality issue of practitioners and researchers in RPRs is more of an epistemological question regarding how practitioner knowledge and researcher knowledge are activated in relationships rather than a practical question of how practitioners can become more involved in research work.

Operationalisation of the Education Policy–Practice Nexus

Recent developments in education policy have emphasised the importance of practitioner involvement in education research. Practitioners’ participation is considered necessary for developing future knowledge in the field of education and for strengthening education practitioners’ knowledge base (cf. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2022). The question of practitioner involvement in research is not new, as can be seen in the traditions of action research and design-based research (Askling, 2006; Carlgren, 2005; Rönnerman, 2018). However, today’s

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newer ways of working collaboratively in education research and the perceived dependence of productive knowledge development in education based on both researchers' and practitioners' involvement bring forward several issues regarding how such processes might work and the roles that practitioners and researchers play in these collaborations. This chapter aims to investigate and discuss the topic of research–practice relationships (RPRs), which are located at the core of the policy–practice nexus. Practitioner involvement in education research is anchored in long-standing discussions on whether education research can be made (more) useful and relevant to education practice, school leaders, schoolteachers and the education sector in general and, if so, how this can be done (Furlong & Oancea, 2005; Prøitz & Aasen, 2017). Such a discussion often problematises the relevance and usability of education research from a two-way functionality perspective: first, to strengthen the professional work of school leaders and teachers in schools through knowledge mobilisation (Revai, 2021), and, second, to strengthen the focus and quality of education research available for teacher education, teacher educators and teachers (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Korthagen, 2010). Furthermore, this literature often discusses how relationships and partnerships between teacher education institutions and schools are complex and undergoing developments but still are characterised by the hierarchical structures between partners and traditional ideas about knowledge transfer and one-way relationships in which universities are expected to bring knowledge to teacher education and to schools (see, for example, Furlong et al., 2000; Lillejord & Børte, 2016). Against this backdrop, this chapter aims to continue this discussion drawing on empirical insights into an example of the education policy–practice nexus operationalised in a recent and ongoing Swedish nationwide government-initiated project for the development of solid and stable RPRs in education.

Research–Practice Relationships

Among the main challenges for productive RPRs are physical, linguistic, work-related, structural, organisational, financial and cultural distances that characterise and separate education research and education practice. Although these challenges can vary and be more or less distinct depending on context, it has been well established that the basic structures organising the working lives of researchers and practitioners are so different that elementary factors, such as differences in available time and space, hinder the establishment of well-functioning RPRs (cf. Nutley et al., 2003; Prøitz, 2020; Prøitz et al., 2022; Rasmussen & Holm, 2012). A central aspect here is how organisations such as schools, universities and local authorities have not been constructed for seamless contact, dialogue or collaboration. Rather, RPRs challenge the very structures upholding the idea of what constitutes a university and research and the school and its practice.

Over the years, the literature has presented concepts, theories and methods aiming to bridge these differences, often called the research–practice gap (Korthagen, 2010). Other strands of studies take developments in education research as the points of departure, discussing the characteristics of the relationships between research and practice in education today. For example, practice-based research has been highlighted as an umbrella term for newer approaches that link and tighten relationships (cf. Furlong & Oancea, 2005).

Seen from a traditional perspective, initiatives to strengthen RPRs blur the demarcation lines between theory and practice, scientific knowledge and experience-based knowledge, the researcher and the practitioner, and the university and the school. In the field of education, the relationship between these categories has often been characterised by tension, as being opposites, contradictory and even conflicting. On the other hand, researchers have pointed out that the gap metaphor is an exaggerated misunderstanding; instead, it can be used productively to make people aware of the challenges in the field and the development of these towards more integrated perspectives (cf. Carr, 1980; Gallagher, 2004; McGarr et al., 2017). It has been well documented that policy and society challenge the traditional differentiation between scientific and experience-based knowledge, established actor roles and the place for research production by stimulating a combination of experience- and scientific-based knowledge and research production outside the university (Furlong & Oancea, 2005; Hessels & Van Lente, 2008; Nowotny et al., 2001).

Governments and universities alike have introduced several initiatives aiming to strengthen RPRs in education. Across Nordic countries, we can see variations of these initiatives, for example, in partnership agreements between universities and schools, and with local authorities, funding schemes that require collaboration between researchers and practitioners, and the growth in professional doctoral programmes, in which applicants must have teacher education experience and preferably work in teacher education or in schools while doing their doctoral work (Prøitz & Aasen, 2016; Prøitz & Wittek, 2019). Despite variations, a common characteristic across initiatives is the involvement of multiple actor groups in what we have traditionally considered the academic turf of researchers. Another feature is the strong belief in how researchers and practitioners, solely by being brought together, will almost effortlessly develop a stronger relationship between research and practice, as well as bring new and improved knowledge that is applicable and relevant to education practice. However, research has shown that it takes more than placing researchers and practitioners in the same room to develop practice-oriented research and that the obstacles in RPRs are often under-communicated and underestimated (Lillejord & Børte, 2016; Nutley et al., 2009). How the roles of the actors involved, particularly practitioners, in these collaborative efforts can best be positioned is an empirical question that we aim to investigate and discuss further in this chapter.

Context of the Study

The initiative that we studied, called ULF,¹ involved 25 universities with teacher education programmes, more than 150 municipalities and a substantial number of schools and teachers² across Sweden. The goal of the ULF policy initiative was to strengthen the scientific basis for teacher and pre-school teacher education and thus the overall educational system in Sweden. The government highlighted four main arguments for this initiative. The first is the *collaboration argument*, which emphasised the need for increased collaboration between research and education in general. The second is the *judicial argument*, which underscored that teaching in Swedish schools and pre-schools according to the Education Act should be grounded in both a scientific basis and proven experience. The third is the *relevance argument*, which emphasised that practice-based research must ensure a relevant knowledge base available for quality work in the school system, school and pre-school goal attainment, and teacher training while also maintaining high international scientific quality. The fourth is the *attractiveness argument*, which highlighted the need to make the teaching profession more attractive, both to recruit new teachers and to retain those already in the system. These arguments illustrate how the ULF initiative was expected to contribute to and solve several policy issues and thus involve a range of education policy–education practice nexuses.

The ULF government initiative must also be understood in a socio-historical context. Over time, reforms and projects have been initiated as answers to questions about how existing research, organisational methods and forms of collaboration could contribute to strengthening comprehensive and long-term collaboration on practice-based research and the development of the school system on a scientific basis. Central in this context was the goal to make research more practice oriented, relevant and accessible for use by the profession (Prøitz et al., 2022). The initiative was organised as a national pilot project that would develop and test sustainable collaboration models regarding research, school activities and teacher education between academia and the school system.

The Swedish example have shown RPRs involving practitioners in the research process and in different types of research roles. It also displays practical difficulties, such as providing teachers with the necessary time to be involved and finding gathering areas that can function for all. Other issues relate to research competencies and research literacy among practitioners, researcher knowledge about the everyday lives of schools and concerns related to funding and available resources. The Swedish case has shown interesting ways of building and organising infrastructures for RPRs across the country through a nationwide network of collaboration

¹ ULF stands for Utbildning/education, Lärande/learning, Forskning/research.

² ULF was a national pilot project commissioned by the Swedish government from 2017 to 2021. The project developed and tested sustainable collaboration models between academia and the school or school system regarding research, school activities and teacher education. <https://www.ulfavtal.se/about-ulf/> (retrieved 02.03.22)

agreements and practice-based projects between teachers, school leaders in schools and local municipalities, and researchers in universities within a short period of time (Prøitz et al., 2022).

The topic of multiple actor roles in education research is particularly interesting to revisit in the Swedish context (c f. Prøitz, 2020; Prøitz et al., 2022) as involvement of teachers in research activities are not new in Sweden; rather, there is a long tradition of action and design research in the country (Askling, 2006; Carlgren, 2005; Rönnerman, 2018). However, this new initiative both includes and parallels such approaches, thereby raising the question of actor involvement in all types of education research, not only those approaches that have teacher involvement as a built-in part of the methodology.

Practitioner Involvement and Its Ideals

The ideal frames for research partners in education have been described by several researchers. Often, the ideal of practitioner involvement is pinpointed as a relationship in which all parties have ownership of a shared enterprise (Coburn & Penuel, 2016; Schuck, 2013). Well-functioning partnerships have been described as involving equal partners in all phases of the research process, from research problem identification and definition to data collection, data analysis and presentation of the results (cf. Coburn & Penuel, 2016). Carlson (2001) describes the following principles for the development of RPRs: ‘Agreement on common problems, breaking down of the traditional academic pecking order, commitment to a sharp project focus, recognition and rewards for all participants, leadership that values actions over bureaucratic regulations’ (pp. 83–84). Other scholars have supplemented this idea by emphasising the importance of sharing, recognition of interests and involvement of all parties from the very start of projects (cf. Schuck, 2013). Schuck (2013) notes that true collaboration entails agreement regarding what the collaboration is about and that collaborative partnerships are characterised by power sharing and an agreement on the desired goals. Similarly, Coburn and Penuel (2016) underscore the importance of equality in power and decision making between parties. They stress the importance of practitioner involvement in all/most of the phases of the partnership work.

In sum, the literature emphasises that ideal RPRs (1) involve practitioners from the start of the research–practice initiatives, (2) involve practitioners in most phases of the research and (3) are marked by equality in power and decision making and by the sharing of a common goal.

Although these ideals seem reasonable, studies have shown how challenging they can be to uphold for a range of practical, cultural and linguistic reasons (cf. Lillejord & Børte 2016; Nutley et al., 2008, 2009; Schuck, 2013). With this in mind and considering the complexity of research practice relationships calls have been made for more systematic studies of contextual factors and what might lead to functional research practice partnerships in education (Weddle et al., 2021; Gutierrez &

Penuel, 2014). Another concern is that to date, the diverse literature has mostly been theoretically and conceptually driven; it consists of limited empirical investigations. As such, the foregoing has inspired this empirical study, which focuses on answering the following questions: *What roles do practitioners, such as teachers, school leaders and administrators, have in well-functioning research–practice relationships and what characterises the relationships in terms of practitioner involvement?*

The understanding of well-functioning RPRs in this study is grounded in the fact that the empirical cases examined were selected because they were considered well-functioning by the governing body of the ULF initiative and by the informants of the studied cases themselves.

Method

This chapter draws on the methods and data material collected and analysed in a four-year study (2018–2022) of a national Swedish research–practice initiative (Prøitz et al., 2022). The analysis presented in this chapter draws on both interview and survey data.

The interviews were conducted with actors involved in research–practice collaborations at four universities in Sweden. The interview data material consisted of 26 semi-structured interviews with researchers, municipality representatives, school leaders and teachers, who were all involved as partners in the collaborative arrangements. Twelve interviews were transcribed verbatim for data analysis, while the remaining interview recordings were listened to during the analysis process.

The quantitative survey was distributed to 800 participants of the initiative, and 322 participants responded to the survey, resulting in a response rate of 40%. The central topics covered in the survey that were relevant to this study were collaboration, involvement, participation and success factors. The survey covered the different actors involved in the initiative variably; the largest group of informants comprised the university sector (46.6%), the second largest group consisted of teachers and pre-school teachers (36.3%), the third largest group comprised representatives from the municipalities (14.6%) and the smallest group (2.5%) consisted of individuals in other types of work.

The qualitative material, both from the interviews and the open-ended questions in the survey, was analysed according to the principles of thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006, 2021). This means that the authors conducted readings of the material and identified themes that were then discussed in the research group for the agreed interpretation and meaning condensation of topics that clearly appeared in the material. Categories were also established based on the methodological principles of saturation (Morse, 1995).³

³For additional details regarding the methods and data material, see Prøitz et al. (2022).

Analytical Framework and Analysis

In this chapter, we used the concept of *third space* to analyse and discuss the study's empirical data material. The research questions point the analysis towards a focus on those involved in RPRs, particularly practitioners' roles and involvement. As previous studies have shown how research has often dominated the relationship between research and practice in education, both in terms of what is expected of academia in education and how RPRs are established (Korthagen, 2010; Lillejord & Børte, 2016), we selected the concept of third space as helpful for the analysis. We consider the concept of third space to bring an interesting understanding of and useful lenses for the study of what can happen when multiple discourses meet at what we consider as the core of the operationalised nexus between a policy initiative and those involved in the RPR, including both researchers and practitioners. As such, we consider the third space concept to be a tool that is compatible with and enables a closer analysis of education policy–education practice nexuses. As a theoretical contribution, the third space seeks to address challenges related to different groups of actors in research–practice partnerships and suggests a hybrid solution or a third space understanding of partnership as a fruitful way of considering RPRs (Passy et al., 2018). The term 'third space' originates in research that considers different actors' use of different discourses from different contexts, that is, research as well as one's own experiences, to understand the world (Lynch, 2015). Hybrid thinking emphasises that positions between areas of knowledge and different discourses can be productive, but they are also limited to human activities and practices. In the literature, third space is characterised as a place or a space where the integration of knowledge and discourses from different areas occurs and merges; an example is when people's knowledge and discourses from the home and the local environment or network, characterised as the *first space*, meets and merges with knowledge and discourses within a formalised institution, such as school or work, characterised as the *second space* (Moje et al., 2004).

In the Swedish initiative, this may be understood as researchers' knowledge and discourses from academia (first space) meeting and merging with schools', school leaders' and teachers' knowledge and discourses (second space), forming a potentially common and new knowledge base and discourse through collaboration and partnership in a third space. An interesting element in this thinking is that third space can mean a reconstruction that defines a new, alternative situation and problem understanding based on mutual respect for the positions, experiences, knowledge and discourses of others (Moje et al., 2004). Furthermore, it is also important to recognize that third space thinking can be understood in at least three ways: as a means to build bridges between marginalised and academic discourses, as a way to navigate different environments with discourses and as a space where different and possibly competing ideas are brought together to challenge dominant discourses (Moje et al., 2004). All three perspectives can help reduce unwanted hierarchical structures and competing discourses between, for example, teachers in schools, on the one hand, and professors/researchers in academia, on the other hand (Passy et al., 2018).

The analysis is structured into four sections. The first three sections refer to the characteristics of the ideal RPRs presented earlier in this chapter. This means that the analysis first focuses on practitioners and the activities they are involved in before equality in power, sharing and common goals in RPRs are presented. Second, we present participants’ considerations about the outcomes they experienced in RPRs.

Participant Involvement and Equality

As mentioned, research shows that it is an advantage for RPRs if all actors are involved from the start and in most phases of the initiative, such as in planning and management, decision making and definition of research questions. Therefore, how ULF participants perceived their own participation in different parts of ULF work is interesting. In the survey, we asked about the respondents’ degree of agreement with the following statements: *I have been involved in initiating ULF projects, I have been involved in planning and leading ULF collaboration, I have been involved in making decisions about the direction of the ULF work, I have been involved in formulating research questions for the ULF work, I have been involved in publishing research in the ULF work.*

In general, and as Fig. 15.1 depicts, most of the participants reported that they had high levels of participation and involvement in ULF. Around 60–70% of the respondents agreed or fully agreed with our four first statements. Around 20–30% disagreed or completely disagreed with our statements about participation and involvement. The fact that some respondents stated that they were not involved in

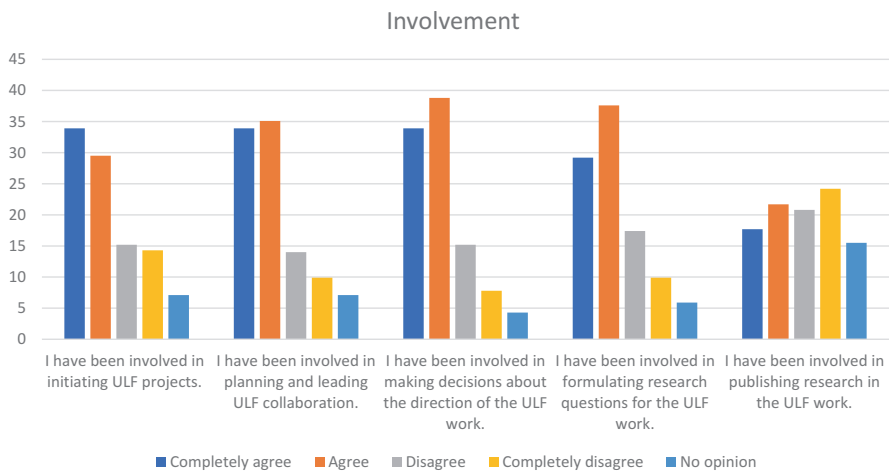


Fig. 15.1 Involvement: initiatives, planning and leading, decisions on direction and research issues (N = 322)

taking the initiative or in planning and leading ULF is not surprising. We know from other studies of ULF that a limited group of participants often work with applications and agreements at the very start of RPRs and that they are mostly researchers, municipal leaders and school leaders (Prøitz et al., 2021, 2022).

Nevertheless, it is interesting that so many participants report that they were involved in formulating research questions, as previous research has often shown that these are the processes in which practitioners, in particular, tend to come in late. When we look more closely at which groups of actors most strongly and strongly disagreed with the statement about involvement in the development of research questions, we do not find a specific pattern, except that there was, to some extent, a higher number of representatives from municipalities or teachers in this group.

Interestingly, there was a far lower proportion of participants who stated that they were involved in publishing research in the context of ULF. This may be related to the fact that research publication comes later than the actual project implementation, but mainly, it is probably related to the fact that fewer actors from schools participate in this part of the research–practice initiative.

The question of participation and involvement is also about how the actors experienced the climate of cooperation. This was evident on whether there was agreement on important issues, whether the actors experienced being equal with their colleagues in discussions and decision making, and whether they wanted another direction for the work. The results of the survey indicate that most of the respondents experienced collaboration between actors in ULF as equal. They reported having agreed on the relevant direction of and priorities for ULF. Only a few stated that they wanted a different direction for the work (Fig. 15.2).

However, we can also observe a higher proportion of respondents (20%) who reported having ‘no opinion’. This could be interpreted as participants holding back

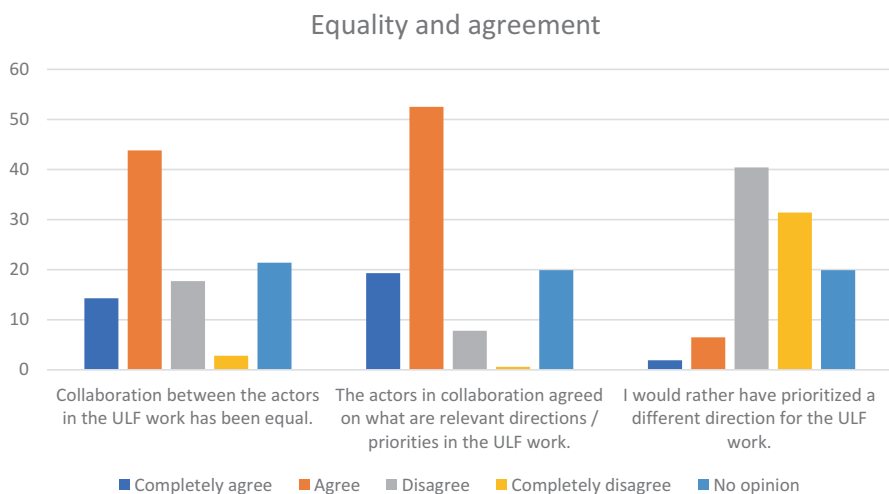


Fig. 15.2 Equality, agreement and satisfaction with the direction of ULF (N = 322)

by selecting a neutral position. Another interpretation that would follow the patterns observed for the other questions in the survey could be that these respondents did not participate in ULF long enough to have formed opinions, as the statements assumed knowledge of the history of various ULF projects. To a certain degree, the answers here correlate with the responses to the open-ended questions of the survey in which we asked questions that would require some participant history and to which those respondents with a shorter experience with ULF often replied that they could not answer because of their shorter history with ULF (less than a year).

In our qualitative interviews, equality was described by several ULF actors as ‘cooperation at eye level’. Several informants from the school described themselves as equal actors and that ULF was different from their previous experiences in which academia stood for something higher or better, and in which it could be easy to feel inferior. The informants from schools/pre-schools in the initiative described their experiences as meeting the researchers at ‘eye level’. Questions and approaches were developed in partnership through close and continuous dialogue grounded in a common goal. The path was made as they went. At the same time, the case studies also showed that in the ULF context, there was a certain concern among some school leaders and teachers that they were not good enough or that they may be at risk of making mistakes in practical contexts of collaboration. We observed that despite this uncertainty, the informants described solutions through which they were able to overcome these concerns and continued with their work. In the context of building equal relationships between practice and research, the informants highlighted that a common language and respect for one another’s competencies were crucial. For example, one researcher said, ‘The competencies are different, and we should respect that and listen to one another. We’re trying to do that in the project, I think. And that’s a huge advantage’.

Outcomes: Participant Experiences with the Research–Practice Initiative

In addition to investigating the participants’ experiences with involvement, participation and equality, we were also interested in the informants’ thoughts about what ULF might have contributed to the promotion of practice-based research.

We asked the respondents to consider whether they agreed with the following statement: *ULF contributed to promoting practice-based research*. Of the respondents, 92% ‘agreed’ (42.9%) or ‘completely agreed’ (49.1%) that ULF contributed to the promotion of practice-based research. The 322 respondents in the survey also clearly reported that ULF led to increased collaboration between academia and municipalities, as well as between academia and schools. We asked the respondents to take a position on the following two statements: *ULF contributed to increased cooperation between academia and pre-schools/schools* and *ULF contributed to increased cooperation between academia and municipalities*. On the issue of

increased collaboration between academia and pre-schools/schools, 84% of the respondents stated that they ‘agreed’ or ‘completely agreed’ with this statement. We found a similar pattern in the responses to the statement that ULF contributed to increased collaboration between academia and municipalities, as 73.9% ‘agreed’ or ‘completely agreed’ with this statement.

For a broader and more detailed picture of the actors’ experiences with ULF, we also asked the respondents an open-ended question in the survey: *What do you think is the most important thing that ULF contributed to your organisation?* This open-ended question was analysed through identification of thematic categories based on the occurrences of themes in a process of meaning condensation inspired by Braun and Clark (2006).⁴ The results of the analysis of the open-ended answers are presented here with reference to the respondents’ workplaces in municipalities, pre-schools, schools and universities.

Municipalities

The most frequent responses from municipality actors can be summarised into two categories: increased collaboration and increased “*scientificity*”. The larger category, increased collaboration, included answers indicating that ULF contributed to establishing collaboration areas/arenas and that it provided municipalities with a model for collaboration when working with universities/researchers and a model for collaboration between teachers, educators and researchers. Furthermore, several respondents described collaboration as ‘equal collaboration’, ‘mutual knowledge exchange’ and meaningful and rewarding collaboration for all parties. Some respondents also mentioned that higher education institutions have made efforts to develop ‘meetings at eye level’.

Pre-schools and Schools

The most frequent responses of pre-school employees (teachers and leaders) can also be summed up into two categories. First, most of the respondents answered that ULF contributed with research that provided new knowledge or ‘in-depth knowledge’ and that they were able to test theories for teaching, new methods and new tools in their didactic work. One example is a respondent who answered that they were able to ‘open their eyes to theoretical methods in pre-school’. The respondents also stated that ULF contributed to increased scientificity and an increased focus on the ‘importance of a scientific basis’ for school development. For example, one

⁴Most respondents provided more than one most important contribution of ULF, so their answers were included in several categories.

respondent said, ‘A scientific basis is now perceived as more useful’. The second category was about ‘collegial collaboration’, in which the respondents described that they ‘began to discuss different teaching methods/models at pre-school’ and that ULF contributed to joint professionalisation and provided them with an opportunity to ‘reflect on what works together with their colleagues’.

Regarding actors from schools (teachers and leaders), we find patterns resembling those in the pre-schools. ULF was most frequently mentioned to have contributed with research, in-depth knowledge and new methods and tools. Many also said that, ‘The most important thing that ULF contributed was facilitating collaboration with researchers/universities/colleges’, such as ‘establishing partnerships between practitioners and researchers’ and ‘opening dialogues and conversations between researchers and, in this case, teachers’. The teachers also described how ULF contributed to increased collegial collaboration and a greater degree of joint discussions and reflections with colleagues.

Universities

The most common answer among actors from universities is that ULF facilitated ‘increased collaboration with principals and teachers’ and provided an ‘increased understanding and knowledge’ when it comes to the principals’ and teachers’ questions and challenges. Some examples of answers are as follows: ‘An increased understanding of one another’s practices/professional fields (university, school principal), which is important for the quality of research’ and ‘Enabling research in close collaboration with a school, which also meant that we gained access to the school that would otherwise not be possible’. The second category of answers mentioned by the respondents from universities/colleges was that ULF increased interest in, opportunities for and the focus on practice-based research.

Discussion

This study of the Swedish ULF initiative provides a novel opportunity to elucidate what the involvement of different groups of actors, particularly practitioners, entails in a national authentic research–practice initiative. For this chapter, we asked the following questions: *What roles do practitioners, such as teachers, school leaders and administrators, have in well-functioning research–practice relationships and what characterises the relationships in terms of practitioner involvement?* The questions emphasise one of the core issues in the operationalisation of a topic currently being debated in and about the education policy–education practice nexus. As such, this study can inform several nexus levels that are being thematised in this book.

This study confirms the findings of previous literature on the importance of actors' involvement in RPRs. It extends the existing knowledge base by bringing in aspects of participant satisfaction and participant experiences regarding outcomes.

The overall data material of the ULF initiative generally shows that there was great enthusiasm towards the initiative and that the actors were satisfied with their participation (Prøitz et al., 2022). In detail, the survey showed, for example, that most of the ULF participants reported being satisfied with the priorities and direction of the ULF work.

Figure 15.3 indicates that the ULF initiative managed to establish structures for RPRs in which the actors in general seemed to be satisfied. What this entailed in detail is the focus of our discussion.

The experiences and outcomes seem to carry with them a range of promising effects of research–practice collaborations. These are seen in light of the expressed policy goals of establishing stronger connections between education research and practice and of developing practice-based research.

This study also contributes by nuancing and discussing some of the ideals presented in the literature, such as 1) involving practitioners from the start, 2) involving practitioners in all the research phases and 3) the importance of equality in RPRs. This nuancing seems highly appropriate and may help in realistically defining involvement while also recognising that all parties involved have their own and not necessarily the same interests in the relationships, bring different knowledge, experiences and discourses, and have very different opportunities and preconditions for involvement. Previous studies (cf. Furlong et al., 2000; Lillejord & Børte, 2016; Nutley et al., 2008, 2009), as well as our studies on the ULF initiative, have shown that there are several obstacles and barriers to building well-functioning RPRs.

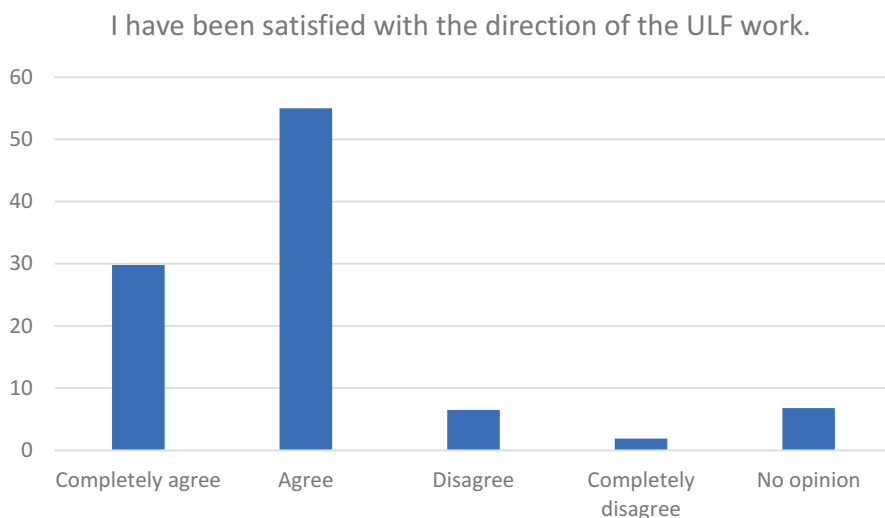


Fig. 15.3 Participant satisfaction (N = 322)

In the following section, we discuss the ideals for well-functioning RPRs with reference to the third space concept as an analytical lens.

Involvement and Equality

The data material shows that most of the participants were satisfied with their involvement in ULF. They reported participation across a range of central activities that set the frame, focus, organisation and ongoing work of the project, such as initiating, planning and leading, making decisions about project directions and formulating research questions. Although we know from the study that school leaders and teachers reported somewhat less involvement in the initiating phase of applying for funding and related processes, they reported higher degrees of involvement in the central phases of the project. As such, the data material explicates that the participants in ULF seemed to have been involved mainly in setting the frame and defining the focus of their projects. This may indicate that ULF laid the groundwork for sharing and knowledge development between the different discourses that the participants brought with them, thereby opening opportunities for the development of a third space of common language and common goals of the RPRs (Moje et al., 2004; Passy et al., 2018).

When it comes to the ideal of practitioners' involvement in most or all phases of the research process, we observed that the practitioners in ULF, to a high degree, reported having been involved in the important stage of defining research questions. We also know from the interviews that pre-schools/teachers and leaders described their involvement in data collection and interpretation. However, there were differences between the types of practitioners involved and who were engaged in what. For example, municipal administrators or leaders, along with researchers, were more involved in taking the initiative and contributing to application processes. School leaders can be involved in starting projects and ensuring that schools and teachers could participate in the project themselves. Although variably, teachers seemed to be more strongly involved in project activities when set in motion by taking part in discussions on research questions, design and data collection, as well as by being part of the data collection and interpretation.

Both the survey study and interview data indicate that practitioner involvement can consist of a range of different practitioners and activities at different project stages. This challenges the ideal of practitioner involvement in all stages of the project or at least the understanding of practitioner involvement as being done by one and the same person or group throughout the project period. Our study shows how different persons and groups of practitioners enter research–practice projects at different times and with different roles while still securing practitioner involvement of one kind or another throughout the project period. The participation of different practitioner groups often seemed to reflect the structures of responsibilities and areas of work, such as having the power to make decisions about agreements and funding, staffing of projects and how close actors are to the topic in question for the

project, as well as availability and personal engagement. This illustrates the complexity of RPRs in which a multitude of spaces are involved in the potential creation of a third space through the different actors involved. Here, it is a question whether the theoretical and conceptual third space as a metaphor is too limited when a range of variations in actors and arenas shift in time and space throughout RPRs. Nevertheless, the third space concept helps us see how varied discourses involved bring actors together and that there are limitations, such as how the picture of participant involvement completely changes when it comes to research publication. The survey and interview data showed that less than 40% of the participants were involved in research publication. This result marks a clear limit in their participation in all stages of RPRs and may be an example of where the different discourses and contexts of the participants clearly separate into distinguished spaces. This can be understood in terms of how the publication of results in research is a highly specialised activity that is related more to inner academic processes with weaker connections with and relevance to practice. This further exemplifies how practitioners take part in RPRs in different activities at different stages of the research process.

Looking at the last of the three ideals for RPRs—equality in power and decision making—we observed a particular understanding of equality among the ULF participants. Equality does not refer to being equally involved in all phases or activities of the RPRs or doing the same things; rather, it means equal partnership of the practitioners in decision making, in discussions on topics and themes to be investigated and in how to collect data and interpret them. This places the equality issue of practitioners and researchers in RPRs as an ideational and epistemological question regarding how practitioner knowledge and researcher knowledge are viewed and activated, rather than as a practical question of how teachers can become more involved and can learn about research work. This aspect of RPRs can be interpreted as the essence of third space conceptualisations (Moje et al., 2004), in which none of the parties involved are taken over by the discourse of the other but rather form a new understanding as part of a common discourse regarding the activities and elements of the RPR.

From this perspective, every actor is involved in research based on their already existing knowledge, competencies and experiences. However, such an approach requires several issues to be considered; for example, it entails the acknowledgement of practitioner knowledge as being equally important as scientific knowledge in RPR development processes. This is not necessarily easy because actor status, actor power and perceptions of hierarchy between researchers and practitioners influence the knowledge that dominates the discussions. It requires mutual competence building, respect and curiosity between the parties involved, which take time and engagement. Swedish history has shown that over time, practice-based initiatives can tend to become more development oriented instead of research oriented and that upholding the principles of scientific rigour in collaboration with multiple actor groups with varied interests can be a challenge. This requires researcher competence and experience in performing practice-based research. Therefore, the question of involvement is also an epistemological consideration of what constitutes quality in education research, as Furlong and Oancea (2005) have noted.

Research in the field and our recent study of the Swedish initiative have shown that practice-based research requires efforts that focus on access to and the meeting places between practitioners and researchers for well-thought-out processes and arenas adapted to the working situations of all parties involved.

The argument made here underscores not only the involvement of multiple actor groups but also the multiple ways of involving and mobilising practitioners and researchers in collaboration for practice-oriented knowledge development. Practitioners' involvement can be carried out in terms of practice orientation and practice involvement in the various phases of the research process. It can also be done in pre- and post-research processes, for example, as part of needs identification processes and of considerations of relevance as an integrated part of securing scientific quality.

Rethinking the Research–Practice Relationship

Research that describes well-functioning RPRs points towards the ideal of involving actors as equal partners in all phases of the research process. Others have emphasised how challenging this can be, for example, for economic, practical and cultural reasons, such as a lack of shared language and knowledge frameworks and asymmetrical power structures and statuses that inhibit productive relationships. As such, an RPR is a concrete example of the education policy–education practice nexus with all its meeting points between national policy ambitions, local policy and administration interests and opportunities, and local school life in projects with researchers in universities.

The ULF initiative as presented here can be understood as both a deliberate effort by all parties to construct a nexus space where building stronger relations despite the well-known differences between research and practice in education becomes a space where researchers, practitioners and politicians can legitimately come together. Another aspect is the fact that ULF has also been shown to provide a space that supports already existing RPRs in further building and extending existing third space collaborations between researchers and practitioners in education (Prøitz et al., 2021).

In light of the current results, a reasonable question to ask would be the following: What is to be gained by teachers or administrators in RPRs, and what are the best ways for everyone to be involved? The Swedish example displays well-functioning projects involving practitioners in the research process, as well as in different roles and phases for the research projects. The Swedish case also presents practical difficulties, such as providing teachers with the time they need to become involved and finding gathering areas that can function for all. Other issues are related to research competence and research literacy among practitioners, researchers' knowledge about the everyday lives of schools and concerns related to funding and available resources. This study points in the direction of rethinking the ideals for RPRs as an answer to these questions. It also raises new questions about how

RPRs can support the development of new knowledge relevant to practitioners, as well as provide new and expanded insights into the field of education in general. With reference to this book theme and the acknowledgement of the complexity of education, these considerations make a call for more research into not only how the core of policy and practice nexuses function but also their potentials for teachers and schools, municipal administrators, teacher education and education research in general.

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Index

A

- Actor, 3, 5–12, 14, 20, 22, 29, 30, 35, 36, 49, 70, 83, 87, 109–112, 124, 125, 144, 156–158, 160, 185, 190, 191, 199, 206, 214–216, 234, 235, 244, 249–251, 260, 281, 289, 291–302
- Administration, 9, 66, 67, 70, 96–99, 102–105, 113, 117, 178, 180–182, 184–186, 189–191, 228, 234, 302
- Agency, 7, 8, 10–12, 19, 27, 29, 30, 39–55, 62, 63, 77, 80, 82, 97, 109–125, 134, 144, 145, 151–168, 190, 197, 198, 208, 230–235, 238, 239, 241–243, 281
- Agent, 7, 19–36, 41–47, 49–54, 61, 65, 69, 143, 147, 152, 233, 235, 250, 259
- Agentic, 7, 20, 29–35, 41, 51, 54, 81, 84–85, 163
- Assessment, 10, 14, 42, 44, 67, 68, 103, 104, 106, 114, 120, 122, 125, 134, 139, 141, 142, 144, 159, 165, 179, 181, 183, 185, 189, 229, 230, 236–239, 250, 252–255, 257–259, 266–282
- Audio data, 250–252
- Autonomy, 7, 39–55, 62, 68, 76, 78, 82, 113, 118, 133, 145, 146, 179, 183, 184, 189, 190, 200

B

- Bureaucracy, 65, 66, 177

C

- Case study, 4, 113–116, 296
- Classroom, 7, 9, 11, 13, 39–55, 61, 67, 68, 84, 100, 136, 141, 147, 153, 158, 162, 165, 177, 181, 199–200, 215, 216, 228, 232, 233, 238, 241, 242, 244, 247–260, 266, 267, 269–272, 274–276, 281
- Collaborative, 153–161, 249, 251, 253–261, 266, 277, 281, 289, 291, 292
- Competence, 45, 70, 85, 105, 113, 138, 139, 142–144, 146, 176, 184, 189, 190, 206, 210–213, 215, 218, 231, 242, 258, 266, 267, 269, 281, 301, 302
- Competition, 25, 103, 140, 161, 177, 234, 250, 257, 261
- Complexity, 1, 6–12, 32, 40, 42, 45, 60–63, 65, 67–69, 76, 77, 100, 111, 145, 180, 199, 244, 254–256, 259, 291, 301, 303
- Configurations, 3, 4, 7, 46, 62, 70
- Context, 2–4, 6, 8–13, 24, 40–43, 46, 47, 52–55, 61, 63–66, 68, 71, 76, 78, 80–83, 93, 101, 105, 109–125, 136, 145, 146, 154, 156, 157, 164–166, 168, 177–181, 184–186, 188, 189, 191, 196–216, 228–244, 248, 249, 266, 267, 281, 288, 290–291, 293, 295, 296, 301
- Cooperation, 12, 67, 177, 185–186, 188, 190, 250, 295, 296
- Core, 20, 28, 32, 34, 46, 67, 68, 70, 104, 111, 117, 124, 153, 239, 248, 266, 267, 269, 279–281, 288, 293, 298, 303
- Cross-sector, 9, 196–216

- Culturally-bound, 231
 Cultural schoolbag, 9, 196–217
 Culture, 9, 20–24, 30, 34, 35, 48, 51, 64, 66, 68, 70, 80, 85, 112, 114, 118, 125, 132, 136, 141, 152, 156, 164, 181, 197, 198, 202–212, 215, 217, 219, 228–233, 242, 248, 253, 258–260
 Curriculum, 8, 14, 20–23, 25–30, 33–35, 40, 49, 50, 61, 65, 66, 68, 70, 93–107, 114, 131–135, 138, 141, 145, 146, 157, 161, 176, 178, 179, 181, 196, 199–206, 208–211, 214–216, 218, 229, 231, 237, 239, 240, 243, 248, 252–254, 256, 259, 281
- D**
 Didactic, 66, 67, 97, 98, 106, 153, 164–166, 199, 200, 215, 216, 297
 Didaktik, 168
 Differentiation, 5, 8, 44, 54, 66–68, 70, 96, 97, 102, 130–135, 137–139, 143–147, 177, 289
 Discursive, 8, 32, 82, 95, 98–100, 157, 164, 166, 250–252, 258, 270–272, 276
 Document study, 183
 Downloading, 109, 112, 113, 116–118, 124, 125
- E**
 Educationalization, 196, 197, 199, 216
 Education policy ideas, 249, 261
 Education research, 5, 10, 11, 287–289, 291, 299, 301, 303
 Epistemology, 63, 152, 163, 167
 Equality, 67, 106, 133, 140, 146, 214, 217, 287–303
 Equity, 26, 67, 140, 146, 243, 270, 276
 Evidence, 4, 5, 13, 76, 77, 81, 83, 94, 96, 97, 111, 143–146, 163, 190, 199, 214, 266, 270, 272
 Exam, 52, 115, 120, 136, 267–270, 280
 Exo, 178, 181, 183–185, 189, 191
 Expertise, 66–68, 70, 79, 84, 113, 153, 155, 177, 184, 190
 Extra-curricular, 9, 196–216
- F**
 Fragmentation, 9, 176–191
- G**
 Governance, 2, 4, 9, 11, 41, 42, 78, 131, 132, 145–147, 161, 178–182, 197, 200, 202, 229, 230, 232–235, 242–244, 248, 268
- H**
 Heuristic, 152, 165–168
- I**
 Inclusion, 5, 9, 21, 66, 86, 140, 176, 177, 179, 183, 184, 186, 189, 190, 217, 227, 228, 244
 Individual development plan (IDP), 229
 Individual education plan (IEP), 228–230
 Instrument, 54, 61, 100, 112, 124, 179, 182, 186, 190, 230, 243
 Interaction, 3, 4, 6, 9, 42, 43, 49, 52, 62, 65, 67, 68, 71, 77, 94, 98, 112, 145, 154, 202, 214, 238, 250, 255–256, 267, 268, 273, 274, 282
 Interdependency, 43, 44, 47, 52, 99, 180, 250, 251, 254, 257, 261
 Intersection, 5, 6, 65, 87, 99, 125
 Interview study, 130, 300
 Involvement, 3, 11, 80, 118, 189, 190, 287–289, 291–296, 298–302
- K**
 Knowledge, 2, 5, 7–10, 12–14, 19–36, 40, 46, 52, 54, 60–63, 65–70, 76, 78–82, 84–86, 95, 96, 99, 101, 109, 112, 130–134, 136, 138–141, 143–147, 152–156, 158, 160, 162, 163, 165–167, 190, 191, 196, 198, 202, 209, 210, 214, 216–218, 228–231, 234–244, 249, 258, 260, 266, 268–272, 274, 277–283, 287–290, 293, 296–303
- L**
 Learning outcome, 9, 83, 138, 139, 141–143, 146, 248, 250, 260, 261, 266, 267, 269, 277–279, 281
 Licence, 102–107
 Linear, 7, 11, 60, 64, 76, 81, 83, 84, 99, 101, 145, 153, 200, 242, 244
 Local authorities, 8, 12, 141, 145–147, 158, 159, 288, 289

M

Macro, 6, 178, 180, 181, 183–185, 189, 191
 Management, 8, 41, 52, 67, 68, 130, 133, 134,
 139, 143, 146, 147, 165, 166, 176–191,
 217, 229, 234, 235, 242, 259, 261,
 267, 294
 Meso, 178, 180, 181, 184–187, 189–191
 Micro, 6, 27, 178, 180–182, 184, 185,
 188–191, 259
 Mixed method, 178
 Mobilization, 19–36, 209, 288
 Model, 13, 24–26, 28, 42, 47, 60–70, 77, 79,
 98, 101–107, 114, 133, 136, 137, 139,
 140, 154, 155, 158–160, 177, 178, 180,
 181, 183, 189, 190, 200, 207, 213, 234,
 237, 290, 297, 298
 Multi-level system, 178–180, 189
 Municipal, 134, 139, 295, 300, 303

N

Nexus, 1–14, 75–87, 228–244, 294
 Nexuses, 2, 4–14, 40, 41, 47, 49, 60, 62, 64,
 70, 71, 75–77, 82, 85–87, 109–112,
 117, 124, 130–147, 191, 196, 197,
 199–202, 204, 211, 214–216, 228,
 242–244, 259, 260, 268–272, 277,
 280–282, 287–288, 290, 293, 298,
 302, 303
 Nonlinear, 81

O

Observation study, 10
 Oracy, 266–269, 277, 279–282
 Oral assessment, 9, 254–256, 266–282
 Organization, 3, 8, 9, 11, 12, 24, 40, 44, 45,
 49, 65, 97, 130, 132, 134–139, 177,
 181, 184, 187, 190, 191, 197, 266,
 273, 275

P

Partnership, 5, 8–10, 12, 77, 80, 81, 85,
 151–168, 196–216, 288, 289, 291, 293,
 296, 298, 301
 Pedagogic, 32, 153, 165, 166, 168,
 228–230
 Pedagogy, 27, 41, 55, 105, 137, 144, 154, 159,
 164, 168, 207, 208, 211, 216, 249
 Philanthropic, 101–102, 104, 105, 107

Policy, 1–14, 19, 20, 22–24, 26, 29–36, 40, 42,
 49, 51, 54, 55, 70, 75–87, 109–125,
 130–147, 151–168, 176–191, 196–202,
 204, 205, 208–217, 230, 248,
 266–282, 294
 Policy formation, 4, 8, 13, 14, 111, 197, 202,
 210, 214
 Policy initiatives, 35, 76–78, 86, 133, 141,
 145, 212, 290, 293
 Policy instrument, 65, 109–112, 117, 119, 124,
 125, 204
 Policymaking, 3, 7, 11, 13, 76, 87,
 202, 214
 Policy-practice nexus, 12, 13, 39–55, 131,
 177, 191, 214, 282
 Policy system, 42
 Policy uptake, 10, 282
 Political, 2–4, 6–14, 20, 24, 25, 27, 29,
 30, 33, 35, 39–55, 61, 69, 78, 82,
 97–100, 103, 105, 106, 111, 114,
 116, 124, 130, 132–134, 137,
 138, 140, 144–146, 152, 156,
 162–165, 178, 201, 211,
 213, 266, 268, 281
 Politics, 3, 4, 7, 8, 20–23, 26, 30, 32–34, 36,
 42, 49, 51, 54, 61, 94, 95, 97, 98,
 111, 177
 Postcolonial, 8, 109–125
 Practice, 1–14, 19, 20, 35, 40, 41, 43, 49, 51,
 53, 54, 60, 67, 68, 70, 71, 75–87, 100,
 103, 104, 109, 111, 112, 118, 130, 131,
 134, 135, 139–147, 151–156, 158, 159,
 165–168, 176–191, 196, 197, 199–202,
 204, 211, 212, 214–216, 228–244, 248,
 266–282, 294
 Premise, 9, 95, 96, 98, 99, 102, 106, 198, 211,
 251, 269
 Professional autonomy, 7, 39–55, 70, 76, 143,
 191, 215
 Professional development, 8, 67, 70, 76, 130,
 131, 134–139, 152, 155, 157, 158
 Professionalization, 11, 45, 68, 177, 190
 Professional judgement, 145, 147
 Programmatic, 98, 100, 103
 Public education, 8, 24, 26, 30, 60, 61,
 64–67, 70, 93–107, 130, 133,
 134, 140

Q

Questionnaire, 182, 187

R

- Reforms, 3, 4, 7, 8, 11, 13, 19, 25–27, 34, 49, 53, 60–71, 97, 101, 102, 104, 105, 130, 133, 134, 137–139, 143–146, 161, 162, 179, 190, 191, 196, 200–202, 204, 205, 209, 213, 214, 231, 266, 269, 277–282, 290
- Relationship, 1–3, 5–13, 30, 42, 45–47, 49, 61–71, 75, 77, 81–83, 85, 86, 154–156, 158, 161, 165, 178, 196, 199, 209, 214, 215, 228, 233, 242, 287–303
- Research, 2, 4, 5, 7–10, 12, 13, 25, 28, 35, 36, 40–42, 48, 53–55, 60, 61, 63, 69, 70, 75–87, 94, 102, 111, 113, 134, 141, 144, 145, 156, 165, 177, 181–182, 191, 196–202, 204, 207–214, 216, 217, 228, 249–252, 260, 266–268, 272–274, 299
- Research-practice relationship (RPR), 288–295, 299–303

S

- Scheme, 8, 12, 109–125, 139, 142, 160, 207, 210, 213, 250, 252–254, 259, 267, 277, 278, 280, 289
- School system, 27, 52, 54, 66, 101, 106, 107, 115, 117, 132–135, 137, 139, 140, 176–181, 184, 189, 190, 205, 266, 290
- Scientificity, 297
- Skills, 5, 9, 26, 28, 40, 45, 65, 99, 101, 109, 110, 114, 115, 121, 122, 124, 130, 134, 143–146, 152–154, 162, 163, 165, 166, 168, 211, 214, 238, 248, 249, 251, 253, 254, 256, 258–261, 266–269, 272, 279–282
- Social interaction, 54, 65, 213, 267, 271
- Spatial, 7, 11, 12, 65, 82
- Special education, 176, 177, 190
- Special need, 9, 178, 182, 189, 190, 230, 232, 242
- Stakeholder, 1, 40, 130, 143, 177–181, 183, 184, 187, 189, 190, 196, 200, 211, 216
- Standard, 66, 68, 70, 93–107, 121, 124, 130, 134, 137, 140, 142–145, 160–165, 168, 179, 184, 185, 190, 228, 231, 238, 243, 267, 271, 272, 274, 279–281

- Steering, 8, 130, 134, 139, 146, 177–179, 181, 183, 184
- Structure, 4, 7, 8, 10–13, 19, 20, 42, 45, 48, 60–63, 65–67, 70, 77, 81, 82, 85, 86, 95, 97, 101, 111–113, 131, 133, 137–139, 142, 145, 160, 177–180, 184, 187, 189, 196, 197, 207, 237, 253, 274–277, 282, 288, 293, 299, 300, 302
- Student evaluation, 235, 270, 274, 281
- Student group work, 9, 249, 250, 252, 256, 258–260
- Subject talk, 252, 266–283
- Support activities, 9, 228–244
- Survey study, 249, 300

T

- Teacher education, 5, 8, 42, 49, 67, 69, 70, 75, 79, 130, 132–139, 141–145, 147, 151–168, 211, 288–290, 303
- Teacher training, 40, 45, 52, 80, 130, 133–135, 137, 147, 176, 183, 218, 290
- Teaching profession, 7, 8, 65, 67, 75–87, 130–147, 290
- Tensions, 5, 12, 13, 22, 85, 87, 130–147, 154, 159, 162, 164–166, 196, 198, 213, 228, 249, 259, 269, 289
- Theory, 1, 5, 8, 30, 33, 35, 48, 53, 54, 62, 69, 81, 93, 94, 111, 112, 137, 142, 144, 147, 152–156, 158, 164, 165, 167, 168, 177, 234, 242, 250, 267, 272, 289, 297
- Third space, 155, 156, 293, 300–302
- Traditions, 1, 5, 10, 20, 22, 28, 34, 36, 40–42, 48, 55, 76, 82, 93–95, 101, 106, 130–147, 181, 188, 198–200, 210, 215, 234, 266, 268, 273, 287, 291
- Transformation, 19–36, 140, 197, 199, 201, 212–215, 248

U

- Uploading, 109, 112, 113, 120, 122–125

V

- Video data, 250, 251