Policy Implications of Research in Education 1

Ulf Blossing
Gunn Imsen
Lejf Moos *Editors*

The Nordic Education Model

'A School for All' Encounters Neo-Liberal Policy

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Policy Implications of Research in Education

Volume 1

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Ulf Blossing • Gunn Imsen • Lejf Moos
Editors

The Nordic Education Model

‘A School for All’ Encounters Neo-Liberal Policy

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Foreword

Almost a hundred years ago, after an intense period of competitive colonisation and an increasingly sophisticated arms race, Europe engaged in the first of two terrible wars. Today in Western Europe, such aggressive competition for power is unthinkable. But there is a new weapon being used in today's competition – education.

Countries are restructuring their education systems in bids for the top of the international rankings. And, just as generals were prepared to sacrifice countless soldiers in the hopes of a victorious battle, modern ministers appear happy continually to 'reform' their teachers and subject their students to endless change.

Prime amongst the deadly weapons available to politicians is the neo-liberal philosophy of markets, competition and choice. Based on Milton Friedman's *Capitalism and Freedom*[1], such a way of looking at the world has enabled big business to grasp involvement in what had hitherto been public service. In many countries, regardless of their customary politics, New Public Management (NPM) with its reliance on financial reward as the only acceptable motivating factor has become the favourite governmental means of reform in the fields of health and education.

The Nordic Education Model is an excellent account of how the five Nordic countries are coping with the pressure of this global trend. The book is the fruit of the NordNet group of researchers with whom I have had the privilege of working as a critical friend. The three editors and 19 authors work in 10 Nordic universities. Three each come from Sweden and Norway, two from Denmark and one each from Finland and Iceland. In addition, the book benefits from the involvement of a Danish 'expat' (from my old university in London). From Reykjavik in the northwest to Helsinki in the east and Copenhagen (and London) in the south, these authors have examined the impact of neo-liberal thinking on the education systems in which they work.

Writers from each of the five countries recount the history of the 'School for All' before describing the challenges it is facing. Thus, Gunn Imsen and Nina Volckmar

[1] Friedman, M. (1962). *Capitalism and freedom*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Boston, J., Martin, J., Pallot, J., & Walsh, P. (1996). *Public management: The New Zealand model*. Auckland: OUP.

from Norway ask: 'How open should it [the comprehensive school] be to private alternatives? How much should one break from the principle of combined classes and allow for a permanent differentiation of levels? How should one meet the demands for adapted education for all pupils, both within and outside the framework of the classroom community?'

Annette Rasmussen and Lejf Moos inform us how in Denmark, from around 1990, the historic government agenda changed with 'a shift in the modernisation policy. Public institutions should not only be internally effective, they should also be externally competitive. Therefore, regulations were introduced, inspired by the private sector'.

Even in Finland – the Nordic country with the most equal outcomes – Sirkka Ahonen recounts how 'The changes in school politics happened step by step during the 1990s. Deregulation and decentralisation of the administration of primary and secondary education came as the first step, and the introduction of competition within the primary school, accompanied by the liberation of the management of the public expenditure by local authorities, as the second step'. As a result, equality has been 'subordinated to the freedom of choice in order to boost the creative potential of free individual actors'.

The situation in the Nordic country worst hit by the October 2008 economic downfall – Iceland – according to Anna Kristín Sigurðardóttir, Hafdís Guðjónsdóttir and Jóhanna Karlsdóttir, is somewhat different. The Iceland Chamber of Commerce, 'representing neoliberal education policy', had publicly recommended free school choice in 2003. 'Its aim was to increase quality by encouraging school competition and establishment of private schools by the 'money goes with child' approach'.

According to these authors, NPM could have heralded the death knell of the 'School for All' and the advent *of* 'elite schools'. But, the authors report that 'it is doubtful that this neoliberal policy impacted education to the same degree as it did many other fields… indicating some level of consensus across political parties about the importance of School for All'. It is as if the severity of the financial crisis brought home to people and the government the risk of forsaking a proven pillar of society. Furthermore, they suggest that the crisis 'led to disbelief in political ideas, rooted in new public management and a neoliberal atmosphere, such as privatisation, competition and accountability'.

This book addresses questions important not only within the advanced Nordic countries. As the editors note in the concluding chapter, 'in many countries, a School for All is still a goal in progress'. It is somewhat ironic, therefore, that it is in those countries where the noble idea has best succeeded that its dissolution is being most thoroughly discussed.

The thematic chapters cover a lot of territory. Nina Volckmar and Susanne Wiborg endeavour to explain why social democratic governments have conceded so much to right-wing pressures, foregoing principles in the hope of retaining a bigger prize without seemingly noticing its inevitable diminution.

The three editors trace the history of progressivism and ask questions about the future of all the more complex forms of group work and pedagogic communication in the face of the increase of individualisation of learning.

Karen Andreasen and Eva Hjörne raise vexed questions about who should be included as the goal of the 'School for All' is challenged. Anne Nevøy, Annette Rasmussen, Stein Erik Ohna and Thomas Barow take the same debate into upper secondary schooling asking important questions about the efficacy of irregular programmes. And Trond Buland and Ida Holth Mathiesen explore the issue of drop-out and the essential role of the local authority.

The final chapter by the three editors reprises the issues. It ends on a positive note: 'In spite of the worrying indications, it is not likely that neoliberal policy will dominate the Nordic educational model at the system level and erase the ideal of a School for All. The democratic vision is still there'. I hope that events prove them right. I hope also that the competition between nations extends to include measures of equity[2] and well-being.[3] These are issues which affect the quality of life in all societies and about which the Nordic countries know a great deal.

Professor Emeritus, Richmond, England Peter Mortimore

[2] Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. (2012). *Equity and quality in education: Supporting disadvantaged students and schools*. Paris: OECD.

[3] UNICEF. (2007). 'Child well-being in rich countries'. *IRC Report Card 7*. Florence: Innocenti Research Centre.

Acknowledgements

The NordNet research network, 'Transnational Tendencies and Nordic School Development', was established with funding from NordForsk, under the Nordic Council of Ministers, in 2009 with Lejf Moos as the Coordinator. Roughly 60 researchers from 16 different universities in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden met for three 2-day seminars over a period of 3 years. We wanted to find out if a Nordic model in education really existed or had existed prior to massive global and transnational influences. Are new expectations furthering or limiting the development of Nordic values? Are transnational influences homogenising educational politics and practices? And are traditional cultures and discourses persistent? At the seminars we shared introductions by Nordic and international colleagues about trends and tendencies, and we formed five working groups: 'A School for All', 'Pre- and Primary Schools', 'Ambivalences and Paradoxes', 'Accountability in Higher Education' and 'Educational Leadership'.

The working group on 'A School for All' decided to write this volume, but we would not have been able to meet and talk without the support from NordForsk and from our critical friend, Peter Mortimore. We would like to thank the Nordic Research Foundation, our critical friend and all the colleagues in the working group wholeheartedly for the support, inspiration and hard work.

Gothenburg — Ulf Blossing
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Chapter 1
Nordic Schools in a Time of Change

Ulf Blossing, Gunn Imsen, and Lejf Moos

1.1 Introduction and Aim

Historically, the Nordic model of education has been based on a vision that schools should be inclusive, comprehensive, with no streaming and with easy passages between the levels. This concept of a *School for All* has been closely related to the development of the welfare state in the Nordic countries in the twentieth century. Based on an egalitarian philosophy, it was considered the state's duty to provide equal educational opportunities for all children, regardless of social background, abilities, gender and place of living. The development of a comprehensive school system for all children has had both economic and social motives. More and better education for all has been considered a prerequisite for economic growth, and bringing children with different backgrounds together physically was seen as a way to reduce social class differences in society at large. The aims of schooling were to develop social justice, equity, equal opportunities, participative democracy and inclusion, as those were pivotal values in Nordic welfare state thinking.

The Nordic model of education has mainly been supported by social democratic parties in changing patterns of collaboration with liberal and socialist parties.

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At system level, the School for All has changed both in content and form over the years. Across historic and national developments, we can identify some basic ideas that seem to have sustained until recently. One of these is a desire to create a democratic school, which ensures equal opportunities for all children and where all pupils, despite different prerequisites, experiences, knowledge and needs, are respected as human beings of equal worth. A School for All rests on a moral ideal of democracy, where diversity is valued as an asset in teaching, in which everyone may participate by their own conditions.

In a global context, it was not until 1994 with the Salamanca Declaration that UNESCO countries reached an international agreement on how best to organise education for pupils with special needs. It held that pupils with special needs would receive an education along with other children in their own environment (Tomlinson et al. 2004). 'The principle of inclusive education, enrolling all children in regular schools, unless there are compelling reasons for doing otherwise' (UNESCO 1994, ix). The ideas of this declaration were already widely accepted in the Nordic countries.

The aim of the anthology is to take a closer look at what happens in practice when the School for All meets the neoliberal education policy undertaken in the Nordic countries today. Criticism claims that the Nordic educational ideology, focusing on the child and a comprehensive school system in solidarity with the weak members of society, is on the retreat and does not produce the qualities necessary in a competitive, global perspective. In today's neoliberal education policy, the concept of a *School for All* is no longer part of the rhetoric. School change is an everlasting process; but the question is if the development of a School for All is directed towards ideologies that combat the ideas of justice and equality. In what ways has the Nordic model in education not fulfilled its promises, and what transformations have operated in the Nordic school systems in the last two decades?

1.2 The Nordic Countries: A Brief Historical Review

The Nordic countries consist of five nations, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland and Iceland, and the self-governing areas the Åland Islands (belong to Finland), the Faroe Islands and Greenland (with partial autonomy in the Home Rule arrangement with Denmark) (Fig. 1.1). Within the Nordic region one sometimes distinguishes the Scandinavian countries, which include Norway, Sweden and Denmark. On 1 January 2012 the population of Sweden was about 9.5 million, in Finland it was 5.4 million, whereas Denmark had 5.6 million inhabitants, Norway 5.0 million and Iceland 0.3 million.

The Nordic countries have a long history together, which has influenced political institutions, society and culture. In practice and historically speaking, Danish, Norwegian and Swedish are one and the same language, even though each of the countries has developed its own *national* variant. In Finland too, Swedish was the only official language for hundreds of years. However, the development towards a

Fig. 1.1 The Nordic countries

Finnish national state in the nineteenth century, which started after 1809 when Finland was ceded to the Russian tsar, meant that Finnish was recognised as an official language equal to Swedish (1863). Today's Finnish is the main language of the Finns, while only some hundred thousand of them have Swedish as their first language. Furthermore, in Norway, Sweden and Finland, there is a Sámi minority and several Finno-Ugric languages, which reach across the borders of northern Scandinavia. Icelanders and Norwegians used the same old Norse language until around 1450, when the Scandinavian languages underwent a common transformation to modern Norwegian, Danish and Swedish, respectively. These are quite alike and can with some practice be understood by people from all three countries. Written Icelandic was gradually modernised from the nineteenth century and on.

The Scandinavian language community reflects the close political relations between the Nordic peoples. For most of the period c.1320–1520, the kingdoms of Sweden, Denmark and Norway were united in political unions, in pairs or as one unit, as in period c.1390–1520. After that Scandinavia was divided into two political blocs: the western Oldenburg monarchy (Denmark, Norway and the Norwegian dependencies in the Atlantic and Schleswig-Holstein) and Sweden in the east, which would be the dominant power in Scandinavia and the Baltics after c.1640. Parts of Denmark and Norway were incorporated into the Swedish realm between 1640 and 1660, and Estonia and parts of Pomerania were made Swedish dominions. Our modern Nordic nation states are a product of the political upheaval that

followed in the wake of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars. Finland, which had been part of Sweden since the Middle Ages, was made a grand duchy (*storfyrstedømme*) under the Russian tsar, who also maintained their old Swedish laws and customs. Finland obtained full sovereignty in 1917. Norway was ceded to Sweden in 1814, which the Norwegians could not accept, and in the end Swedish authorities had to recognise Norway as a sovereign state in union with Sweden, which lasted until 1905. The Norwegian dependencies did not follow Norway into the union with Sweden in 1814, but remained under Danish sovereignty; though in 1918 the Icelanders obtained a kind of internal self-rule, and in 1944 they declared themselves independent from Denmark.

In spite of the division in nation states after 1814, the Nordic countries retained their common feature, which was strengthened as a result of Scandinavian movements in the nineteenth century and a strong sense of common historical and cultural heritage: all the Nordic nation states abolished absolutism and introduced democratic constitutions. Moreover, they could count on a long tradition of rule by law. And finally, social inequality was never as pronounced as on the European continent, even though parts of the Nordic region did follow a more continental pattern with regard to social structures. Strong and self-ruling rural communities characterise the Nordic model, which is very well documented, especially in Sweden and Norway, from the late Middle Ages and onwards. In other words, history has put its mark on the process of political and social modernisation in the Nordic countries from the middle of the nineteenth century to the present.

An important political force in the twentieth century was the working-class movement, both in the form of unions and political organisations. Large social democratic parties have been dominating politics, especially in Denmark, Sweden and Norway. Together with liberals they pursued a democratisation of society. In Finland the antagonism between right and left led to a civil war in 1918, which the right wing won.

Between the First and Second World Wars, democratisation in many of the European nations was threatened by Communist, Fascist and Nazi dictatorships. The power of these movements in the Nordic countries was limited, and subsequently the process of democratisation went on with party coalitions, creating a more stable parliamentary position, and collaboration between labour market organisations. Gradually the idea of the welfare state was born, and from around the middle of the 1900s and on important foundations were laid with state financed pensions, sickness benefit, unemployment insurance, maternity welfare etc.

Economically the five small nations were strongly dependent on the foreign trade, and in this context they also had to take sides between different blocs (Nordic Council of Ministers 2012). To begin with they acted similarly by becoming members of EFTA, but when Great Britain joined EEC (later the EU) in 1972, the Nordic countries were divided. Denmark also joined in 1972, Sweden and Finland two decades later in 1995. Norway and Iceland have still not become members of the union (at the time of writing in 2012). As a region the Nordic countries have both strengthened and weakened their position in the new Europe. The collaboration in the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers has taken on a more cultural than political profile, as the nations have chosen different solutions in relation to the EU.

The globalisation processes have also resulted in large immigration. After the Second World War, Sweden especially experienced an extensive influx of foreign labour. After 1970 the influx of refugees has been considerable, and today, in 2012, all Nordic countries are more or less multicultural. Especially the immigration and influx of refugees from Islamic nations in the first decades of the twenty-first century have caused debate. In all of the Nordic countries, there is a lively debate about the more or less successful integration of new citizens; some talk about a threat to the national identity, and others about the risk of nationalism and hostility towards foreigners.

In the early twenty-first century, unifying bonds still exist between the Nordic countries. They are all welfare states, characterised by stable parliamentary democracies, low elements of violence in society, extensive equality between men and women and an organised labour market. As a region in Europe, their unifying characteristics are perhaps most obvious when it comes to such everyday phenomena as a childcare system and the high rate of women on the labour market (Nordic Council of Ministers 2012).

1.3 Old Values Meet New

The pivotal democratic values that are manifested in the vision of a School for All have been developed over several centuries as a part of the unifying Nordic culture. In most countries the development was based on agricultural and small-scale crafts culture and ways of living, with only very few big industries and farms. Until the middle of the nineteenth century, most people lived in self-sustaining villages and small towns with small power distances. Most primary schools were thus established in the countryside and in villages; they were small and organised in ways that allowed for participation in the work at the family farm. Bigger towns had secondary schools. This special parallel legislation lasted until the early twentieth century. In the middle or second half of the twentieth century, the majority of the Nordic countries established a public comprehensive school for children between the ages of 7 and 16, mostly initiated by social democrats and regulated at state level. Different conceptions of equity and equality were promoted in this period of time.

Values from a social democratic participative vision have survived as the basis of educational thinking in most Nordic countries and with many stakeholders, be they professionals, politicians or parents. Thus, we see that participatory democratic thinking, social justice and equality are present in the sounding board, when new values like competition, choice, streaming, steep hierarchy and managerial accountability are introduced in order that countries can survive the global competition. Since the mid-1980s new forms of governance and discourses have been introduced. Triggered by the entrance into and competition on the global market place, all Nordic countries have brought political neoliberal thinking and governance, including new public management procedures and social technologies, into their education systems, although in different ways and with different consequences for school practice.

As a result, the Nordic model of education has been discussed in research literature in relation to the emerging international neoliberal trends during the last two decades. Already in 1992, the Director General of the Planning Department of the Norwegian Ministry of Education, the experienced OECD officer Kjell Eide, warned that increasing European economic integration would put a pressure on public expenditure and develop a system of *quality ranking* of public institutions. Increasing youth unemployment, attitudinal changes towards instrumentalism, competition and individualism were changing the age cohorts and confronted the education system with new challenges. His ideological claim was that no individual's values should be measured in terms of his or her income-earning capacity or potential, and that pupils should not be regarded as raw material to be moulded and processed according to specifications provided by others. Admitting that these wishes sounded unrealistic, Eide suggested that sole economic forms of education governance should be abandoned. Europe should instead welcome systems that favour innovation and creativity at all levels in the education system: 'We should accept the practical consequences of our rhetorical commitment to the principle of "education for all"' (Eide 1992).

A few years later, Tjeldvoll (1998) suggested that in the wake of the political changes in the Western world in the 1980s and the 1990s, neoliberal and conservative views on individualism and educational quality were incompatible with the traditional social democratic egalitarianism of the Nordic countries. The governments should instead reorient themselves towards policies based on competition and inequity in order to foster a new power for competitive development in education as well as in the fields of industrial production and economics.

In the 50 years anniversary issue of the *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* in 2006, all contributions were dedicated to the Nordic model of education. It is stated that the Nordic model of education exists, at least as an ideal, due to differences between the national systems. The common preconditions included a Nordic welfare state, a common labour market model and sustained economic growth. The spread of neoliberalism was, however, recognised, and pertinent questions were asked about the value attached in Europe to the Nordic model in the most general sense of the concept (Antikainen 2006; Telhaug et al. 2006). It was also demonstrated that social inclusive policies, like the inclusion of all pupils, comprehensiveness of education, democratic values and a focus on community, rather than on the individual, have been reformulated and delimited during the last decade. Consequently, caution is needed if the Nordic model is to survive (Arnesen and Lundahl 2006). The question of how the Nordic model in education is being transformed is therefore of great importance.

1.4 Two Core Concepts

At the level of educational policy, the question of what we mean by the terms we use in the process of discourse is inevitable. The real meanings of the words are, ultimately, demonstrated at the level of educational practice and are consequently a

matter of empirical research. There are, however, two core concepts that are in need of closer examination at the theoretical level: first, what we mean by equality and, second, the concept of neoliberalism.

1.4.1 The Many Faces of Equality

The English twin terms equity and equality are both part of the core of the notion of a School for All. In the Scandinavian languages, some terms (like the Norwegian *likhet* and *likeverd*) are frequently used in national policy documents, and their meanings do not coincide with the English terms. The first term (*likhet*) means being equal in quantity and quality, while the second one (*likeverd*) denotes being of the same qualitative value, but not necessarily equal in the more strict sense of the word. For instance, pupils should have equal access to educational resources, whereas there should be variations in curricula according to individual abilities or cultural conditions, but they should of course be of equally high quality.

The *Oxford Dictionary of English* defines equity as a quality of being fair and impartial with respect to, for instance, law and justice. The adjective equitable means a state of being fair and impartial, for instance, in equitable distribution of resources. Closely related, equality is defined as the state of being equal, especially in terms of status, rights or opportunities (Stevenson 2010). Both equity and equality are terms that seem to be connected to the adjective equal, which is defined as being the same in quality, size, degree or value. These definitions miss the notion of being different, but of equal worth. In the literature, in general, we often find the term equity associated with access to equal opportunities in education, whereas equality refers to the similarity of one thing to another in terms of quality or quantity. On the contrary, in OECD reports (such as the country reports of the Thematic Review of Equity in Education project started in 2003) we often find the term equity in education connected to analyses of opportunities and outcomes, i.e. quantitative and measurable characteristics. Therefore, there seems to be no clear consistency as to the different meanings of equity and equality.

A tentative clarification can be found if we stick to the different aims of equality measures (Hernes 1974). The most basic form of equality is formal equality, which means that pupils should have the same legal access to educational resources, regardless of social background, gender and ethnicity. This is parallel to the explanation of equity given by the *Oxford Dictionary of English*. Formal equality, however, does not guarantee equality in practice because of pupils' different economic backgrounds. To compensate for this, the education system should provide economic resources to avoid segregation and marginalisation in schools. In this respect, we speak of resource equality. Third, an equity policy raises the question of distribution of educational resources according to the competence of the pupils. Should more resources be allocated to the most able pupils in order to maximise the national economic benefit of the school system, or is it more appropriate to channel more resources to those that are in need of the most help and support? If the distribution of resources is equal for

all pupils, the result will probably be increasing social differences in educational outcomes, so this is an odd issue in the question of equity. The fourth theoretical aim of equality is equity of results, meaning that the distribution of educational resources should aid the process of making pupils more equal with regard to educational outcomes. This is, of course, not a realistic aim because of differences in pupils' abilities, interests and social backgrounds. At the same time, we continually observe political efforts to reduce social differences in educational outcomes. Generally, all four concepts of equality are at work in the Nordic model of education. To take this a step further, there is also widespread agreement that the curriculum should be adapted to individual prerequisites or to local interests, so that the right to curriculum differentiation should be a part of the equality complex. In other words, the vision of a national curriculum canon, which has been a central issue in the Nordic model, should be balanced with the principle of the right to include a qualitatively different curriculum.

In this volume, all these concepts of equity and equality will be used. Their respective meaning will appear from the contexts in which they occur. Most of them, however, can be traced back to one or more of the five different meanings mentioned above.

1.4.2 Global Neoliberalism

A second core concept of this volume is neoliberalism. This should be distinguished from the classic notion of liberalism, which originated in the enlightenment and was promoted by, among others, Adam Smith and later John Stuart Mill, who advocates free market trade and individual freedom, but also societal responsibility and tolerance. The latter accepts the state as a provider of infrastructure and as an instrument for redistributing wealth and power in order to create a more just and equitable society. More recent neoliberalism is linked to economic theory and policymaking in the context of a capitalist society and promotes free market forces without any intervention by state regulations. This ideology was promoted by, among others, Milton Friedman and associated with prominent conservative state leaders like Ronald Reagan in the USA and Margaret Thatcher in the UK. Neoliberal ideas in economics were transmitted to the field of education and spread all over the world by transnational organisations within trade and finance.

This became evident when societies and economies were restructured after the disasters of the Second World War, and new ways of cooperation and governance were introduced or reinvented. Global and transnational organisations like the World Bank (WB), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the European Union (EU) and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) were pivotal in designing a new, global marketplace with few or none barriers for cross-country operations: the free flow of finances, goods and workers (Pedersen 2010). Economy was the prime driver of this deregulation of cooperations; hence, the core logics and theories of the new world order were economical: Public

Choice, Rational Choice, Principal-Agent, Transaction Cost Theory and Scientific Management were some of the core theories (Pedersen 2005).

All these theories are built on the thesis that the marketplace is the best regulator of economies and therefore also of societies. At the centre of those theories is the belief in peoples' ability to make rational choices on the basis of known alternatives (March 1995). In order to make alternatives known, it is necessary to compare them; the basis for transaction on the marketplace is competition and comparison. Free choice and rational choice – people always follow their personal interests – and competition are inherent in marketplace thinking. Marketplace competition and deregulation have been spread to competition between countries, the global competition of competitive states and education systems (Pedersen 2010). This tendency has brought about new ways of governing public sectors. An often used umbrella term is New Public Management (NPM). Common trends in different versions of NPM are basically neoliberal: focus on decentralisation, outcome, competition and strong leadership in combination with accountability policies of centrally imposed quality indicators and quality assurance (Moos 2009a). It should be noted that we in this volume are focusing on these common trends and in line with Newman and Clarke (2009) are not referring to the development of new public services as e.g. networks, partnerships and public participation and which could be understood as new forms of public management.

Many Western nations and, most certainly, the Nordic countries have worked hard after the Second World War to build welfare states, where the state was supposed to support people in need, and to regulate the economy, public sectors and education in order to strengthen the construction of democratic nations. Thus, education has been seen as a major player in educating the next generation to participate actively in democratic communities. The gradual emergence of a global marketplace from the Second World War reached a stage where most national economies had to be changed from welfare state economy to competitive state economy.

This occurred gradually from 1980 and onwards, when some of the transnational agencies began interfering in education; the OECD became a very powerful player and so did the EU. None of them were given the power of regulation, the power of *hard governance*, so they developed forms of *soft governance*, named *peer pressure* in the OECD and *open method of coordination* in the EU (Moos 2009b). Important examples are the international comparison of educational outcomes (e.g. PISA) and peer reviews of aspects of education systems (e.g. Educational Leadership [Pont et al. 2008]). These activities often have a major impact on national politics and the development of new social technologies.

1.5 The Chapters

Part I of the volume consists of country reports from the five Nordic countries, starting with Sweden, followed by Norway and Denmark and closing with Finland and Iceland. Each country report describes the emergence of the comprehensive school

system in each country, the political circumstances and the particular formation of the education system that can be said to have fostered the idea of a School for All. The main structures of the educational system are very much alike in the five countries, even if they were developed at slightly different times, and that there are some minor differences in the regulative issues. The reports go on to describe how transnational neoliberal education policy has affected this idea and, eventually, outline the results of the meeting between twentieth-century ideas of a School for All and twenty-first-century ideas of market-oriented and goal- and result-driven neoliberal educational policy.

Part II of the volume consists of themes that make up the background for the Nordic model and its current situation. For instance, inclusion is a major theme that was accentuated by the concurrent emergence of more students with special needs and higher dropout rates in secondary education and increasing demands for better outcomes. Independent schools, free choice, increased privatisation and new assessment technologies are becoming gradually more important due to the changes in governance.

The first theme chapter, 'A Social Democratic Response to Market-led Education Policies: Concession or Rejection?', by Nina Volckmar and Susanne Wiborg investigates the role of privatisation in the public education sector in Scandinavia in the post-war period. First, they argue that neoliberal policies in education and privatisation in particular have been adopted to a lesser degree than in Anglo-Saxon countries and, second, that there are significant differences between the Scandinavian countries with regard to the extent to which these policies have been pursued. Finally, the authors discuss whether privatisation is currently undermining the comprehensive school system.

The next chapter is 'Progressive Education and New Governance in Denmark, Norway and Sweden', written by Ulf Blossing, Gunn Imsen and Lejf Moos. Progressive education has been an important educational philosophy that has given inspiration to practical, pedagogical renewal and school-based development in the Scandinavian countries since the mid-twentieth century. The ideology has spread to curriculum documents and teaching practices as part of the structural development of a School for All. The chapter discusses in what ways progressive education, as it developed in Europe and the USA in the twentieth century, has been implemented in Denmark, Norway and Sweden, and it examines the competing ideologies and the status of progressive education in the Scandinavian countries today.

In the third theme chapter, 'Assessing Children in the Nordic Countries – Framing, Diversity and Matters of Inclusion and Exclusion in a School for All', Karen Andreasen and Eva Hjörne discuss and analyse the use of assessments in comprehensive schools in the Nordic countries through time, including different kinds of documentary and empirical studies in their argumentation. Assessments point to and create differences between pupils and play a key role in processes of socialisation, marginalisation, inclusion and exclusion in society. Andreasen and Hjörne reflect on how different ways of practising assessment can support or counteract the idea that the comprehensive school is based on the general idea of a School for All.

In the fourth theme chapter, 'One School – Different Worlds: Segregation on Basis of Freedom of Choice', by Marianne Dovemark, the author describes the cultural production in two eight forms and links it to cultural and social reproduction. Regardless of the discourse of one School for All and in view of the objectives of equity, the study reveals strong differentiation and segregation on the basis of class boundaries, with ethnic overtones, which affects pupil performance.

The fifth theme chapter is 'Nordic Upper Secondary School: Regular and Irregular Programmes – or Just One Irregular School for All?' It is written by Anne Nevøy, Stein Erik Ohna, Annette Rasmussen and Thomas Barow. The aim of the chapter is to investigate and compare current alternative strands of courses within vocational education and these schools' collaboration with workplaces. The foci of discussion are inclusion and dropout. The *irregular programmes* in Denmark, Norway and Sweden all seem to function as a way of protecting the regular programmes from considering the full range of diversity. Schools do so by excluding some students from the regular programmes to different degrees and in somewhat different ways. The question is as follows: Does this foster a School for All?

In the sixth theme chapter, 'Dropout in a School for All – Individual or Systemic Solutions?', Trond Buland and Ida Holth Mathiesen investigate the problem of dropout in upper secondary schools from a systemic perspective and from the perspective of the individual student in Norway. The close relationship between dropout rates and succeeding unemployment and dependence on social welfare makes this a highly prioritised political issue, challenging both the principle of a School for All and the societal welfare system.

The country reports will show how the Nordic educational model has fulfilled its promises of a School for All, especially with respect to system characteristics and pedagogical developments regarding organisational and pedagogical differentiation. The theme chapters follow the School for All model into the neoliberal era, giving special attention to the questions of choice, private schools, assessment of learning outcomes and social differences in order to shed more light on the question of what transformations have operated within the Nordic education systems during the last two decades.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

The chapters in the volume are written from different theoretical perspectives. The five country reports all take a historical approach and discuss the discrepancies between ideological values of a School for All, on the one hand, and recent empirical evidence about the development in the era of neoliberalism, on the other. Most of the theme chapters also take as their main perspective the gap between intention and reality; some of them supplement this with cultural and social reproduction theory.

A main question in the volume is how new global organisational ideas about educational governance, originating in neoliberalist ideology, are selected, received and transformed in the five Nordic education systems and how they change the systems into which they are imported. Generally, this question has concerned institutional theorists for many decades (Scott 2008), but institutional theory has not been frequently applied to educational questions, at least not until recently. Schools are definitely institutions in the formal sense that they represent national regulations concerned with fulfilling important societal tasks; second, schools can be considered normative organisations, in the sense that they relate to social values and norms in the societal and cultural environment to maintain legitimacy in their work. Schools differ from many other public or private production organisations, as they are not constrained by efficiency, but rather by legitimacy.

Consequently, even if transnational agencies like the EU and the OECD send global messages about educational governance to countries throughout the world, we do not believe that they are adapted in the same way in all countries. Their acceptance will depend on historic, national and local values, meaning that their implementation will vary according to environmental conditions. This is an important point in new institutional theory, where it was recognised already in the 1970s that educational organisations do not follow the imperative of conformity (Meyer and Rowan 2006). There might be *loose couplings* between national regulations and school practice, and schools were shown to be rather different although the institutional forms were the same. An explanation for this is that organisations become similar to the extent that they adopt the form elements that give them the necessary legitimacy, but they decouple from other regulations (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). In other words, schools as organisations are not automatically responsive to global governance measures.

On the other hand, when more subtle technical constraints, like inspections, tests, transparency, competition and delivery requirements, are imported to the Nordic context, the decoupling theory may become more tenuous. Schools cannot escape the new technological governance systems without losing their legitimacy. The question then arises, how do schools adapt to these measures? The responses of the five Nordic countries may also be different, according to the given historic and political contexts. They may transform or *translate* the new organisational ideal into their own national policy in different ways, and they may develop differently and make a variety of changes in the national education systems as well as at school level (Røvik 2007, 2011).

We therefore expect a varied picture when we explore the neoliberalist impact on the Nordic model of education. Throughout this introductory chapter, we have described the Nordic characteristic to be the democratic value base, whereas the model consists of the comprehensive and inclusive school system. Because of the historical traditions of democracy and welfare, we do not foresee any dramatic changes in the values underpinning national educational policies, although there may be controlling measures and changes in school practices that run contrary to

these values. However, this depends on the sustainability of the logic of legitimacy at school level. If the logic of efficiency expressed in quantified parameters takes the lead in school environments, the future of the School for All is more uncertain.

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Part I
Country Cases

Chapter 2
A School for Every Child in Sweden

Ulf Blossing and Åsa Söderström

2.1 Introduction and Aim

The concept of "a School for All" rests on a moral ideal of democracy that sees diversity as an asset in teaching. Everyone may participate, and inclusion, equality, and participation are key (Egelund et al. 2006; Tornberg 2006). It expresses a political vision of a school where children shall have an equal education, regardless of their place of residence, social background, physical and mental abilities or other factors that may influence their success in school.

The vision of a School for All, where all children from different social backgrounds meet, has been one of the cornerstones in the Swedish social democratic building of an equal and democratic society from the 1960s to the 1980s. In fact, this vision and its pedagogical consequences have filled the "folk home". For many years, the folk school has been a major feature of the Swedish social identity.

What has become of this vision of a School for All in twenty-first-century Sweden and the new era of globalisation and market-oriented education? What were the practical implications of this schooling vision? Did it ever become realised, or was it just political rhetoric? Does the moral ideal of democracy, which is salient in a School for All, still underpin educational policy? Does educational practice in the twenty-first century understand student diversity as an asset in teaching and that it is important for students to participate and learn in school from their own backgrounds? Does the concept of a School for All still hold true? Or is it fulfilled by strengthening the rights of each child in school?

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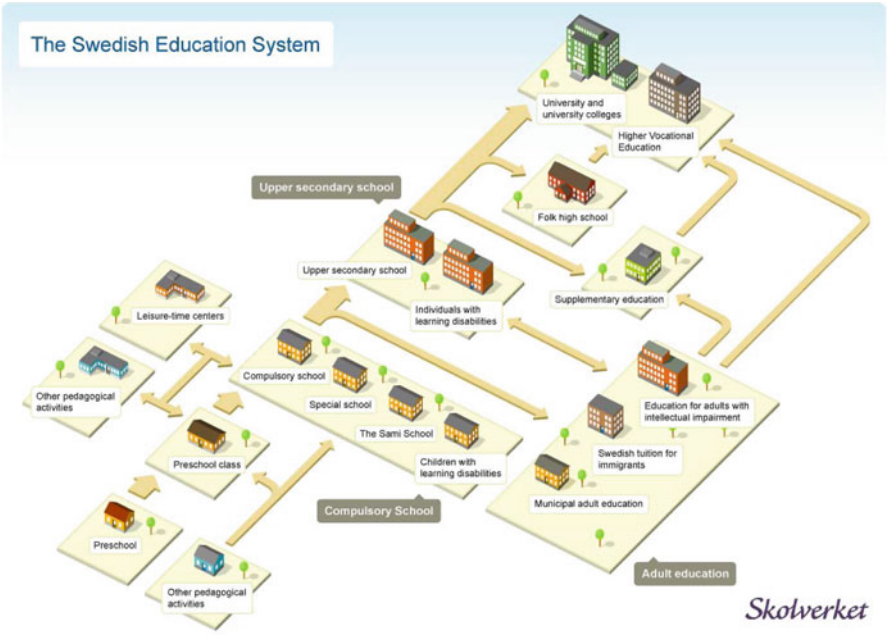

Fig. 2.1 The Swedish school system

The aim of this article is to investigate these questions and suggest some answers. It begins with a short description of the present school system of 2011 and gives a historical review before addressing the changes in the educational system.

2.1.1 Some Features of the Swedish School System

The Swedish school system is public, comprehensive and compulsory primary and secondary education for all children between the ages of 7 and 16. Primary and secondary compulsory school consists of four parts (see Fig. 2.1). Most primary-age children attend compulsory school (Skolverket 2011b). One per cent of children attend a school for learning disabilities or mental retardation. Only 501 children attend a special school for children with functional disorders, such as vision or hearing disorders. The Sami ethnic group can let their children attend a Sami school for the first 6 years.

Since 1992, there have also been independent schools. These are not owned by the state, municipality or county council. Rather, they are owned by educational companies or different interest organisations. As with the public schools, these independent schools are financed by the state through the municipalities. The students and their parents do not have to pay any fees to attend them. Twelve per cent of students in primary education attended these independent schools in 2010–2011 (Skolverket 2011b).

The intention of the 1962 compulsory school reform was to keep all students together in classes without streaming. This was an important part of the widespread political ideology of equal opportunity. This ideology included not sorting students by ability and building solidarity between different societal classes. This was not fully realised until the curriculum reform of 1980. However, ability grouping is still common. It is noteworthy that the percentages of students in special schools are very low, which is an indication that Sweden has gone far in its ambition to keep all students together in one system.

There is a voluntary preschool for students under the age of 6. In 2010, 49 per cent of 1-year-old children were enrolled. 91 per cent of 2-year-olds, 96 per cent of 3-year-olds and 98 per cent of 4-year-olds participate in preschools (Skolverket 2011b). 98 per cent of 6-year-olds also attend preschool. These preschool classes are a gateway to elementary school. Everyone participates in comprehensive school between the ages of 7 and 16. There is then a voluntary upper secondary school (*gymnasium*), where 90 per cent of students between the ages of 17 and 19 study various programmes for 3 years, regardless of whether they follow academic or profession courses.

2.2 Historical Review

2.2.1 Early Beginnings in the Seventeenth Century

Although 1842 and the start of the folk school (see Fig. 2.2) are the most appropriate point of time to start this historical review, the concept of a national school organisation for all children was already in place long before. In 1642, the famous

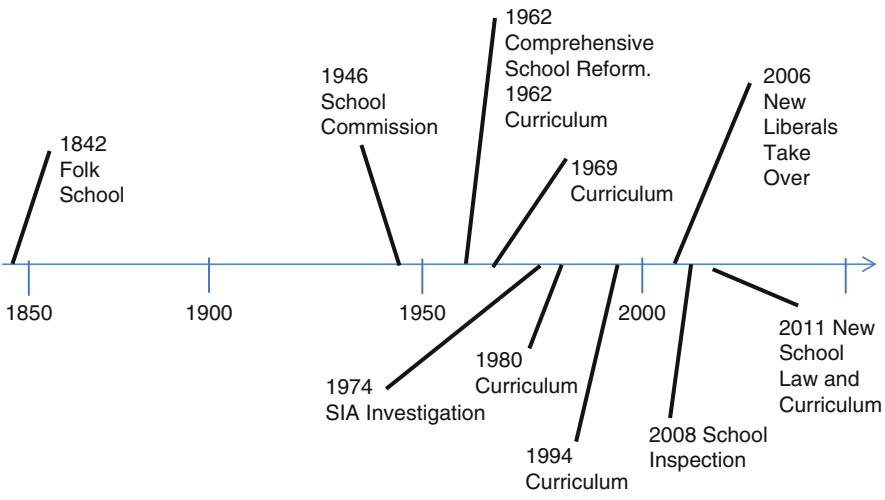

Fig. 2.2 Timeline of important events in Swedish educational history

Bohemian theologian and pedagogue Amos Comenius was called to Sweden and assigned the task of organising the Swedish educational system (Richardson 1999). In the Educational Act of 1649, a three-part educational system was established: trivial schools, gymnasiums and academies. This impressive plan was never completely accomplished due to insufficient funds. Despite the influence from Comenius, education was mainly a privilege for the upper class until the mid-1800s. In 1842, a step was taken towards a mandatory "bottom school" or "folk school" for all Swedish children. This was done by the decision of a public school charter. The intention was that within 5 years, all children would receive a 6-year elementary education. The folk school was not actually a School for All children in the sense that all children in the society met there. A parallel school system existed before the folk school and lasted for more than 100 years. Upper-class children received basic schooling at home and/or in private schools. Until 1865, the upper class could send their sons to the university without any basic education.

In 1946, a commission submitted most of the ideas for a compulsory and comprehensive primary school that would realise the vision of a School for All. The ideas from this commission have since evolved and expanded throughout the twentieth century (Ekholm 1985). In 1962, this compulsory school replaced the parallel school system of a folk school, a voluntary and academic preparatory school (*realskola*) and a girls' school.

In order to promote teachers' collaboration in the new compulsory school, an education act was presented in 1976 (Prop. 1975/1976: 39) that aimed to improve the schools' internal workings. The 5-year SIA Investigation[1] (SOU1974:53) that formed the basis for the government's education act indicated reforms to create a School for All students. This was to be done through local improvement in each school, as opposed to more systemic changes. By the time of the 1974 SIA Investigation, the concept of a "School for All" was more explicitly expressed to mean a desire to integrate all students, regardless of their learning needs. This was again an attempt to make all students meet in the classroom and thus foster equity and solidarity.

The SIA reforms were proposed by the social democratic government and determined in the Parliament in 1976. That year, the Social Democrats lost the election and a coalition of new liberal parties took over. In 1980, they put forward a proposal for a new compulsory school curriculum. The coalition lost the majority in the 1982 election, after which the Social Democrats implemented the new curriculum. This indicates that there was agreement between the political parties on the educational policy during this time.

2.2.2 Strong State Governing

In addition to the concept of a School for All, the Swedish school system from 1960 to 1977 was strongly state governed. In 1958, the National Board of Education (NBE) was strengthened and supported by County Boards of Education, which

[1] SIA = Schools' Inner Work.

worked hard to implement the compulsory school reforms of 1962. The 1970s saw the peak of management by the National Board of Education. Rules and directives for how to carry out teaching and learning guaranteed equity and solidarity in the School for All, especially how to teach students with different learning needs in the same classroom. However, streaming prevailed in the secondary school in mathematics and English until the 1980 curriculum.

In the 1970s, a pedagogical committee within the NBE was founded, which consisted of politicians and researchers. Their task was to evaluate and analyse Swedish schools. Evaluation and inspection has a long tradition in the Swedish school system. When the folk school started in 1842, the church was responsible for inspection. In 1861, a state inspectorate was established. Lundahl (2011) describes how teachers had to give an account of their work, which was gathered by the local inspector, summarised and forwarded to the Ministry of Education. This worked up to 1958, when the inspections were taken over by the new County Boards of Education. Thus, the NBE and the later National Agency for Education (NAE) delivered evaluations of different subjects and scopes. Major national evaluations were done in 1989, 1992, 1995 and 2003. Since then, minor evaluations have been done, with a more narrow focus. These were taken over by the new inspectorate established in 2008.

National tests, or standardised achievement tests, have been a part of the system since the 1930s (Lundahl 2009, 2011). Frits Wigforss and Carita Hassler-Göransson were pioneers in the area. The tests were originally developed to help teachers improve their pedagogy, but were not for central use and control. During the 1950s, researchers wanted to decrease teacher influence over tests. The aim was to acquire an instrument that could differentiate students yet affected the teaching and learning as little as possible. Lundahl describes that teachers and students protested the tests in 1968. Teachers and students questioned the tests' meaningfulness. The tests later turned towards the function of providing the state with school results.

According to the NAE, the aims of the national tests were to support an equal and just assessment and grading and provide data to analyse the degree to which required knowledge was fulfilled at the school, authority and national levels (Skolverket 2011a). Furthermore, the national test provided support for teachers in finalising syllabuses and fostered student goal fulfilment.

Following the above reasoning we mean that strong state governing is a characteristic of the Swedish school system. Even after the 1990s and the decentralisation reform, the state governing has remained strong in terms of curriculum content/regulation, tests and evaluations/inspections.

2.2.3 New Educational Policy in the 1990s

Economic cutbacks during the 1990s required substantial savings in the public sector, particularly in the educational field. There were also changes in school governance towards decentralisation and market thinking, such as increased

competition, profiling, performance accountability and freedom of choice. In 1994, a new curriculum was introduced, underpinned by management of objectives. Decentralisation of the compulsory school system was completed in 1991 when ownership was transferred from the state to the municipalities. The Social Democrats governed from 1982 until the conservative takeover in 2006, with the exception of 1991–1994. The foundation of the neoliberal education policy was thus laid out by the Social Democrats. One motive was to strengthen the local democracy and responsibility. Another was to cut down on expenditures after the economic crises of the 1980s.

To help the municipalities improve as a consequence of decentralisation, the NAE was divided into two authorities in 2003. The new National Agency of School Development introduced developmental dialogues with the municipalities. The members of the School Development Agency met with school leaders. Together, they determined which actions were needed and elaborated on a joint action plan, funded by the agency. The developmental dialogues were appreciated (Sandström et al. 2003). However, after the new liberal Alliance coalition takeover in 2006, it was closed down and replaced with the School Inspection in 2008.

When the new liberal Alliance came into power in 2006, it published an education policy document with 143 points. More than 100 of these points concerned the comprehensive school. The title of the programme statement was "More knowledge – a modern, knowledge policy for Sweden". The following are some of the specific features:

- A closer inspection of schools' activities, as well as student performance:
  - The formation of a strong School Inspection
  - Grades to students earlier in the school year
  - More mandatory national tests
- Focus on proper study order and more possibility of sanctions for schools
- Academisation of education for students, teachers and headmasters
- Differentiation of education by making vocational training more clear
- Strengthening of student and parents' rights
- Greater emphasis on values such as the requirement of schools to counteract discrimination and degrading treatment and demonstrate the ability to create a safe school environment
- Increase of independent schools

The three last points represent an increase in trends already in place before the new liberal takeover. A strengthening of students' rights and a stronger emphasis on values of discrimination had been introduced into the curriculum of 1994. As early as 1995, the concept of degrading treatment was introduced in an education act. Bullying and racism were added as examples in 1999. Unlike bullying, degrading treatment is a legal concept. Strengthening the school law in this respect is an example of how children's rights in schools are more clearly formulated.

2.2.4 The School Inspection

The School Inspection was established in 2008. The mission of the School Inspection (Skolinspektionen 2012b) was to supervise and quality-check preschool, public and independent schools and adult education. It also licenses independent schools. The inspection shall act on behalf of good conditions for student development and learning, as well as improved knowledge. The Child and School Student Representative is part of the School Inspection and counteracts degrading treatment.

A list of the latest inspection news from February 2012 includes (Skolinspektionen 2012a):

- The municipality of Kumla must allow students to reach their educational goals.
- Strong efforts are necessary to improve knowledge results in the municipality of Ånge.
- Low expectations restrain students' knowledge development in the municipality of Bräcke.
- Assessment and grading at schools with large deviations when re-marking national tests.
- One independent school in Malmö is shut down.
- Poor investigations at the prospect of special schools lead to misplacement.

2.2.5 Summary of the Historical Review

The structure of the educational system changed from a parallel system to comprehensive and compulsory primary education in the 1960s. In 1992, it was opened up for privately owned independent schools. The motives of the comprehensive school reform were to promote nation building, growth and welfare by reducing social inequity and establish school as a cultural institution. A cornerstone of the student health care programme of the comprehensive school reform was to increase support for special education in regular classes. The goal was to make it inclusive, teaching students in need of special education in their "home classes". The special education was emphasised in conjunction with the 1994 Salamanca Declaration.

From 1960 to 1980, the governance system was characterised by following by laws. During this period the National Board of Education, as well as the regional County Boards of Education, grew strong. This governance model was slowly replaced with management by objectives in 1980 and was fully implemented with the 1994 curriculum. In line with the decentralisation ideology, the NBE was reorganised, and the county boards were closed down. The authority of the schools was shared between the state and the municipalities at the reform of the comprehensive school. However, during the 1970s and 1980s, the relationship gradually changed and the state withdrew their many rules and regulations. In 1991, the municipalities took over the responsibility.

The ideology of school reforms during the 1960s emphasised the process of learning by looking at the inner lives of schools, where students influence how things work. This was particularly important for those students with special needs. This was an essential part of the social democratic school policy during the time. Since 2006, with the takeover of the new liberal Alliance, learning outcomes have been emphasised. This was expressed in more national tests and inspections and a new grading system. However, there has been a long tradition of evaluation, tests and inspections in the Swedish school system. Different political parties have struggled with making evaluations and tests into improvement instruments for teachers. This was especially the case in the 1940s, 1970s and 1980s. Since then, the government has held municipalities and schools more accountable for their work, instead of supporting their improvement.

2.3 Empirical Updates

2.3.1 Early Difficulties Implementing a School for All

The rhetoric of the comprehensive school reform emphasised a School for All in terms of inclusive or whole-class teaching, with special needs education in students' home classes, student democracy and experiential learning where students could ask questions and investigate them. One can question how much of it ever become a reality for the children. Forces for and against a School for All were visible in the pilot programmes. Studies on the pedagogy in the pilot programmes showed that progress was slowly achieved (Marklund 1981: 72). Traditional academic culture of the secondary schools made it difficult to implement improvement efforts.

Marklund believes the legacy of this traditional academic school culture "came to represent an important condition in the piloting that was basically about the forces for and against the preservation of the streaming that took place in school and society, for and against attempts to replace this streaming with a more coherent education system and less of social streaming in society" (Marklund 1981: 48, our translation). For the "counterforces", there was no reason to promote a more complex teaching method with individualisation and student activity learning, because such a method was politically intended to foster rapprochement between social classes.

2.3.2 Slow Improvement of Pedagogy

The curriculums of 1962, 1969 and 1980 were transformed in line with the political educational ideology of, e.g. whole-class teaching, experiential learning and student democracy. Between 1969 and 1980 also a prominent reduction of actual pages of the curriculum was undertaken, thus announcing a shift from centralised to

decentralised regulation. On system level the parallel school system was replaced. A special needs education support and health care organisation were established. The inner lives of schools also changed, more in terms of teachers' working environments than students' learning environment in terms of pedagogy and student democracy. A study started in 1980 to investigate the deepened reform requirements in line with the 1974 SIA educational act and were followed up in 2001 (Blossing and Ekholm 2008). The study focused the reform initiatives of among other things a collective leadership, teacher collaboration and local development planning. The conclusions were that the schools had become a more professional organisation. Teachers and principals responded to the reform requirements and become more systematic and goal oriented. This was in line with decentralisation. In summary, schools were no longer rigid institutions governed by state rules, but became local organisations trying to cultivate a self-renewing capacity in order to adapt effectively to the demands from the world around them.

Changes in the learning environment of the students were not very visible in the follow-up report. There were indications of a pedagogic system that was open to student suggestions of what and how to learn, inclusive in terms of student teamwork, and took account of society outside classroom. However, these changes were small and did not indicate any manifest trend. In fact, it happened on a small scale in some schools and not at all in others. In other words, there was a School for All teachers, but not for all students.

The conclusions from the follow-up study were that changes were most apparent at the systematic level. In other words, the educational system was open for all children due to the comprehensive system that replaced the parallel one. The development towards inclusive teaching in terms of student democracy and experiential learning seemed fragile. Inclusive special needs education has not succeeded, but is still organised in a streaming way.

2.3.3 Increasing Ability Grouping and Individualisation

A group of researchers, on a commission from the NAE, reviewed research on student results in Swedish schools (Skolverket 2009b). The conclusions from this report demonstrated that development since the follow-up study (Blossing and Ekholm 2008) has not yet moved towards the vision of a School for All. The researchers concluded that ability grouping has increased as an organisational solution to manage students' learning differences. The pedagogy also moved towards individualisation, in that the responsibility for the teaching and learning process was transferred from teachers to students and parents.

The reports from the inspection were in line with the review above. In a report (Skolinspektionen 2010), the inspection investigated the schools' systematic work to improve student knowledge. Of 40 investigated schools, only a few systematically worked. Schools were best when following the knowledge development of individual students in secondary school. They were worst at broadly analysing

student learning problems, related to classroom climate and didactics. This, together with the conclusion from the inspection that schools overrate student results, implied that schools are not for all, especially not for those students with learning difficulties.

Emanuelsson and Giota (2011) studied the conditions for students with learning difficulties. In a nationwide survey of comprehensive school principals about their special education support, the researchers concluded that children in Sweden do not get equal opportunities to learn and may be marginalised. The study focused on both primary and secondary levels in 2008. A fourth of the principals in grades 7–9 said that they organise some kind of ability grouping. The results showed that ability grouping is common as early as grades 1–3. Ability grouping was more common in independent schools for older students, as compared to public schools. Regarding individual and organisational reasons for student needs for special education, almost every principal in grades 7–9 considered it to be related to individual characteristics. It was fairly unusual for the principals to understand student needs as a consequence of teaching quality, or school or teacher attitudes. Principals considered medical diagnosing as fairly important when acquiring resources for special education. Principals in independent schools for younger students more often held that opinion compared to the principals in public schools. According to school law, action plans shall be written for students in need of special education. The principals said that the most common actions in those plans were adjustment of textbooks, practical skills training and adjustment of the classroom. Adjustments of the didactics were more common for younger students.

The results from the School Inspection were in line with the results above. The School Inspection visited 1,400 primary, secondary and upper secondary schools from August 2011 to May 2012. This corresponds to almost a fourth of all schools (Skolinspektionen 2011). The School Inspection concluded that measures must be taken in the majority of schools to allow students to reach their goals. Among the more serious deficiencies were the lack of pedagogic adjustment in relation to students' conditions, needs, interests and experiences.

2.3.4 Students Like to Be in School

Every 3 years, the NAE does an attitude study among students (Skolverket 2009a). The study was taken from a Swedish student population sample. In the most recent study (2009), a majority of the students stated they were happy and comfortable in school. More than 80 % of the students in grades 4–9 and upper secondary schools said they were comfortable in school. This percentage increased from approximately 70 % in 2000. The same figures were also true for how much students engage in their school work. The data showed an increase from approximately 60 % in 1993 (for students in grades 7–9) to almost 80 % in 2009. Approximately 85–90 % of the student body stated that they liked their teachers very much or quite a lot.

Eighty per cent of the students also stated that they can work at their own pace in almost all subjects. This percentage for upper secondary schools was somewhat lower. Although streaming is not allowed, ability grouping is rather common in the latest evaluations of comprehensive schools. Four out of ten students in grades 7–9 were in some kind of ability grouping. The number was five out of ten in grade 9. Ability grouping is most common in mathematics. The great majority of the students liked ability grouping and stated that it works fine for them. Approximately 5 % stated that it worked poorly. A majority of the teachers believe in ability grouping as a pedagogical method. Eight out of ten teachers stated that students' needs are better met with ability grouping, and almost the same share of teachers stated that students learn better in these groups. This fact is interesting and points to a situation where the idea of whole-class teaching, which has been highly embraced in the rhetoric of a School for All, is not at all grounded in the work of the teachers.

Students' positive attitudes were predominant in the report. Most students were satisfied with the learning demands from the teachers and thought the demands were moderate. A majority said that they talked with their teachers about how their learning was developing. They got help and support from their teachers when they needed it. Most of the older students also stated they got peace and quiet when working.

In 1997, every tenth student in grades 7–9 and upper secondary schools seldom or never felt it meaningful to go to school. A similar share of students in grades 4–6 said that their schoolwork was never or only sometimes interesting or fun.

2.3.5 System Building and Law Building

School system building was significant during the social democratic era when the comprehensive school was implemented in the 1960s. This was the manifest effect of a vision of a School for All. Likewise, school law building has been significant in the new public management era since 2006. The rhetoric of a School for All has been replaced with every child's right to education. On 1 July 2011, a new school law (Utbildningsdepartementet 2009) became operative. It put stronger requirements on schools and principals to investigate the circumstances around students' learning difficulties and establish development plans so they could reach the goals in the syllabuses.

The aim with the new school law (Skolverket 2010c) was to improve the legal rights of the individual and also to improve the ability of children and parents to exert influence on the school work. Every school is obliged to have forums for consulting with students and parents about educational questions and school work. These formulations of the democratic structures of the school are much more distinct than before.

The principals' responsibility to make decisions was clearer. A new formulation in the school law said that the principal decides on the internal organisation of the school and makes decisions based on school law and other paragraphs. This made it

possible to structure schools' inner organisation according to learning and thus strengthen improvement capacity. School principals are beginning to discuss these possibilities. Principles can also now delegate the right to make decisions. This makes it easier for principals to structure the school organisation by distributing responsibility.

Systematic quality work in the local schools has been on the agenda since 1979, when the government demanded that each school should evaluate its work every year. That demand on the schools was sharpened in 1997 (SFS 1997: 702), when a regulation stipulated that the municipality should deliver an yearly account of the outcome and quality of the school work. The new school law removed this requirement. Instead, the municipality or independent authority shall plan, follow up and develop the organisation and the work in a way they deem to be appropriate. This work shall be documented and filed. If the evaluation shows deficiencies, the authority shall be able to give an account of the work.

Changes in the school law strengthened every child's right to education. These changes also strengthened the principals' power and responsibility to organise their school in an appropriate way to achieve goals. This also means that the school as a public authority is strengthened and falls under the jurisdiction of administrative law. This results in a need for school to document their work in cases such as parents appealing against the principal's decision.

2.3.6 PISA Results

The results from PISA 2009 showed that students' reading ability dropped from 2000, when it was first included in PISA (Skolverket 2010b). Sweden had a mean value of 497, which was not significantly different from the OECD mean value of 493. The Swedish mean fell 19 points from PISA 2000. The Swedish results were not significantly different from those of Denmark, Norway or Iceland. A closer look at the PISA result concerning reading showed that below the mean drop, there was a greater increase of poor readers, compared to a drop of good readers.

The Swedish math results of 494 were not significantly different from the OECD mean of 496. The Swedish results dropped 15 points from 2003, which was significant. All Nordic countries except Norway had significantly better results.

The mean results in science were significantly lower than the OECD mean. The results dropped eight points from 2006, which was not significant. However there was a significant increase in the percentage of students who could not reach the lowest achievement level, from 16 to 19 %. This was the same for all Nordic countries except Finland, which had higher achievement scores.

This drop in results was more significant for boys than for girls. Foreign students had significantly lower achievement scores in reading than the mean OECD values. Foreign students and those of lower socioeconomic backgrounds had much worse achievement scores than other Swedish students. The researchers who compiled the

Swedish report concluded that Swedish schools have not succeeded in giving all students an adequate education.

Comparing the PISA results with the national tests (Skolverket 2011c), reading results are better. In 2011, 2.7 % of students did not pass. This was an improvement from 2005, when approximately 5 % of students failed. On the other hand, there was a sharper drop in mathematics. Approximately 19 % of the students failed in 2011, compared to approximately 9 % in 2001.

The researchers (Skolverket 2010b) state that between 2000 and 2009, Sweden lost its position as one of the most equitable school systems. This was due to increased differences between low- and high-performing students and schools. Furthermore, the importance of students' socioeconomic backgrounds has increased. The only indicator that did not show negative development was the socioeconomic differences between schools.

The researchers (Skolverket 2010b) comment on the report from the National Agency (Skolverket 2009b), in trying to answer why there were decreases in equity in Sweden. The researchers of the report from the National Agency assert that student differentiation increased such that they were divided into ability groups based on special education needs or achievement levels. This division leads to homogenous groups. This development can cause increasing differences in student results due to so-called peer effects, where results are affected by students' peers. Teachers also tend to lower expectations for students in groups with low-performing students. Individualisation was also highlighted. The intention was to adapt the teaching and learning to students' conditions and needs. Instead, students worked more in isolation. There was also a shift in responsibility from teacher to student and from school to home. Another theme was decentralisation and the differences between municipalities in how they allocated resources for schools' needs. Research (Skolverket 2009b) show that the connection between resources and student result was weak, but teacher frequency and class size could be important for low-achieving students.

ICCS 2009 (the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study) shows that relatively many 14-year-old Swedish youth are uninterested in politics and social issues (Skolverket 2010a). Compared to other countries, they showed less activity in associations and organisations, fewer discussions about politics and social issues among family members and friends and fewer who followed mass media to learn what was going on in society. However, when compared internationally, knowledge of democratic values and equal rights for different groups was high. Many students exert an influence over the everyday life of school.

2.3.7 The Control Curriculum

According to Bernstein (in Lundahl 2009) a curriculum consists not only of the actual content but also its mediation or communication and the control of students' learning. Lundahl describes how the tests were developed in connection to

curriculum reforms in 1980 and 1994 to support a decentralised system where the local authorities and the teachers took more far-reaching responsibility. The standardised tests were replaced with national tests that were supposed to foster a professional discussion about goals, knowledge and grading criterions. The aim was to not introduce national evaluation, grading or tests that could jeopardise local development initiatives. However, the NAE evaluations soon showed that the system of local evaluations and control worked poorly. By the late 1990s, the state took increasing responsibility to value the efficiency of the school. Tests and unambiguous measures of outcomes were stressed, and schools' results were published to make them accountable.

> /…/The results of schools are beginning to be described as a control instrument rather than a basis for development. The major dilemma at the present time could in theory (and in the most authorial regulation-document) be described as it exist a kind of curriculum which promises an extensive local freedom of action, whereas in practice a total different kind of curriculum is established where externally given criterions and national claims outline the work in school. This is in particular the case since many of these claims and expectations on schools' knowledge assessments serve purposes that is not primarily pedagogical but administrative or even political. (Lundahl 2009: 186, our translation)

In Rönnberg's (2011) words, this situation strengthened the educational policy, as opposed to the weakening of state governance in a decentralisation process. The "filling in" means that central state control is strengthened at a point in time when a market orientation and greater choice and privatisation are gaining ground, which is the "hollowing out" feature. Rönnberg concludes that this phenomenon resulted in an odd combination where decentralised, local and market incentives were strong, yet the state strengthened governance by national tests and inspections, along with detailed and standardised curricula, organisation and licensing of teachers and head teacher education.

> /…/All in all, they keep the state in command. Drawing on the previous theoretical discussion, we may interpret these developments as ones in which processes of hollowing-out are accompanied by simultaneous processes of filling-in. (Rönnberg 2011: 699)

The School Inspection embodies the control of curriculum, but what do schools improve through inspection? Matthews and Sammons (2004) suggest that the improvement efforts in schools in conjuncture with the OFSTED inspection in England depended on school quality and leadership, inspection quality and reporting clarity. They also conclude that improvement in line with the inspection was likely to appear when funding was available. There is likely not any automatic improvement mechanism inherent in inspection routines that cause schools to take actions. As Matthews and Sammons conclude, greater return visits, interventions or developmental interactions by local actors with ongoing links with schools could foster improvement.

Ekholm and Lindvall (2008) analysed 187 Swedish schools from 1998 to 2006 to find out if grading results rose after inspection. They conclude that schools development before and after the School Inspection did not affected one-fourth of the schools. Half the schools that did change had poorer results. Ekholm and Lindvall argue that the most plausible argument is that the School Inspection does not affect

student outcome. They argue that students' learning, teachers' way of motivating and supporting students, explaining and following-up are affected by a whole range of factors that, even if they are indirect, have anything to do with whether state inspections in schools are achieved.

2.4 Conclusions

This historical review demonstrates that the idea of a nationwide school system for all has roots far back in the seventeenth century, and that steps towards it were taken at various points in time, such as the proposal of a three-level school system in 1649 and the folk school reform of 1842. However, it was not until the 1960s and the economic upswing after World War II that it became possible to finance an expansion that included all children and the building of new schools and other supporting resources. The moral ideal of democracy came into focus after World War II. Although the different political parties did not agree on preparing for comprehensive school reform, they then became almost strangely devoted to the ideal of a School for All to foster students into democratic citizenship and give them a better life. This was the manifest result of the School for All vision: the creation of a nationwide school system on the foundation of equity and democracy. Today, every child has access to this system. The great majority of students like it and think that they learn and get relevant support from their teachers. Furthermore, almost every child belongs to the system of primary and secondary schools. Only a small percentage goes to special schools.

In today's neoliberal educational policy, the School for All concept is not a part of the rhetoric. Yet, equal educational opportunities for all students, regardless of geographic, social or cultural affiliation, is still on the agenda. However, today's political rhetoric or policy measures do not point out the moral ideal of democracy, in which everyone participates. Students' rights to receive support and assistance are emphasised, regardless of conditions and capacity to achieve the school's knowledge objectives. But it is difficult to read into the advocated policy that the goals could be adapted to students' conditions and differences could also be seen as assets. The increased focus on children's rights in a legal sense also raises concerns about the concept of a School for All. Is there a shift from the perception of students as right-holders in a moral sense to right-holders in a legal sense? If so, how does this affect the view of a School for All? Is there a risk that schools, students and parents are counterparts instead of partners, and that the distance between them will increase?

The intensive use of a juridical and control level in Swedish educational policy and practice should be understood in its historical context. These levels have always been important. The state's relationship to local school actors has varied during the decades. There was a period in the 1950s where control was intensified with more testing. The 1970s and 1980s focused on local responsibility. Now in the NPM era, the state's control of local actors again intensified, this time with global economic

organisations at its back. This control regime overshadows the learning, equity and democracy agenda that are still in the curriculum.

This state and societal interest in schools is one way to renew and improve the vision of a School for All. According to Luhmann (Seidl and Becker 2005), organisations are basically closed systems that must be challenged in order to improve. From the research on the inner lives of schools (for an overview, see Blossing 2000), it is difficult for principals and teachers to invent problems and take actions outside those constructed inside the organisation. This means that one cannot just inform schools and leave the responsibility with them. Instead of legislation and control, this paper argues for informative technology, intensive interaction and communication between schools and state organisations, in which people create communities of practice (Wenger 1998) where both parties can learn and improve. This will not only improve schools but also improve state organisations or authorities responsible for school review information. This may appear costly and unnecessary, since the information is already there. All that is needed is to correct the organisation of schools.

This combination of an informative technology with an interactive communication strategy could constitute a new vision where school organisations become fundamental parts of the society. Schools would not just be organisations where students acquire knowledge and skills to join the work force, but the very residence for human ideals of democracy and equity. Long ago, the vision of a nationwide school system where all children could enter seemed ambitious and costly. In a similar way, this vision of a society-wide school system where many organisations interact seems grandiose. However, it is a vision to strive towards because it is under serious threat. There is no way back. We need a new vision that takes us into the future. It will move from the idea of a School for All to a school in which the whole of the society can engage.

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Chapter 3
The Norwegian School for All: Historical Emergence and Neoliberal Confrontation

Gunn Imsen and Nina Volckmar

3.1 Introduction

The Norwegian education system has played a prominent role in the development from a relatively poor country at the start of the twentieth century to one of the world's richest at the close of the century. Education has contributed significantly to nation-building, modernisation, welfare and community development. However, growing international influence on education policy, neoliberalism and the growth of individualistic attitudes in public thought around the millennium have altered the conditions for this laboriously constructed school system, causing widespread concern that its fundamental values were under threat. How did this situation develop? What kind of society engendered the Norwegian education model? What were the motivations, the means and the governing systems of that development? What are the new transnational governing systems that have been introduced in recent years? Can we identify specific management systems which may counteract the traditional ideal of 'a School for All'? What does existing research say about the current status of 'a School for All'? What are the threats?

The present Norwegian education system is mainly public, encompassing most pupils aged from 6 to 19. Only a small proportion (2.6 %) of pupils in Norway attends private schools. The public system is divided into three main levels with primary and lower secondary school compulsory for pupils aged 6–16, a 3-year upper secondary school including vocational training for pupils 16–19 and a university/college level offering bachelor's, master's and PhD degrees. From the age of 1, children are entitled to attend kindergarten. Figure 3.1 shows the structure of the two lowest levels of the school system. Most children with special needs are included in the regular system, with only 0.3 % of pupils attending special needs

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3.3 Growing International Influence After the Millennium

3.3.1 The Knowledge Promotion Reform

The Norwegian school system came under increased criticism after the publication of the first PISA study in 2000 in which Norway barely scored above average among numerous OECD countries. Norway's disappointing result received considerable attention in the press; the opinion that Norway's education system was not as good as they might have expected was widespread among politicians, educators and the general public.

Whereas reforms after WW2 were mainly attributed to the Labour Party, education reform pertaining to primary, lower and upper secondary education in the 2000s, the so-called Knowledge Promotion Reform, was a bipartisan project involving both the right and the left in Norwegian politics. Since the turn of the millennium, education policy has more notably become an arena for international players; organisations like the OECD, WTO and EU became premises for how national education policies should be shaped, not only in Norway but throughout the world (Karlsen 2002). National education policy is greatly influenced by the statements made by international experts and agencies, among others the OECD's annual report, as well as the results from international tests like PISA and TIMSS.

After the parliamentary election in 2001, the Norwegian government was controlled by a centre-right coalition with a Minister for Education and Research from the Conservative Party. It announced major changes in education policy. The main strategy was decentralisation and delegation of power to the municipalities and individual schools. Moreover, this involved a more coherent management by objective system, greater transparency and a new, thorough national curriculum for primary, lower secondary and upper secondary schools (St.meld.nr. 30 (2003–2004)). The national curriculum was reformed to specify 'competence aims' pertaining to the pupils' measurable learning outcomes in each subject and devolving responsibility to municipalities and schools to make more detailed curriculum plans. Heavy emphasis was placed on basic skills which should be integrated in all subjects and across all levels of the learning process (Læreplanverket for Kunnskapsløftet 2006). A curriculum that was developed according to these principles was believed to be more adapted to the new national system for quality assessment and national tests, implemented from 2004 on. The Knowledge Promotion did not lead to considerable structural changes, but the connections between different levels in the entire education system were made even tighter. Greater emphasis was also placed on adapting education individually for each pupil and on local quality assurance systems which involved extensive documentation of the school's activities and results.

After the parliamentary election of 2005, a red-green coalition government consisting of the Labour Party, the Centre Party and the Socialist Left Party came to power. Surprisingly, perhaps, most of the management reforms from the previous government were enacted, including the national tests. The Knowledge Promotion Reform now became a unified political project. The absence of political alternatives to this

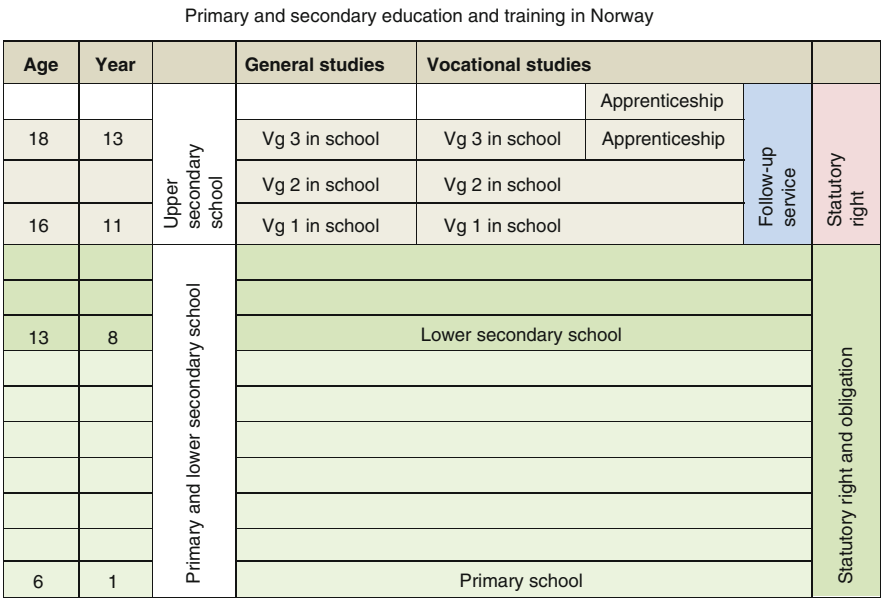

Fig. 3.1 The structure of the Norwegian education system (Utdanningsdirektoratet 2010)

schools. Norway, with only around five million inhabitants, is a geographically dispersed county with 430 municipalities. With 80 % of the population in cities or urban areas, there remains a multitude of small municipalities and small schools in Norway, with local environment varying considerably between different geographic areas.

This chapter focuses on primary and lower secondary school and the education of children aged 6–16. In a Norwegian context, the concept of 'a School for All' is meant to define a common School for All pupils without organisational differentiation based on pupils' abilities. While the meaning of 'a School for All' has changed over time, today it is generally considered to consist of four features. The first regards resources, to which all municipalities and schools should have access in equal quantity and in the quality of economic, material and human resource. The second feature is the social dimension, which addresses schools' ability to facilitate interaction between all groups of pupils. Thirdly, the cultural dimension upholds that the content of the curriculum should be approximately the same for all pupils. The final dimension concerns a respect for diversity: the pupils' right to an education suited to their individual needs must be respected (Telhaug 1994). It should be clear from this list that the Norwegian school system has faced many challenges in advancing these contrasting interests. The greatest challenge has been that of differentiation, or finding a balance that allows pupils to be taught in the same class while accommodating their various cultures and abilities. Another challenge is the question of the schools' universal subject matter, or to what degree pupils should have the same curriculum regardless of the school or its location. This introduces the issue of local variation

and the need to adapt curricula to meet pupils' needs and backgrounds. This is associated with the recurring issue of how the management of schools can be balanced between central and local authorities, and to what degree parents should have a say about the subject matter and teaching methods they use.

3.2 Development of a 'School for All' in Norway

3.2.1 From Pietism to Nation-Building

The public school system with compulsory attendance is generally dated to 1739, when the Danish-Norwegian King Christian VI issued an *ordinance for the rural schools of Norway* as part of his state-controlled pietism.[1] He introduced obligatory confirmation in 1736 as a means of ensuring that everyone had a sufficient basis for living in accordance with pietistic Lutheranism. These steps were also politically motivated as the pietistic sector could be employed to strengthen political control. To further this ambition, the king and the state-pietistic clergy established a public School for All children aged 7–12 who were not already receiving schooling elsewhere. The school was organised as an ambulatory school, emphasising Christianity and reading. Wealthier groups and those living in the cities had access to bourgeois and Latin schools (Telhaug and Mediås 2003).

The Peasantry Education Act of 1860 paved the way for a significant wave of reforms and for the modern breakthrough of the Norwegian folk school; this included an extended period of education, expanded curriculum content and permanent schools instead of the earlier ambulatory schools. The Folk School Act of 1889 established this institution as a 5-year comprehensive school for children from all social classes and marked the final break from the old 'church school'. It was run by municipal politicians and was free. Thus, the Norwegian comprehensive school was a reality as far back as 1889 (Slagstad 1998; Telhaug and Mediås 2003). The old Latin and bourgeois schools in the cities were to some extent replaced by middle schools, and gymnasiums lost their Latin curricula and were developed instead as schools for general education. While the word of God continued to be a central focus in the folk school, preparing pupils for professional work and a secular life in society became equally important (Bull 2011). Liberal education to provide pupils with the necessary skills to participate in society was viewed as equally important to the religious-moral upbringing.

Norway was in a royal union with Sweden from 1814 until 1905 and became an independent kingdom in 1905. School represented an important mediating agency for the nationalistic wave that accompanied Norway's move to independence.

[1] Norway was in union with Denmark from 1537 until 1814 and was in practice subordinated the Danish Crown. However, from 1660 onwards, the twin kingdoms had their own separate laws, militaries and systems of finance.

The state's grip on schools was tightened through the introduction of a national curriculum which went a long way towards delineating a detailed subject matter. The structure was strengthened, and a 7-year folk School for All became a reality in 1920 when only those middle schools based on the 7-year folk school system received economic support from the state. The 7-year folk school was later established under the Folk School Act of 1936. This period, from the mid-nineteenth century until the 1930s, is commonly referred to as *the nation-state school* due to the close connection between educational reforms and contemporary nationalism, as well as the heavy emphasis which the schools placed on national culture, history and language.

3.2.2 Strong State Control and the Development of a Compulsory Comprehensive School

The economic crisis of the interwar years weakened public confidence in market liberalism and paved the way for a wider belief in a strong and active state for the Norwegian people, particularly during the years of reconstruction following World War II. During the interwar years, the Norwegian Labour Party had undergone a transformation from being a party for the working class to a social democratic party for the people and took governmental control for the first time in 1935, which it held until 1965 (apart from during the war years and a few short interruptions). The development of the Norwegian education system became a central aim in the Labour Party's restructuring of Norway as a welfare nation.

3.2.3 Expansion of 'A School for All'

Although Norway, compared with other countries, was quite early in introducing the 7-year compulsory folk school, it lagged behind in developing an expanded basic education system after WW2. Both England and the USA had extended children's schooling to the age of 16, and Sweden was well underway towards introducing a 9-year compulsory basic education. A new generation of politicians concerned with education within the Labour Party supported a new school policy in Norway aimed at integrating the older, separate types of continuation schools into a 9-year comprehensive school. In 1954, the Experimental Act allowed this to be tried out, and the 9-year comprehensive school was established as a nation-wide arrangement through the Primary and Lower Secondary Education Act of 1969.

The main motive of post-war education policy was social integration and egalitarianism through establishing an equal right to education, regardless of geographic location or economic and social background. While notions of individual freedom and the idea that every man is the source of his own happiness were

dominant in the decades leading up to the WW2, values of community took hold after the war. Solidarity, cooperation and national integration were seen as the best bases for peacekeeping. A common School for All was the main tool used to achieve all this. Christian upbringing was diminished even further in the content of schooling during this period, and the previous era's emphasis on romantic ideals of Norwegian nationalism gave way to a more international focus, social awareness and a democratic education. Education policy remained closely regulated by the state (Volckmar 2005, 2008).

3.2.4 Differentiation and Inclusion

The challenge in developing a comprehensive primary and lower secondary school was to recognise that pupils are different and that the differences are assumed to increase with age. How long would it be possible to hold a group of pupils together? The basic belief was that in a 9-year compulsory primary and lower secondary education including all pupils, it would be necessary to divide them into levels according to their abilities (organisational differentiation). After several attempts using various forms of organisational differentiation in the final 2 years of lower secondary school, the principle was abandoned in primary and lower secondary schools in 1974 and replaced by internal pedagogic differentiation within the classes and with cohesive classes from the 1st to 9th classes. It was expected that the problem of differentiation would be resolved by the principle of adapted education, which entailed the right of each pupil to an education suited to their individual abilities.

At the same time, work continued on improving the rights of groups which were previously excluded from the 9-year compulsory primary and lower secondary school or who had experienced poor conditions in their own special schools. In 1975 general educational legislation included that on special schools. Separate, special needs schools were closed down and children with special needs were, to some degree, integrated into ordinary schools. While children with Sami or Kven-Finnish ancestry had previously been victims of a dominant policy of 'Norwegianisation', they were given the right to primary and lower secondary education in the Sami or Kven language in the 1970s.

3.2.5 Neoliberal Shift, Management by Objectives and Decentralisation

Starting at the end of the 1970s and continuing into the 1980s, there was a growing opinion within the Labour Party as well as in the wider public that the state-controlled social democratic model of welfare in its current form had in some ways reached its limits and could no longer be sustained in a new and globalised world.

This criticism, which was rooted in a neoliberal stance, was directed primarily against the management of the public sector, which was believed to be bureaucratic and inflexible. In public sectors, the guiding principle of management by regulation was replaced by that of management by objectives, which was introduced as the new principle of governance for the education sector in 1991 (St.meld.nr. 37 (1990–1991)). The aim was to weaken the state's regulation of details and to transfer more authority and responsibility over to the local level: school owners, schools and teachers (Slagstad 1998; Telhaug and Mediås 2003; Volckmar 2005).

As in other western countries, the education system was criticised for not offering people and society the information and the competence needed to participate in a knowledge-based global economy. After a change of government in autumn 1990, the Labour Party began work on far-reaching reforms of the Norwegian education system. A new Municipal Act in force from 1993 freed the way for decentralisation and increased municipal freedom in school administration, which was an essential precursor to reforms that took place 10 years later. Not least, it allowed bureaucrats with a background in economics to structure schools according to the principles of social economics.

Since the 1970s, academic and vocational courses at upper secondary level were integrated and coordinated in a single institution. In 1994, a decision was passed on the statuary right to 3-year upper secondary education, which should either offer vocational competencies or qualify the student for further studies. These reforms went a long way towards giving Norway an integrated education system for pupils aged 16–19. A new Education Act in 1998 established a principle which put the entire age group within a single context: it underscored the policy of decentralisation and of individual pupils' rights and obligations and formed part of a wider process of legislation regarding individual rights which left its mark on all aspects of the welfare state in subsequent decades.

In 1997 the starting age for primary school was lowered from 7 to 6 years, which brought about the extension of the Norwegian primary and lower secondary school from 9 to 10 years. The national curriculum for this 10-year primary and lower secondary school (L 97) was implemented in 1997 and marked a significant step towards a shared body of school content for all pupils (Læreplanverket for den 10-årige grunnskolen 1996). L 97 was a detailed curriculum with clear instructions on what should be taught at each level (Volckmar 2005, 2008). Norway differed from many other countries in this respect (Ahonen 2001). This detailed curriculum, with clear guidelines for the 'what, when and how' of teaching (processes aims), to some extent also broke from the principle of management by objectives. By refusing to specify result objectives, it also went against the grain of the prevailing neoliberal approach.

Norwegian education policy also differed in that it upheld its restrictive stance on the privatisation of state schools. Whereas Sweden passed the Free School Act in 1993, which allowed for new private alternatives to state schools, Norway adhered to the restrictions of the Private School Act of 1985. At the time, safeguarding the comprehensive state school continued to be a central objective of the Norwegian Labour Party (Volckmar 2010).

prevailing approach to education policy was most likely a result of strong international influence over previous decades, alongside the trend towards convergence of educational issues through the introduction of international evaluations and comparisons.

However, the two governments differed in their view on privatisation. The right-wing government enacted a Free School Act in 2003, partly inspired by the Swedish model. In contrast to the Swedish Act, the Norwegian Act did not allow money to be earned from running a school (Volckmar 2010). The new Free School Act was a red rag for the red-green coalition government. Approval was granted for a new and more restrictive Private School Act which was more in line with that Act of 1985, which stipulated how private schools should operate. In a Nordic and international context, Norway once again took a different route when it came to the question of private schools (Volckmar 2010).

Social equality, an important goal throughout Norwegian post-war education policy in its entirety, is also central to the Knowledge Promotion Reform. In December 2006, the Ministry of Education issued a white paper, St.meld.nr. 16 (2006–2007) *…and no one is left behind. Early intervention for lifelong learning* on measures aimed at preventing social differences between pupils from being further replicated. OECD's national reports and comparative study of pupils' learning outcomes across the 2000s demonstrated that, in Norway, social differences affected pupils' learning outcomes more than might have been expected of an education system that went to such considerable lengths to meet demands for equality in formal rights. Just as surprising was the fact that social differences in learning outcomes were greater in Norway than in other comparable countries (Mortimore et al. 2004; Opheim 2004). Building on a Finnish model, the government concentrated on early intervention among the youngest pupils. Early intervention indicates both that formal teaching must begin as early as kindergarten and continue as a lifelong process, and that measures should be implemented immediately once inadequate development and learning is detected among primary school children (St.meld.nr. 16 (2006–2007)). The old classic aim of social democratic education policy to achieve social equality has in spite of neoliberal shift, persisted until present, although it has adopted some elements from neoliberalism and the American 'No Child Left Behind' policy.

3.4 What Research Indicates About 'A School for All' in Norway

What then does research reveal about how 'a School for All' really works? It was not until the 1990s that school practice was examined systematically by empirical research. An important factor in stimulating research has been the growing international orientation of education policy, and the fact that international bodies like the EU and OECD have increasingly prioritised the field of education in the past few decades. An OECD evaluation of the Norwegian education system in 1989 concluded that Norway demonstrated insufficient knowledge and management of

the education sector (Kirke- og undervisningsdepartementet 1989), which resulted in better reporting and registration systems about educational matters. Although not a member of the EU, Norway is affiliated to it by way of the EEA agreement, and it has a tendency to adapt quickly to new agreements with the EU. However, it was not until after the turn of the millennium that more intense empirical studies of the various aspects of schools' operation were put in place in Norway.

3.4.1 International Studies

In the early 2000s, the OECD carried out a larger study on equality in education in a number of member countries (Mortimore et al. 2004; Opheim 2004). It concluded that the Norwegian education structure is a well-functioning system in which equality is a central goal in national education policy. This highlights the fact that Norway spends a considerable amount of money on education, and that the general education level of the public is high. The decentralised system has, among other things, aimed to reduce geographic differences by building schools in rural areas. The heavy emphasis placed on integrating all groups of pupils, regardless of abilities, special needs, gender, social background or ethnicity, is viewed as promoting equality. Nevertheless, the Norwegian system faces many challenges.

First, PISA studies have for many years shown that despite heavy investment in resources, Norwegian school children do not perform better than average in reading, mathematics and natural sciences (Kjærnsli et al. 2004, 2007, 2010). This view is based on the assumption of a linear correlation between economic inputs and results. Due to the high investments in education made in Norway, one would expect high results. This logic should, however, be nuanced in light of the fact that Norway, due to its geographic distribution, has many small schools which are relatively expensive to run. Local conditions, decentralised curricula, a high degree of integrated pupils with low abilities and local variations in support networks also play a role, as does the quality of teaching. Expectations that Norway should perform well in international studies is just as likely to be motivated by a general national pride and a desire to maintain a good reputation in international educational discourses as by sober economic calculations.

Another result from the PISA investigations showed that the learning environment in Norwegian schools is problematic. Norway is second only to Greece as having the world's loudest pupils. Although the empirical basis for this conclusion is exceptionally weak, the results have received considerable attention and have led politicians to prioritise improving discipline in schools and to support for various programmes which improve classroom management. This in turn creates an industry for programmes in which half-private and private providers compete to sell their services to communities and schools. Providers are ready to foster a private support structure where there is little control of quality assurance and economic conditions.

The TIMSS study has shown similar results as PISA (Grønmo and Onstad 2009). Norwegian pupils in the 4th and 8th grades perform poorly in mathematics and natural sciences in comparison to many other countries, though there is some indication of improvement. This study highlights the fact that Norwegian pupils receive little follow-up attention and feedback from their assignments in comparison to other countries. The TIMSS material also indicates that homework in mathematics can have a positive effect on pupils' performance, but that those from lower socio-economic situations do not profit as much from it as other children (Rønning 2010). This conclusion led to a heated debate in the media about homework that ultimately resulted in schools being required to offer to help pupils with their assignments. The intention was to reduce the significance of a factor which could widen social gaps.

It is often the negative results from international studies that receive the greatest attention from the media and which are incorporated into political discourse to legitimise various measures in certain areas. For example, a study of the attention paid by the media to PISA, which compared Norway, Sweden and Finland, showed that awareness of its results among Norwegians caused them to develop a more polarised opinion of the education system. In Sweden and Finland, awareness of PISA did not have a correspondingly polarising effect (Fladmoe 2012). This indicates that the political effect of PISA has been especially strong in Norway. This in turn may cause the debate on education policy to be influenced by guesses and assumptions about what has caused this deplorable situation. This quickly leads the debate about education into the details of teaching, which ultimately may deprive the policy of consistency and coherence.

Another factor is that positive results rarely receive much attention. There has, for example, been almost complete silence within the media and among politicians about Norway's results in the international ICCS study (International Civic and Citizenship Education Study). This study mapped a broad democratic disposition among the participants towards engagement now and in the future based on basic attitudes, necessary skills and knowledge. In 1999, Norwegian pupils on the 13–16 year level did exceptionally well in this study (Mikkelsen et al. 2001). The Norwegian education policy after 2001 has downplayed democracy and civic duty as a curriculum field (Stray and Heldal 2010) and has instead focused even more heavily on improving reading, mathematics and natural sciences, a move that was probably based on the influences of PISA and TIMSS. The ICCS study in 2009 showed that Norwegian 13–16-year-old students still had a good awareness of democratic values. In terms of knowledge, they ranked 5th among 38 countries (Fjeldstad et al. 2010). The media has also been silent about this. In light of the terror attacks in Oslo and Utøya on 22 July 2011, it is surprising that municipality elections a month later continued to focus on national tests in Norwegian, English and mathematics as the main objective areas in school. This illustrates that international influence on the national education policy is selective, and that a filtering takes place on a national level in terms of what is implemented in practical politics. It is not the international studies which are the main problem but rather what the respective countries choose to derive from them and how they are used in the discourse of education policy.

3.4.2 *Differences Between Districts and Between Schools*

One of the premises for the comprehensive school is that schools should have access to the same economic, material and human resources, regardless of their geographic location and municipal affiliation. Considering that municipalities and counties have an economic responsibility for schools, it is not surprising that there are considerable differences among them. Until the mid-1980s, this was compensated for by earmarked state grants to the municipal schools, depending on how many classes the school had. The decentralisation movement of the 1990s gave the municipalities more independent responsibility for the distribution of state funding, and the school sector was forced to compete for funding with the municipal social and health sectors and with the technical sector. This occurred at the same time that municipal school administration in many areas was being restructured and downsized, whilst professional school administrators were pushed aside by engineers and social economists. This created an unavoidable situation whereby differences between the allocations of funds to schools continued to grow. For example, in 2010 children in the richest municipalities received more than double the national yearly average allocated per pupil.[2] By loosening state control over municipalities they also gained greater freedom in determining class size, meaning that the status of resources for an equally valuable school has been weakened in the name of management by objectives and decentralisation.

Studies of pupils' performance have also shown regional differences. This became apparent in the evaluation of the 1997 reform, which showed that differences between the highest and lowest performing counties in Norwegian language and mathematics were more than one standard deviation, in other words substantial differences (Imsen 2003). This finding has been supported by several later studies (Hægeland and Kirkebøen 2007; Utdanningsdirektoratet 2011).

A number of studies have shown significant differences among schools, both in terms of learning outcomes and of students' well-being and motivation (Imsen 2003; Kjærnsli et al. 2007; Olsen and Turmo 2010). On the one hand, from a normative perspective, one could argue that this is unacceptable for a country that strives for equality among schools. According to PISA, one could claim that the differences between schools in Norway are small in comparison to those of a number of other countries, and that the variation between pupils within individual schools is greater than the variation between the schools themselves. This has been used to downplay the importance of differences in quality among Norwegian schools. In other words, the segregated school models we find in a number of central European countries, which naturally show considerable performance differences among schools, are used as a contrast to the Nordic comprehensive school model. But this comparison ultimately obscures the fact that the aim of offering an equally good School for All pupils, regardless of where they live in

[2] Source: KOSTRA, an online register system for Norwegian municipalities and counties.

Norway, has yet to be met. In doing so, it fails to highlight one of the greatest challenges faced by the comprehensive school system.

3.4.3 Differences Between Social Groups

A central motivation for the development of the comprehensive school has been to increase mobility in society and reduce differences among various groups, primarily social disparities. From a historical perspective, there is no doubt that this has been a success. In the mid-twentieth century, there were substantial social differences in terms of theoretical education, to which only the wealthiest had access. In 1963, only 3 % of fishermen's children were prepared for the artium exam needed for access to a university level education. Among academics or higher governmental officials, 60 % of their children received such an education (Vangsnes 1967). In the wake of the substantial school reforms of the 1960s and 1970s, there was a comprehensive expansion of the education system, including in rural areas, allowing the public greater access to education. The establishment of reasonable loan schemes for young people during their education as well as a general increase in the prosperity of the entire population further contributed to this greater access. The aim of providing equally accessible opportunities to education was well on its way towards being achieved by the 1990s, when legislation established a legal right to 13 years of education for everyone.

A formal right to education does not, however, mean that all receive equal benefits or are equally pleased with the education system. There continue to be differences among social groups in terms of education outcomes. This is already apparent in primary and lower secondary school, that is to say up to 16 years of age. The results of a national investigation in 2010 showed that the parents' level of education clearly correlated with their children's results, both at the 5th and 8th levels (Utdanningsdirektoratet 2011). This study showed that pupils who perform poorly at the 5th level continue to do so at the 8th. There is little change in the pupils' relative performance levels throughout their education, and the same pupils continually achieve lower than their higher-performing classmates. PISA 2009 demonstrated a correlation between pupils' abilities to read and their socio-economic status. Some consolation can be found in the fact that this correlation was weaker in the Nordic countries than in other OECD countries (Olsen and Turmo 2010). An analysis of school results in 2006 showed the same pattern: the higher the education of the parents, the better their children's grades. In 2006, the average difference between the highest and lowest education groups was a little over half a grade on a scale from 1 to 6; whether this discrepancy is large or not is debatable, but it would be likely to play a role in admissions to special courses of study in upper secondary school.

The student's gender was also a factor in differing academic performance, despite the fact that gender equality has been a clearly articulated objective in public school policy since the mid-1970s. In this, Norway has followed a pattern that has long been established across much of the western world. Traditionally, girls

have performed better in language subjects, while boys have done better in maths, natural sciences and social studies. As in many other countries, this began to change in the mid-1990s as girls caught up with, and in some cases surpassed, boys in their average performance. Generally speaking, one could say that since the turn of the millennium girls have exceeded boys in all school subjects except physical education. This must be toned down a little. Gender differences exert a greater influence upon overall grade achievement than on formal assessments, such as national tests or written exams. In mathematics there is no gender difference in the exam results: PISA 2009 shows that, in this subject, boys do better in all countries included in the sample, except for Sweden, in which girls do better, whereas in Denmark the boys' results s are sometimes even higher. These results have consistently been stable in most countries (Olsen 2010), which indicates that motivation within individual subjects depends on the local cultural values associated with both gender and social background.

The extent of non-western immigration to Norway is relatively moderate and occurred later than in many central European countries. The number of pupils who speak a minority language is largest in the cities, especially in Oslo. From the left-wing political stance, an inclusive comprehensive school has been seen as one of the most important tools for the successful social and cultural integration of immigrants. Not unexpectedly, the children of immigrants perform somewhat lower than Norwegian pupils, yet there is a tendency for second generation immigrants partly to overcome this disadvantage, particularly in mathematics (Hægeland and Kirkebøen 2007; Bachmann et al. 2010).

Many of the differences in terms of social background, place of residence, gender and ethnicity have been stable over time. There is a complicated interplay of causes behind the changes we have observed throughout the 2000s, where child and youth culture beyond school plays an important role in how its learning environment changes, as do new pedagogies and new governance structure. The transition from the process objectives of the national curriculum of 1997 to the outcome-oriented objectives of the Learning Promotion Reform of 2006 has, together with an increased municipal expectation of higher achievement on national tests, undoubtedly placed greater pressure on schools to focus on those theoretical subjects that are most liable to being tested. The considerable media attention given to the poor PISA results has also contributed to this. Theoretical subjects have been strengthened through an increased number of lesson hours in schools since 2005. Practical and aesthetic-oriented elective subjects, being an important component in the differentiation policy of the 1970s and 1980s, disappeared in 1997, and these subjects received little time and attention in the 2006 plans. Varied content is essential for realising a school which is intended to accommodate all pupils, and there is little doubt that the new administrative systems and the international competition for knowledge bear responsibility for having given schools a more theoretical profile.

Cooperation with parents has always been an important principle in the Norwegian school system and has, to some degree, been strengthened over several decades through both laws and regulations. The parents' right to decide their child's education is also stipulated by article 26.3 in the human rights declaration, which

states that 'parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children'. Other motives include the notion that parents' engagement will contribute to a good learning environment for the children and that more active participation from parents can help counteract the push for a stronger private school system. Parental participation has also been stimulated by the political right as a means of creating greater customer orientation. The neoliberal social ideology is considerably affected by the principal agent theory, which downplays the welfare element and reduces all relations to dealings between customers and providers. In this relationship the customer is always right, that is to say the pupils and parents. Stimulating customer or user orientation among parents thus becomes more than a matter of facilitating learning for individual pupils. It is within the capacity of the customer to present clear, individual demands on the school. With this, cooperation between schools and parents is no longer an equal relationship between partners but rather one in which the parents represent hegemony.

Social differences have always affected parental participation in schools. Research has shown that not all parents view cooperation in an equally positive light, and there appears to be a connection between differing attitudes towards cooperation and the parents' own educational level (Nordahl 2000, 2004). A form of management built on a working relationship with parents, one which goes in the direction of customer orientation, will probably widen the social gaps which already exist in schools. The question of who should have authority over a school, whether the state, the teaching profession or the parents, is thus unresolved and politically volatile, one whose answer will undoubtedly have consequences for the future of the comprehensive school.

3.4.4 The Problem of Differentiation

The models for organisational differentiation in the 13–16-year age groups that were tried out in the 1960s, with a segregation of levels in the main theory subjects, were abandoned because (among other reasons) most parents wanted the highest course plan for their children and because the groups therefore became so heterogeneous that differences among pupils had to be addressed by the teaching strategies used within the classroom. Since the 1970s, considerable school-based developmental work has been undertaken that includes approaches such as pupils' activity, individual work, teaching pupils at the same level in smaller, temporarily organised groups, multidisciplinarity, project work and storyline, all of which have their roots in a progressive pedagogic tradition. The idea was that within a varied teaching and learning environment it would be possible to facilitate teaching assignments which suit the individual pupil. Adapted education has been the main principle in the Norwegian comprehensive school for the past three decades and remains an individual right embodied in the 1998 Education Act. Yet it remains unclear how far this right extends in practice and whether individual parents can demand 'tailored' teaching for their children.

Norway currently maintains a special school system in which pupils with special needs have access to additional instruction after this has been deemed necessary through expert evaluation. The principle of social inclusion remains strong, and most pupils requiring special instruction are integrated into normal schools.

It was not until an evaluation of Reform 97 took place that it became clear that the practical application of the adapted education principle had not entirely lived up to its ideals. In many classrooms there was little variation in instruction and therefore little adaption to individual abilities, while variations among the classes themselves were quite large. Much of the teaching continued to be done in the form of whole-class teaching in which all pupils worked with the same learning material and at the same pace. Another widespread practice involved pupils working individually with a work schedule, often following instructions from a workbook on how to complete assignments, while the teacher went around the classroom helping each individual pupil. It was further shown that most individualised classrooms distinguished themselves through increased use of written assignments and a reduced use of the classroom as a learning arena (Imsen 2003; Klette 2003).

In educational policy, the principle of adapted education is considered as a key to realising a School for All. But, at the same time, the principle is under pressure from many sides. Firstly there is pressure from ambitious parents who demand more for their children than teachers can manage. Secondly, pressure comes from municipal authorities who lack the economic means to match the high demand for resources associated with adapted education. Thirdly, the political right continues to push for a segregated school built on a formal division of levels. The right-wing municipality of Oslo offers a good example of this. In the autumn of 2011, the municipality established special classes for particularly gifted children in subjects such as music, mathematics and natural sciences, which conflicts with state regulations; this illustrates the political power play taking place over the future development of the comprehensive school. This also illustrates the weaknesses of management by objectives when it comes to the broader, most important sides of education policy.

The problem of differentiating the comprehensive school remains unresolved, and it is still unclear how the principle of adapted education should be understood in practice. It is wavering in the tension between community and individuality, and there are many interpretations of it, both on more principle and practical levels (Bachmann and Haug 2006). It can, at one extreme, be perceived in a very narrow way, for example, as specific forms of organisation in which individual work plans are combined with individual supervision. On the other hand, it could be viewed as a wide concept in which adapted education is meant to improve the school's practice to allow all pupils access to the best possible teaching within the common social setting. With the recent Knowledge Promotion Reform, there has been a shift in the meaning of the term adapted education away from an orientation towards the community and, instead, towards a more heavy emphasis on individualisation. As long as this ambiguity exists, there will be room for both political and practical tugs-of-war. Adapted education is a political term which

changes its practical meaning depending on the time and place (Haug in Dahl and Midtbø 2006). That means that the principle of a School for All is continually put on trial.

3.4.5 Paperwork and a Waste of Time

The ideal of adapted education demands a great many resources in order to be realised, regardless of what meaning one associates with it. The most important resources are teacher competencies and time. If the teacher is to have time for each individual pupil, then there must be a limit on the number of pupils in each classroom. This has been subject to discussion and negotiation among teacher organisations and school authorities for years. Teachers complain that they have more to do, that they are uneasy about their inability to offer the necessary help to individual pupils and that there never seems to be enough time.

Norwegian teachers and school leaders have working hours based on the annual number of hours stipulated in negotiations between school owners and teaching organisations. This is largely consistent across the country. Within the annual framework there are further local negotiations to decide how time is distributed between teaching, group planning, collaboration and meetings, and time for individual preparation of teaching as well as subject-related continuing education. How time is divided between these types of work varies depending on the pupil's age, but on average about three quarters of the time is spent on work directly related to the school and around one quarter on independent, individual work. Studies of how teachers use their time show that the age of the 'lonely teacher' is long gone. More time is now dedicated to group planning and to personal contact with pupils and their parents than previously, *and teachers feel that they spend more of their time on all their tasks.* Much of that time is used for nonsubject-related activities such as discipline and conflict solving. The material decided upon in group lesson planning is often viewed as being largely controlled by the head teacher, something which breaks from the traditional autonomy which has characterised teaching as a profession. The main impression is that working time is now under far greater control by the employer than previously (Nicolaisen et al. 2005; Strøm et al. 2009). From a wider perspective, this appears to be part of the national effort to consolidate control over the education system, a venture which started towards the end of the 1980s and was stimulated by the OECD. Whether or not the decentralisation of government power to the municipalities was the right move is debatable. It was introduced without a price tag and has ended up costing teachers dearly in the form of a greater workload inside and outside the classroom.

The importance of school leaders in the development of a good school has been recognised since the 1970s. Norway is no exception to the international development in the role of school leaders, a process that has seen bureaucratic and administrative school leaders being replaced by pedagogic leaders and has focused on the school's organisation, its development and the quality of teaching. At the same time

school leaders have assumed the main responsibility for school-based development, for quality, and for pupils' learning outcomes at their own schools. There is a general perception that these new tasks exceed the time frame available to school leaders, that the administrative support functions are too weak and that the technical and administrative leader functions consume time which should have been used for pedagogic development work (Møller et al. 2006).

For many years, a number of structural factors have crept in and sapped up time. On a national level, a large number of action plans from various ministries have been developed which are barely coordinated and which eventually create more work for schools. School-based development work, being at the core of efforts for adapted education, requires greater cooperation between teachers. The development of school-based curricula which supplement national curricula has become more formalised with the introduction of goal-oriented management and result objectives. Goal-oriented management demands evaluation and control which, in the context of teaching, is a significant task on the municipal level, on the school level and with respect to individual pupils. Most municipalities and counties have implemented programmes for quality assurance which consists of a large number of documents about objectives and evaluations. Furthermore, more individual-oriented, rights-based legislation puts high demands on schools and teachers to document both their activities and their results. Accountability has become an important principle for most municipalities, school leaders and teachers as it has become essential to demonstrate exactly what kind of job they have been carrying out. Professional pedagogic work is increasingly being embraced by legislative frameworks, placing a much greater burden on teachers. Almost everything has to be documented; as a result, an all-encompassing paper mill has developed within which teachers are forced to work.

The Ministry for Education and Learning has taken teachers' lack of time seriously and offered a series of solutions. A committee in 2008 intended to alleviate the problem (Kunnskapsdepartementet 2009; Meld. St. 19 (2009–2010)). Teachers want to spend more time on lesson planning, subject-related follow-ups on pupils and competence building and less time on group meetings and documentation. This highlights the importance of good school leadership and shows that school leaders need to withhold local demands for charting and documentation which exceed the demands of the law. When the issue came before Parliament in 2010, a series of good suggestions aimed to strengthen the competencies of leaders and teachers was put forward.

3.5 Reflections

The Norwegian comprehensive school, or the ideal of a School for All, has constantly been changing and has been the object of political contention since the mid-nineteenth century. A central theme in the history of Norway's education system, up to the turn of the millennium, has been the extension of the comprehensive school, both in terms of the number of years of instruction offered and in the desire to

include all pupils. In practice, Norway now has a 13-year mandatory education which aims to stimulate the majority of youths to complete the final 3 years of upper secondary education. The idea of a common School for All remains strong in Norway, and there is bipartisan support for the 'comprehensive school'.

In the past few decades, and particularly since the turn of the millennium, there has been little talk of the 'School for All'. Like education systems in other countries, the Norwegian system has increasingly been influenced by a clear transnational, neoliberal take on education policy which views knowledge as the most important step towards functioning in a knowledge-based, competitive economy. In light of this, school is valued first and foremost for its ability to produce knowledge in the form of learning outcomes. This corresponds in some ways with the increased emphasis placed on human rights. Views on justice have contributed to a greater demand for individually adapted teaching programmes, private solutions and the parents' simple right to choose the type of teaching for their children. Although wide differences in the school's practice have been documented, both between districts and schools, the 'comprehensive school' has, on a rhetorical level, been passed off as treating all children equally without sufficient room for difference and diversity.

On the whole, there is bipartisan support for the national reform of 2006, the Knowledge Promotion Reform, which is the Norwegian education policy's answer to transnational influences and the introduction of a transnational system of governance. These reforms shift the emphasis in education from process to results. With its emphasis on competition, it plays on external and not internal motivations. It promotes individualism and not community and moves policy from state to local governance, accountability and customer control.

While there was previously little awareness of the quality of Norwegian schools, international tests have revealed that they are not as good as expected. This has led to purposeful measures to improve teaching in the most important areas. Politicians, schools and teachers know more about where schools need improvement. At the same time increased focus on learning outcomes and demands for documentation have drawn attention away from other academic areas, such as practical-aesthetic subjects and an upbringing in the ideals of democracy, solidarity and unity. The teachers' freedom of action has been eroded by increasing bureaucracy and time-consuming documentation. The school's main aims are formally broad and take into consideration that pupils should learn skills for life. In practice, the neoliberal policy reduces the notion of quality to a narrow list of numbers of results on the next national or international performance tests.

In this landscape of education policy, the Norwegian comprehensive school finds itself in an uncertain and changing situation. How open should it be to private alternatives? How much should one break from the principle of combined classes and allow for a permanent differentiation of levels? How should one meet the demands for adapted and varied education for all pupils, both within and outside the framework of the classroom community? And to what extent should teachers' professionalism be supervised by reports and documentation? These questions define a notable dividing line between the right and the left of Norwegian politics; the practical

answers they demand should provide the key to deciding which type of School for All is to be realised.

The development of a School for All must therefore constantly be followed empirically and ideologically and with an analytical eye. It is heavily challenged by new systems of governance and quantified demands for legitimacy which systematically infiltrate the autonomy and the pedagogic skills teachers need in their daily work.

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Chapter 4
A School for Less Than All in Denmark

Annette Rasmussen and Lejf Moos

4.1 The Danish Educational System

4.1.1 Contemporary Contradictions

Political and public sectors develop at different speeds and in diverse directions. The aims of economic policies are often different from the aims of education policies, and the tendency is that policies on economics outpace those of education.

'A School for All' has been a dominant vision in Denmark for about a century now. Political majorities have gradually amended legislation to describe a comprehensive School for All with no streaming. Basically this was done in order to develop a school that was able to form the next generation to take over the desired knowledge, values and norms. The Danish Folkeskole (primary and lower-secondary school) was in the first part of the 20th century intended to contribute to nation building, following defeats on the battlefield of 1864. In the second part of the century, following the Second World War, the Folkeskole was intended to raise democratic young people, in mindset and actions, who were able and willing to avoid war. This development culminated with the Folkeskole Act of 1993, which produced a comprehensive school with no streaming at all.

However, the education policies did not reflect the economic policies. Education policies aimed – more or less until 2006 – at creating a welfare state, while economic policies aimed at creating a competitive state, especially from the mid-1990s

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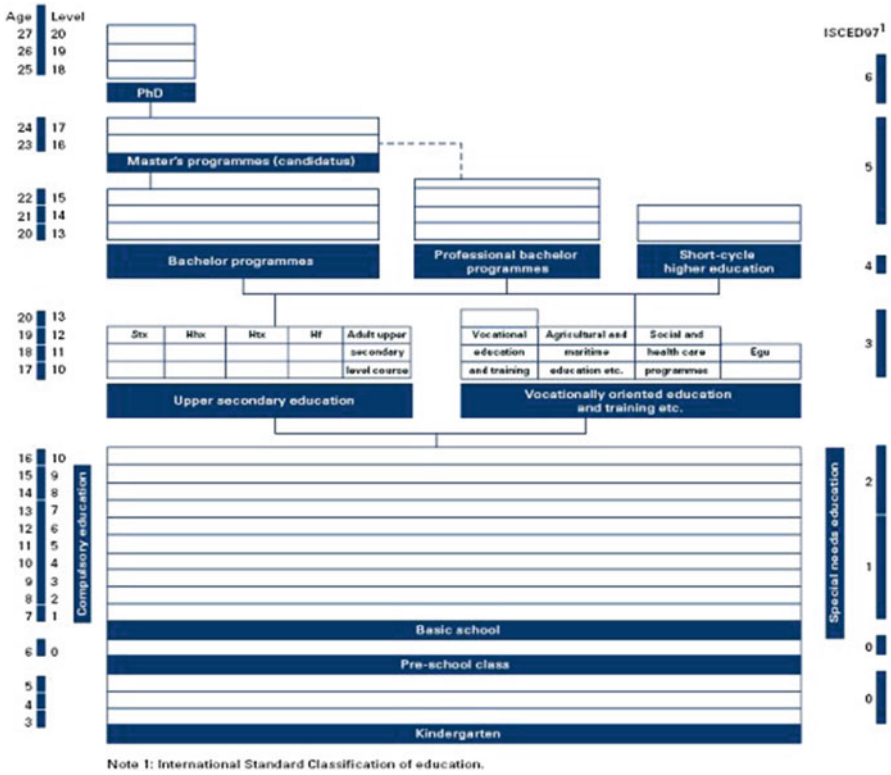

Fig. 4.1 The Danish educational system

and onwards. Different values underpin these two kinds of societies: equality and participatory democracy for the welfare state and competition and job readiness for the competitive state. The contradiction can be illustrated by the shift in dominant discourses on education. Until recently a majority of politicians have argued, with support from the Salamanca Declaration, that it is unfair to deprive children with learning difficulties of inclusion in a community of peers. Today, however, it is increasingly more common to hear politicians argue that we need to take more care of the talented, excellent and gifted pupils by supporting special schools or special offers in the Folkeskole.

In this case study we explore the long-term interplay between education and economic policies to understand how the dichotomy between welfare and competitive values has developed and how it affects a 'School for All'.

The Folkeskole, is a 10-year, non-streamed, comprehensive school with a number of options for streaming pupils for shorter periods of time (Fig. 4.1).

Preschool classes are closely integrated in the Folkeskole and so are leisure time activities and clubs.

Pupils with special needs can be taught in the Folkeskole or in special schools. The number of special schools, however, has been declining rapidly. At the same

time, the number of private schools is rising and so is the number of pupils attending private schools. By 2010, approximately 15 % of all pupils in Denmark attended private schools as opposed to 12 % in 1999 (Pedersen 2010a), while the percentage of children attending private schools earlier in the post-war era had been around 6 % (Telhaug et al. 2006).

A few private schools are affiliated to religious communities, but most of them are based on the same values and norms as the Folkeskole. The main purpose of legislation on private schools is to give parents a choice. Choices, however, are more often led by social than educational motives and recently also geographical motives. When small country schools are closed to limit public spending, in many cases they are replaced by private schools initiated by resourceful parents.

In the period 1990–2007, there has been a decrease of schools in Denmark. In total 387 schools have been closed during this period (Danish Technological Institute 2008). Accordingly, the school structure is increasingly characterised by fewer and bigger public schools and more private schools, implying also that more children attend private schools.

4.2 The Origin of Compulsory Education

The provision of compulsory education for all children was established with the Education Act of 1739 (Larsen 1989: 14). The act stated the obligation of education, but not schooling, and in the following centuries a sharp distinction was maintained between education in the country and in towns – between village schools and town schools.

With the Education Act of 1814, compulsory education for all children was extended to 7 years (Kjersgaard 1993). School districts were established, and it was stated that schools should be accessible to all children. This was difficult to realise in the most thinly populated areas of the country, both due to geographical and economic conditions (Olsen 1986: 34).

In 1903 the municipal town schools and grammar schools were coordinated by the Act on Secondary Schools, and a united school system was established (Haue et al. 1986: 132). According to the 1903 Act, a 4-year middle school (sixth to ninth form) was introduced in both the grammar schools and in the municipal town schools. The children had to pass an exam before they could transfer from village schools to middle school. But in reality this transition was almost impossible to realise, both by means of knowledge and due to geographical distance. If they passed the middle school exam, they could leave school, continue for one more year in secondary school and prepare for the lower-secondary school leaving examination or apply for admission to grammar school.

With the 1937 Act on Municipal Schools, the distinction between village schools and town schools was widely maintained. Danish school children were still divided on the basis of age, geography, social background and gender. It was not until 1958 that schooling in Denmark was standardised, and the distinctions between town and country erased (Olsen 1986: 56).

4.3 From Welfare State to Competitive State

The development of the comprehensive school in Denmark in the direction of an undivided School for All was a gradual process, running through the twentieth century.

An overview of the legislation on education and schools from the Second World War until today can demonstrate this process and the general trends in education policy:

The period 1903–1993 saw a gradual process in education policies and discourses towards a 'School for All'. The process was based on democratic and self-help traditions, which were sustained by the 'cooperative movement' (primarily farmers' tradition for cooperative dairies, with consumer cooperatives). In education N.F.S. Grundtvig was important, as he argued that parents should have a free choice of education for their children (Korsgaard and Wiborg 2006). Education was made compulsory, but schooling was not. This brought about many freestanding schools.

In the half-century following the Second World War, Denmark built a welfare state that should protect its citizens against threats from the outside and establish participatory democracies on individual and institutional as well as local (municipal) and state levels. In this era we saw a 'flat' Danish democracy with strong local governance and influences. This was also a foundation for continuing the development towards a 'School for All'.

The general trend in twentieth-century education policies has thus been an advance in social justice in comprehensive and non-streamed schooling. There was political disagreement as to the role of government: The Social Democrats wanted the government to play a more active role in helping underprivileged families compared to the Liberal Party, who wanted to leave more decisions to the local levels and individuals. But wide political consensus was obtained in the direction of an undivided school.

4.4 Social Justice Through Education

Especially the 1958 Act initiated the development towards an undivided school. This act marked the beginning of a prolonged educational trend, which focused on a continued postponement of student streaming (Table 4.1). The 1958 Act postponed streaming from the fifth to seventh form and standardised conditions for town and country schools, making it possible for children, regardless of the type of school they came from, to proceed to secondary education after finishing seventh form (Kruchov 1985: 146). In the following decades, the comprehensive school went through radical changes which, however, were not primarily due to legislation but to profound changes in society.

The economy and the political situation framed what could be carried out in the school system. The 1960s were characterised by an expanding economy and rising employment, which in the early 1970s boomed into full employment. The dominant political buzzwords of that period were 'social equality through education' (Hansen 2003: 101) and 'mobilisation of the pool of talent' (Olsen 1986: 83). As pointed out

Table 4.1 Phases in the development of economic and education politics

Economic politics		Education politics
Welfare state	1958	A step towards a comprehensive school was formed with streaming postponed to the seventh form
	1975	Streaming was softened
Competitive state	1993	Streaming was abolished
	2006	Schooling was seen as 'preparation for further studies' and for work

by the Swedish researcher Torsten Husén, 'capable hands are in short supply and the economy expects the educational system to tap the pool of talent more efficiently' (1968: 19). One of the premises for this was found in a flexible school system, in which a definitive choice between various educational paths was postponed as long as possible. Such a system was considered more capable of nursing talent from all walks of life than a rigid system with early selection, which would, to a large extent, depend on social background.

With the 1975 Act 'almost' 10 years of undivided comprehensive schooling was introduced. In some subjects ability grouping was maintained in the final 3 years, where the pupils were streamed into a 'basic course' (grundkursus) or an 'advanced course' (udvidet kursus). Agreement on ability grouping was obtained by its enactment as a general rule, which made it possible for schools to renounce the practice if they wished to do so. By means of this compromise, it was expected that the undivided school would gradually develop through school practice, which was also what happened (Kruchov 1985: 151).

In the following years several schools refrained from making use of ability grouping in the four subjects. This was not necessarily due to a conscious strive for an undivided school; rejection of ability grouping was also a result of certain pedagogical quality considerations and the fact that more pupils than expected would proceed to the advanced course. Thus, basic course groupings would be very small, and the differentiation of pupils' abilities would be just as distinct on the advanced course as on undivided courses. On this basis many schools believed that it would be better to give up ability grouping; hence, in practice the flow of pupils had a considerable influence on the school structure (Olsen 1986: 89).

4.5 Global Competition and Neo-liberalism

A major trend was started by the government in the late 1970s, as it began to accept its role in a market-driven globalisation process and, thus, in global competition (Pedersen 2010b). Primary stakeholders in this process were transnational agencies like the WTO (World Trade Organization), the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development), the IMF (International Monetary Fund), the EU (European Union) and of course the states. Nations like Denmark slowly began to turn away from traditional welfare state thinking and shifted its focus to competitive state thinking. The then social democratic government – and later on all other

governments – took important initiatives around 1980, and pivotal labour market legislation was made in the mid-1990s that presented new perspectives on the state and its citizens. Citizens were first and foremost considered parts of a labour force that is willing and able to work.

The years after the 1975 Act were characterised by economic recession. From the late 1970s and increasingly until the early 1990s, many countries encountered economic problems that led to great unemployment and cutbacks in public spending. In the same period the nation states were challenged more than ever before by globalisation and increased international competition, which put great pressure on the public sector that was criticised for being inefficient and creating a culture of dependency. Governments in all of the Nordic countries initiated deregulations that reduced central regulation, on the one hand, but strengthened the need for detailed frames, on the other, which also meant stronger framing of schools (Telhaug et al. 2002).

Where school expenditures, linked to the process of extended municipal self-government, had until 1980 been steadily growing, they were reduced severely in the years to follow. Politically driven by economic thinking and the rationale of saving money a period of increased state control of the public sector economy started, which meant the introduction of tax ceilings, tight frames for expenditure and cutbacks on block grants, which was meant to force the municipalities to reduce their level of service (Windinge 1985).

Since then a number of new acts and reforms have influenced Danish schools considerably. Governance of municipal institutions shifted towards New Public Management, site-based management (1989). Social services and education acts on vocational education and university colleges were enacted. In the first decade of this century, it was decided to reform the municipal structure (from 271 municipalities to 98); a reform of the gymnasium (upper-secondary schools) and vocational schools was passed and important work took place in the Globalisation Council.

Around 1990 another problem had been put on the agenda – a shift in the modernisation policy – that contributed to the very same management strategies. Public institutions should not only be internally effective, they should also be externally competitive. Therefore, regulations were introduced, inspired by the private sector. These initiatives included new organisational forms, funding principles and regulation forms that aimed to enhance the country's competitiveness and the involvement of users in defining public institutions' outputs, free choice of institution, result contracts, outsourcing, strategic competence development and new wage forms. The result was a decentralisation of the decision competence to the institutions in order to facilitate a focus on the outputs in accordance with the market demands and a positioning of citizens as users or consumers (Telhaug et al. 2006). At the same time, pay and personnel policies would be adjusted to these new conditions.

These changes involved processes of reorganisation, so that organisations, managements, supply systems, report systems and accounting were adjusted to private sector standards. Furthermore, a principal-agent form of logic was introduced to the public sector. Thus, there was a shift from process to output orientation, making budgets and accounting systems more transparent, and expenses were linked to concrete items of expenditure which were measurable quantitatively (i.e. quality control). Buyer/seller relations were introduced between the public sector and users of public services,

and user payment was introduced in a number of new sectors. Former centralised planning and service functions were decentralised and combined in single institutions; and functions were reduced and privatised. Thus, it should be possible for public institutions to compete with private companies and non-profit organisations.

4.6 Contradictions

These developments have created a number of contradictions. While Danish economic politics was aiming at surviving in the global competition and thus needed a willing and well-trained work force with emphasis on elite and expertise, we nevertheless saw education policies continue for a long time along the 1903 line. The Folkeskole Act of 1993 completed the line of a welfare state comprehensive school: 'a School for All'.

But the 2006 Act on the Folkeskole – with support from most of the political parties – turned the objective of schooling away from education for everyone and participatory democracy and towards education for an excellent, talented workforce. Programmes for international comparison of the outcomes of schooling – PIRL (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study), TIMMS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) and PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) – have been important levers for the development.

Ove K. Pedersen (2010b) illustrates the development in three phases:

1. The period 1864 until the Second World War was the nation-building period. Denmark was in 1864 defeated by Prussia and Austria and reduced from being a medium-sized power in Europe to a very small and indifferent nation. At the same time, the agricultural sector experienced a major economic crisis. Thus, we needed to make the next generation individuals who would build a new national community.
2. The period from the Second World War to the 1990s was the welfare state, and democracy-building, period. Politicians wanted to prevent another war by raising democrats in school. Therefore, democratic participation became a key value in schooling.
3. From 1990 and onwards: The state is competing for survival in the global competition; thus, schools must make sure that children grow up to be able and willing workers.

The values of all epochs are still to be found in a complex political and educational situation, but priorities are shifting and subject to political fights, creating new contradictions and dilemmas.

From the late 1990s, two issues gain importance in education: accountability and differentiation, which also appear as mutually interdependent. The decentralisation tendencies of positioning citizens as users and schools and local units as relatively autonomous small businesses competing with each for 'costumers', on the one hand, have been accompanied by an emphasis on more direct forms of central regulation, new systems of holding institutions accountable, on the other hand. The accountability systems are designed to make it possible for the

individual state to monitor the education system in an international economic race, where competition rather than community is seen as means of ensuring efficiency (Telhaug et al. 2006). While accountability measures are meant to increase the competitive strength of the education system, they are also likely to lead to increased competition within the system itself and thereby reemphasise differentiation and streaming of pupils. Empirical updates on these issues will be discussed in the remaining part of this report.

4.7 Political Focus on Outcomes: Accountability

In the wave of the PISA surveys that placed Danish pupils below average, compared to pupils from other countries (Danish Ministry of Education 2004), primary and secondary education in Denmark was subjected to a major reform. Among other things, this included enhancing a so-called evaluation culture in education by implementing national tests, introducing personal pupil plans, making the final exams obligatory and expanding the number of subjects and exams, meaning that Danish pupils would overall have to undergo more testing and examinations in the course of their school life.

From a global perspective the evaluation activities aim at ranking educational systems in comparison to other systems, in which international surveys of pupil competences are key. Thus, comparison and ranking appear to be important targets for evaluation activities in this connection. According to the previous Minister of Education in Denmark, the reform was also meant to (1) clarify that the responsibility for school development lies with the municipalities and (2) provide the municipalities with the tools to assure an 'improvement of the school subject knowledge' (Danish Ministry of Education 2006a).

The consequences of increased evaluation activities, among other things, depend on the purpose they serve. Several purposes can be identified, but control and learning appear to be the most predominant evaluation purposes, in theory (Dahler-Larsen 2006). The control issue, as the name indicates, is about controlling a phenomenon with the purpose of ranking its consequences. During this kind of evaluation, also termed *summative evaluation* (Harlen 2009), the person being evaluated, who is usually subject to rewarding or sanctioning, will typically display advantages and hide disadvantages. In contrast, the learning issue is at stake when evaluation, *formative evaluation*, is primarily concerned with providing a basis for improvement, which makes it more legitimate to the evaluated person to display than hide weaknesses in the circumstances of control. From political statements on the 'evaluation culture', the control aspect seems predominant.

The legal provisions concerning primary and secondary levels of education (e.g. Act on tests and examinations in the Folkeskole, 2005; Act on tests and examinations in vocational educations, 2005) broadly state that tests and examinations serve as documentation of the extent to which the candidate meets the demands and goals stated for a specific subject, vocation or programme. Thus, the social functions and system objectives of pupil assessment focus on documentation of skills and abilities

(learning output) and, therefore, on accrediting competence. The provisions also specify that institutional control is an important social function of assessment, as they contain articles that request documentation of student skills in the form of exam certificates, which can be perceived as a way for the educational system to control the quality of the teaching and programmes provided by schools and teachers.

4.8 Accounts from School Practice

Drawing on qualitative research can help us understand the felt consequences of such policies in practice. Some Danish research studies (Andreasen et al. 2011; Rasmussen and Friche 2011; Rasmussen 2011a) have applied a qualitative approach, focusing on evaluation issues concerning learning, pupil strategies and stratification. In combining a constructivist notion of subjectivity with a structuralist notion of objective conditions (Bourdieu 1999: 613), the perspective of this research is that 'ordinary people' like pupils and teachers cannot offer us full explanations of the phenomenon (cf. Bertaux and Thompson 1997), but their experiences and interpretations constitute vital first steps for further research interpretations.

According to pupil interview findings in the above studies (esp. Rasmussen and Friche 2011; Rasmussen 2011a), school examinations are viewed primarily as summative assessments of learning. The pupils connect assessment with the competences lessons have provided them with, but also, in some cases, more generally with abilities, personal competence or value. To some, there is an element of internal (prove to myself) or external (prove to the teachers) control in this.

There are only few indications in the research that examinations could have the character of formative assessments. In only one case is examinations considered useful learning contexts for the next educational level. In another case a pupil regrets that teachers do not get the opportunity to review pupils' subsequent responses to their assessments – because if they had, they would have a basis for adjusting or improving their teaching to the needs of the pupils. So being associated with primarily a summative and controlling function, the increased practice of assessment is likely to contribute to increasing competitive forces in and among the pupils.

Lower-secondary school teachers distinguish between tests as primarily formative and examinations as summative assessments. The role of examinations is to show that pupils know what they have to know – a knowledge that the teachers prefer to define by their own professionalism, rather than through centrally defined canons. Tests and central demands on teachers are perceived as unnecessarily formalised. As one teacher explained, the occasional screening or test is not a new phenomenon but something that this teacher claims she has always done as part of her teaching:

> You have to, otherwise you don't know if they've understood what you want, we've been doing this a lot of times, perhaps labelled differently but the content is more or less the same. (Teacher in comprehensive school, ninth form)

The teacher acknowledged the need for tests to determine what the pupils have learned and thus to attach a summative function to the test. But for the teacher

testing should rather have a formative function, giving her feedback as to how she should adjust her lessons to the needs of the pupils.

From the point of view of this ninth form[1] teacher, the new examinations have meant that she has had to give priority to a new type or content of knowledge:

> (…) lessons have been very different from what they used to be like. Not that I didn't teach them grammar before, but more as a support for the oral discipline, but now suddenly I find it has become more like an independent discipline, you think that it's something they really have to master because they'll surely need it for the written exam. (Teacher in comprehensive school, ninth form)

The teacher, reflecting on lessons and ways of teaching, felt compelled to change her teaching practices and increase her focus on grammatical exercises, given the prospect of a different type of examination. This is what Bernstein refers to as the classification of school knowledge, which means defining, maintaining and validating boundaries between contents or domains of knowledge (Atkinson 1985: 133). When a part of a subject such as grammar, as in the example above, is given greater or independent status, boundaries – and strong classification – are strengthened, which removes control from the teacher and the teaching situation and relocates it to the state level.

The prerequisite for a tradition of strong classification is a high degree of consensus in the intellectual community as to what should be included and what should be left out. The classification process in educational settings can be seen as contributing to more general cultural activities of boundary construction, legitimising what is thinkable or what is regarded as appropriate and good taste.

The formalisation and increased use of tests also support the trend of strong classification of knowledge, as illustrated in the following quote from a pupil:

> The test only lasts 60 minutes so they can only practise it when we have double lessons, or if they swop lessons. But I don't think it influences the lesson, because there's still time for learning. (Pupil in comprehensive school, ninth form)

The quotation also touches upon the problem that testing takes time, a limited resource. This means that there is less time for other activities, such as teaching, and implicitly that the pace of teaching must be increased. Another implication is that while testing is carried out, according to the pupil, there is no learning. Testing and learning activities are thus perceived as incompatible, but could still be decisive for the direction of teaching activities (cf. Torrance 2003).

Tests in primary and lower-secondary school are met with opposition among teachers, who consider them unchanged substance couched in new terminologies. They indicate a lack of trust in, and therefore seem like a threat to, teacher professionalism. Thus, the measurement-orientated means of assessment are likely to reduce processes connected to teachers' motivation for improvement. Hence, the measurement paradigm seems overwhelmingly powerful, threatening the learning dimension of assessment and so threatening also the felt autonomy of the teacher.

[1] The ninth form is the final year of comprehensive Folkeskole in Denmark.

4.9 Educational Strategies or Stratification

Involving increased testing and more compulsory exams, the evaluation culture can be seen as an equivalent to more centralisation and control. It can also be seen as a central symptom of the relations between power and knowledge (Foucault 1985), which reveals changes in the relations between external stakeholders and schools (Bernstein 1996). On the one hand, strong external control weakens the internal control of the individual school and teacher as well as the pupils' opportunities of participating in decision-making. On the other hand, the more explicit standards of learning, which might accompany the measurability movement, could be an advantage to pupils with non-academic backgrounds, who are not familiar with the more implicit codes of schooling.

Following such knowledge-power relations related to evaluation, which have been studied by Broadfoot (1996) and Filer and Pollard (2000) in particular, it is presumed that increased assessment will, one way or another, influence school discipline and stratification.

The concepts of stratification and strategies deserve a few comments. Implying an arrangement in strata or the positioning of different strata in relation to each other, stratification entails that strata or social classes are arranged – it involves objectivism, as relations force themselves upon the agents. The concept of strategy, however, involves the subjectivist notion that individuals make and follow plans for being successful in particular activities and for personal gain. But as the above-mentioned analysis of assessment accounts followed Bourdieu's notion of strategy, the concept involves both objectivist and subjectivist elements. It involves the social agent's ability to play the game or the hand he has been dealt – the social capital of his habitus and the social or symbolic capital he has acquired through education in the space of possibilities available to him (Reed-Danahay 2005: 35) – and can be empirically observed as interest and motivation or the lack of it.

The increased emphasis on evaluation and assessment are seen to influence pupils' motivation for further education. When the pupils are continuously assessed, which the introduction of national tests will assure, it will enhance competition and ranking among them. This more competitive climate is likely to affect the learning climate in negative ways, as it creates a tense atmosphere around the learning processes. In a psychological perspective, it also appears that the external reward system of marking can undermine the intrinsic motivation for learning (Deci et al. 1999) and thereby, creating both winners and losers, discourage some pupils from pursuing further education.

The educational choices and strategies of the pupils are not directly linked to their final exam results. In Denmark pupils have to apply for admission to upper-secondary school before they take their final exams, which are a requirement for admission. This however is not usually conditioned by the exam results, unless for instance a pupil has not been deemed qualified for general upper-secondary education. This assessment of the pupils' qualifications is made by teachers prior to the final exams, the results of which in this way become less important as an assessment tool, as the conclusive pupil assessments have already been made. Even so, the pupils consider the final exams important: The very proficient pupils consider them important to their self-esteem, the less proficient pupils to their future opportunities

in general (cf. Rasmussen 2011a). For the latter group, the exams mark the end of a school life predominantly characterised by low grades, which might be an incentive to make a final effort or vice versa. Moreover, it seems likely that more exams of the individual and summative kind, which are directed by narrow and strongly classified subject understandings, discourage some pupils from producing or following a strategy of further education.

The stratification issue of social reproduction in education is primarily demonstrated by quantitative research. According to quantitative findings (Pless and Katznelson 2005; Mehlbye et al. 2000; Andersen 2005, 1997), young people's upper-secondary education strategies are statistically dependent on the marks obtained in primary and lower-secondary school, on gender and ethnicity and on the educational background of their parents.

The preliminary marks achieved by primary and lower-secondary school pupils prove consistent with their choices of upper-secondary education. Whether they choose a general or vocational track depends on whether they have been judged qualified for gymnasium or not; this is based on their marks for the last year's work. Most of the pupils who have average or above average marks choose the general/gymnasium track, while the pupils with marks below average choose a vocational track (Mehlbye et al. 2000: 56). The pupils' marks for the last year's work express the school's assessment of their qualifications, which the pupils themselves also assess and view as important indications of their abilities to cope with further education (Pless and Katznelson 2005: 55).

Variables such as gender and ethnicity also play a significant role in relation to pupils' choice of educational track. This is especially so when these variables are taken together, as girls with Danish parents especially go for the general/gymnasium track and boys with an ethnic minority background especially go for a vocational track (Mehlbye et al. 2000: 64; Pilegaard et al. 1997).

The educational background of the parents is seen to influence the educational strategies of their children in an indirect, perhaps unconscious way. The statistical connection is made evident by the fact that young people whose parents have a higher education typically opt for the gymnasium, and young people opting for vocational training typically have parents with this type of education or no education at all (Mehlbye et al. 2000: 58; Andersen 1997: 130). When the influence can be said to be indirect, it is due to the fact that the parents do not necessarily express directly in which direction they want their children to go; rather it is a question of indirect expectations and socialisation processes that influence their educational choice – on the visibility of opportunities (Pless and Katznelson 2005: 50) – and facilitate the structuration of choice (Rosenlund and Prieur 2006).

4.10 Differentiation

Differentiated teaching, rather than differentiated classes, is central to an undivided and comprehensive school. This type of school being characterised as a unified, unstreamed system, where all pupils regardless of academic and social background

are enrolled in the same age-based classes, necessitates a practice of 'teaching differentiation' (Carlgren et al. 2006). In Denmark teaching differentiation is implied in the Folkeskole Act (section 18, subsections 1 and 2), which stipulates that the organisation of the teaching must be varied, so that it corresponds to the needs and prerequisites of the individual pupil and challenges all the pupils.

In recent years, it has been argued that many able children are not sufficiently challenged in the Danish school system, where resources are allegedly primarily allocated to less able children. Therefore, new policy initiatives have been made and special funding setup to target the needs of so-called talented school children. Aided by such funding, various initiatives have been taken, and talent classes have been established in some municipalities in Denmark and function as supplementary offers for pupils at a high level in the Folkeskole. In this way ability grouping and new, soft ways of streaming have entered the education political agenda.

The talent initiatives raise questions concerning their objectives and underlying rationale: What kind of talent is favoured, and why, if at all, should talent be a subject of focus in the Folkeskole? What do such talent initiatives mean to the vision of a School for All? Detailed case studies of talent classes in a local Danish context (Rasmussen and Rasmussen 2007; Rasmussen and Vilain 2008; Rasmussen 2011b) have focused on the objective of talent development and will be used as references in the following analysis.

4.11 Talent Development Policies

The rationale and values underlying the educational project on talent development in the Danish context are outlined as:

> (…) a wide and increasing awareness of the fact that many able children and young people in the Danish educational system are short of proper challenges. Studies show that efforts to develop the able pupils influence on the other pupils too. (…) Aiming widely at talent development, not least within the science area, forms part of the Government's strategy to give Denmark a leading position in the knowledge society. Able pupils should be given room for development. They are important social resources. (Danish Ministry of Education 2006b)

Political statements about talent can be deconstructed into a three-part rationale (cf. Campbell and Eyre 2007): educational concerns about catering to the needs of all pupils, economic concerns about realising the potential to enhance performance in the knowledge economy and commitments to equity that stress the need to identify talent in hitherto unrepresented groups.

The educational policy of providing educational challenges to all pupils is recognisable in the Danish context of talent classes, although neither the statement concerning able pupils' lack of challenges nor the claim of broader educational effects is documented in the particular project. The emphasis on natural sciences can be seen as part of the globalisation discourse that research in natural science and technology is an important human resource argument for national economic growth and

competitiveness in the knowledge society. This belief has featured strongly in the political strategy on education in Denmark. Thus, the identified purpose of the talent class project was twofold: an educational argument for providing appropriate challenges to all pupils and an economic argument for developing talents for the knowledge society. Arguments about the contribution of talent development to the social inclusion of individuals and equal opportunities for all citizens were not visible.

Still, the project contained an 'inclusive strategy' for the educational system, aimed at keeping highly able pupils in state schools rather than having them (or their parents) opt for private schools. Inclusion in this case meant gathering the talented pupils in a classroom of 'ability peers' (selected by testing by means of school subject examinations) once a week, as an after-school activity, while they stayed in their ordinary classes at their respective schools during school hours. In this way, selection serves as a means for the very set up of talent classes, which facilitate competition and streaming of the pupils and thereby threaten the idea of a School for All.

4.12 The Talent Classes

The talent classes were organised as after-school activities, which the pupils attended next to their ordinary classes. All pupils from the municipality could apply for the project. The first year participants were selected on the basis of a written admission examination; the second year all applicants were accepted, and classes were established both for the eighth and ninth forms. The subjects taught were English and science, and lessons took place one afternoon a week at the local gymnasium. The teaching was undertaken by two primary school teachers and by two gymnasium teachers.

The talent class teaching differed in significant ways from general Folkeskole teaching, as they had smaller but more homogenous pupil groups. Where the size of an average school class in Denmark is about 20 pupils (legislation allows up to 28 pupils in a class), there were about 15 pupils in each talent class, which meant more teacher resources for each pupil. And as opposed to general Folkeskole conditions, where pupils are submitted to strong framing in the form of fixed curricula and examination demands, there were no such regulations in the talent classes, which gave the pupils room for decision-making and experimental learning.

It can be argued that talent classes' weaker framing (Bernstein 1996) and greater freedom of movement are linked to the developmental character of these classes: The concept was yet untested, things were planned ad hoc, and it was very much up to the teachers to develop the set of courses. The primary school teachers considered the talent classes an opportunity to develop professionally and found them highly motivating. They also considered it a privilege to work with such homogenous and relatively small groups of pupils who, contrary to what the teachers were used to, always showed interest and never caused disciplinary problems in class.

The main point about the talent classes is their openness to experimentation. While schools generally are subject to more regulation and, due to an increased

focus on accountability, experience strong framing, the opposite is true for this talent initiative. It raises questions as to which pedagogies best encourage learning and development, and whether such experimental projects should not be pursued in a School for All, rather than in talent classes for the few. It can be argued that such experimenting would be beneficial to all pupils, not just the ones that volunteer and are tested talented. But the issue of accountability encourages individual competition and streaming of the pupils rather than working and learning in small groups and an autonomous environment.

The above talent class case was just a small project (carried out in one municipality in 2006–2007). But it illustrates well the general topic of differentiation, and how teachers find it problematic to teach heterogeneous groups of pupils which, on the other hand, are central to the idea of a School for All. Instead of facilitating experiments of teaching differentiation, the numerous accountability measures taken in the Folkeskole work against such experimenting and – raising the issue of talent development – pave the way for new ways of ability groupings and renewed interest in streaming.

4.13 The Concept of Talent

To most of the pupils in the talent classes, a talented person was a person who performed better than the majority in a particular area. One of them said, 'they are people who are a little above average, not really so much'. Another said, 'well, that you are good at something, like, better than others'. This interpretation of talent as above-standard performance does not reveal which qualities facilitate such talent. However, many of the pupils' statements do point to particular qualities, which can be grouped into two types. One type of quality, which pupils associate with talent, is 'being especially interested and willing' to invest time and energy in an activity. They emphasise the developing character connected to the term talent, as opposed to the 'raw' ability associated with the term giftedness (cf. Philipson and McCann 2007; Winstanley 2004; Feldhusen 1998). The other type of quality is 'finding it easy' to perform and achieve which, like the term giftedness, carries strong hereditary connotations.

As could be expected, given the context of the interviews, most responses concerning the pupils' own talents contained references to different school subjects. Many of them pointed to special interests and abilities in the subject of mathematics (which is a main subject in talent classes). Several of the pupils said that from their point of view, the project should be given another name, leaving out the word talent. In fact, they had developed micro-strategies to avoid the word when they talked to their ordinary classmates. They would say that they were participating in an activity 'at the gymnasium', naming it 'supplementary school', or they would humorously talk about being 'with the nerds'. However, neither the responses of the pupils nor our impressions when we interviewed the pupils indicated that they experienced this as a major problem. Most of them seemed to have good

social relations in peer groups in their regular schools and, at the same time, liked participating in talent classes.

The general picture is that the pupils in the talent classes did not see talent as a question of outstanding ability and did not want to be perceived as outstanding. Some of them described talent as finding it easy to perform in given areas, but the predominant view of talent was that it was as a question of being more interested and willing to work harder to achieve results in school, which suggested that these pupils were more talented than gifted (Winstanley 2004; Feldhusen 1998). The pupils in the talent class did not see themselves as very different from their classmates in Folkeskole, and in general they did not feel excluded or held back. For this reason they found stereotypical notions about talent misleading and tried to avoid them. They rather adhered to an understanding closely linked to the egalitarian and democratic view, which has been predominant in the Nordic tradition, that talent is randomly distributed in the population and its realisation mainly depends on active participation (Arnesen and Lundahl 2006).

In the general framework of talent development in education, the interpretation of talent was clearly associated with school subjects, not one specific subject but academic subjects in general and science subjects in particular. Thus, talent was narrowly defined as school intelligence, following a fairly one-dimensional measure, as opposed to multimodal conceptions. In accordance with this narrow definition, talent was associated with performance rather than potential, as the talented pupils in the project were selected on the basis of testing. In this connection it is worth mentioning that the talented pupils generally came from social groupings that possess high cultural capital (Bourdieu 1997) and social status in society and thus in practice incorporated an elite notion of talent.

As another response to the alleged criticism that not all pupils are meeting appropriate challenges in school, some politicians advocate for the reintroduction of further educational streaming in Folkeskole. Initiatives also pointing in this direction include marking at an earlier age in Folkeskole, which politicians proposed in 2011, and the increased focus on accountability in education.

4.14 Conclusion

The School for All was on the education political agenda in Denmark for most of the twentieth century. But efforts in the period from the Second World War and onwards to construct a welfare society that aimed at protecting citizens from attacks from the outer world and developing a just, fair and equal society have slowly, from 1970 and increasingly from 1990 onwards, changed into a political struggle for a neo-liberal state, which is considered necessary for prospering in the global financial competition (Pedersen 2010b).

Especially with the Folkeskole Act of 2006, the purpose of schooling was turned away from participatory democracy and education for all towards education for an excellent, talented workforce. International surveys and comparisons of the

outcomes of schooling have been important levers for the development. But is the general vision of education in a School for All not the very prerequisite for national prosperity in a globalised world? This seems to be the case when looking at the Nordic countries, which have pursued a School for All strategy. They are not characterised by weak economies; on the contrary, such equality-oriented societies seem to do better economically than societies that have a selective and divided school system (Wiborg 2009; Green et al. 2006; Wössmann and Schutz 2006).

The analysis in this chapter has brought up two contrasting views about the availability and development of talent, which are at the base of different policies (Husen 1974). The one, which is linked to an egalitarian or social notion, holds that inherited intelligence is randomly distributed over social classes and regards social class differences in school participation and attainments as remnants of an unjust privilege society where parental prerogatives are passed on to the children. The other, which is linked to an elitist notion of talent, tends to regard talent as mainly inherited and to interpret social class and other differences in intelligence, school participation and occupation as largely caused by these differences. The understanding of talent development, pursued in the education policies in Denmark until the 1990s, was mainly based on the thoughts of social democracy and favoured the egalitarian view. Since then, this view has been on retreat and does not seem to appeal to the policy-makers whose policies of accountability and differentiation rather favour testing and selection of the talented few and so indirectly give prevalence to an elitist notion of talent that works against the idea of developing a School for All.

The future of a School for All in Denmark is necessarily a school that is able to adapt structurally to the needs of modern society, regarding inclusion – developing the talents of all children – and differentiated teaching. Danish parents have a historical right to choose between different forms of education for their children – whether provided by the parents at home, in a state Folkeskole or in private schools – and the vast majority has opted for the Folkeskole. Increasingly, however, parents choose private schools; the percentage opting for private education has risen from 6 to 15 %, which is worrying, both with regard to the visions and the realities of a School for All. The practice of 'free choice' tends to offer educational opportunities for 'less than all'.

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Chapter 5
A School for All in Finland

Sirkka Ahonen

5.1 A 'Post-comprehensive' Era?

The neoliberal idea of 'education as a market' landed in the Nordic countries in the course of the 1980s. It was first embraced by industrialists, who demanded accountability to school. It took years before much notice of the idea was taken by big public. First, there was only talk about a need to reduce the centralisation of the school system. No stakeholders anticipated a dismantling of the comprehensive school or raised alarm over the loss of equal opportunity in education.

In Finland local school systems, step by step, adopted working patterns from the world of business, through the implementation of new school laws passed by Parliament in the early 1990s. First, the nationally determined school circuits were abolished and a free parental choice of school allowed. Then, the regulation of school finances was slackened and the local authorities made free to decide about the use of money. Popular discussion about the prospects of equal opportunity to education emerged as late as in the end of the 1990s, in the context of Parliamentary discussion around the codification of the new school laws. The pivotal nature of the recently passed laws passed became obvious, and an awareness spread of the problems related to the marketisation of school. People wondered whether a post-comprehensive era dawned for the school system.

The problems arising from the post-comprehensive reforms have been aggravated in the 2000s. Among them there is the socially splitting effect of the free parental choice of school, legislated in 1990. By the 2000s, the primary schools (*grundskola*) have been polarised in regard to their socioeconomic background. The polarisation is obvious in big cities and towns, where the big number of schools enables a school

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market, but a new kind of uncertainty about whether a neighbourhood school can satisfy families rules also in small places. Schools tend to get polarised into wanted and unwanted schools.

Even if Finland in international comparison remained as one of the most equal countries in regard to educational achievement, towards the end of the first decade of the 2000s, a gap seemed to widen between 'good' (wanted) and 'bad' (rejected) schools (OECD/PISA 2009b). The gap was obvious in regard to the socioeconomic background of the schools but discernible also in learning achievement (Seppänen 2006; OECD 2009b).

Another problem is constituted by the distribution of financial resources. As the law today allows the local authorities to use their local judgement in dispensing the public money, some municipalities are more generous to educational institutions than others. Moreover, as the provisions for an individual school depend on how many students the school attracts in the local school market, some schools within the respective municipality are left with poorer resources than others. Schools and intermediately their students can no more trust the equity of provisions.

The third post-1990s problem, apart from the polarisation of schools and the unequal distribution of resources, has arisen from the neoliberalist belief that quality and equality are incompatible in education. The quality of the educational outcome is regarded quantitatively measurable. In Finland, since 2003, the accountability of the schools was materialised in compulsory participation in national tests, through which the cost-effectiveness of the schools was estimated. Although only a sample of schools were tested, the leadership and the staff of the picked schools were bound to take the test results into account when structuring and organising the school work.

The drastic changes of school politics in the 1990s, especially when considering their effects, call for a review of the political intentions and arguments behind the comprehensive reform of the 1970s. Firstly, was the comprehensive school able to enact the equality of opportunity? Secondly, what was meant by 'equality' in the 1970s in comparison to the 1990s? Moreover, the changing relationship between social and economic arguments in educational decision-making deserves a fresh look.

In this article the focus is on the primary school, which provides education for 7–16-year-olds, but as the problems of the primary and the secondary education are intertwined, the equal opportunity in the secondary school form will be occasionally included in the discussion.

5.2 The Finnish School System

The Finnish education system, in regard to primary, secondary and tertiary education, is based on the principle of education free of charge. The vast majority of the primary schools and secondary schools are publicly administered. There are only very few private primary schools, and on the secondary level only few schools are owned by charities. The education provided by the few private primary and secondary

schools as well as the universities and polytechnics is free of charge. Straightforward educational business, meaning schools as private profit-making enterprises, has so far been rejected in Finland.

Even if the comprehensive primary school has not been exposed to a competition with private schools, the idea of competition has been brought within the comprehensive system. No fixed catchment areas (circuits) determine either the recruitment of the pupils or the number and the size of the schools in a municipality. The number of primary schools is getting reduced from year to year, and the same trend is on in field of secondary education. Small schools are being closed. The development is known as 'the rationalisation of the school net' and affects above all scarcely populated rural areas (Fig. 5.1).

The pre-school education for the 6-year-olds is a debated institution in Finland. According to the law codex of 1999, every child has a subjective right to pre-school education, and the vast majority of families use the right. The ongoing dispute concerns the administration of the pre-school. The majority, 75 % of the pre-schools are run by local school authorities, the alternative being the social services. Respectively, the school authorities tend to employ university-educated pedagogues as teachers of the pre-school classes, while social services favour polytechnics-educated nurses.

Primary education is conducted by the comprehensive basic schools, called 'primary schools' in this article. Apart from a nonsignificant number of private schools, all primary schools are administered by local authorities and subsidised by state. Within the primary schools, there is no institutionalised streaming of pupils, although recently some schools have used their curricular freedom to divide pupils into ability groups in 'difficult subjects', that is mathematics and foreign languages.

Secondary education is offered by gymnasia and vocational schools. Traditionally, the two school forms function in their own right, but since the 1990s students have been provided by some local authorities with an opportunity to take courses in both gymnasium and vocational school. The academically oriented gymnasium ends with a matriculation examination. A vocational school student, who takes a sufficient amount of courses in a gymnasium, is entitled to take part in the matriculation examination. However, less than 10 % of matriculation examinations are constituted by such a combination.

On the tertiary level, the matriculation examination is the precondition of the entrance to university, while the polytechnics choose their students from both gymnasiums and vocational schools. The polytechnics are a new school form, established in the early 1990s. Their existence has increased the attraction of the vocational schools. By 2010, the numbers of the applicants to vocational schools had grown remarkably bigger than of those who choose the gymnasium. Only 2 % of the age group in 2010 failed to apply to any secondary school, but the proportion of those who were not enrolled because of the shortage of places in some very popular programmes was almost 20 %.

The policy intention since the 1990s is to have nine of ten basic school leavers aiming at a graduation from a gymnasium or a vocational school. Apart from raising the educational level of the population, the aim is to combat youth unemployment through education.

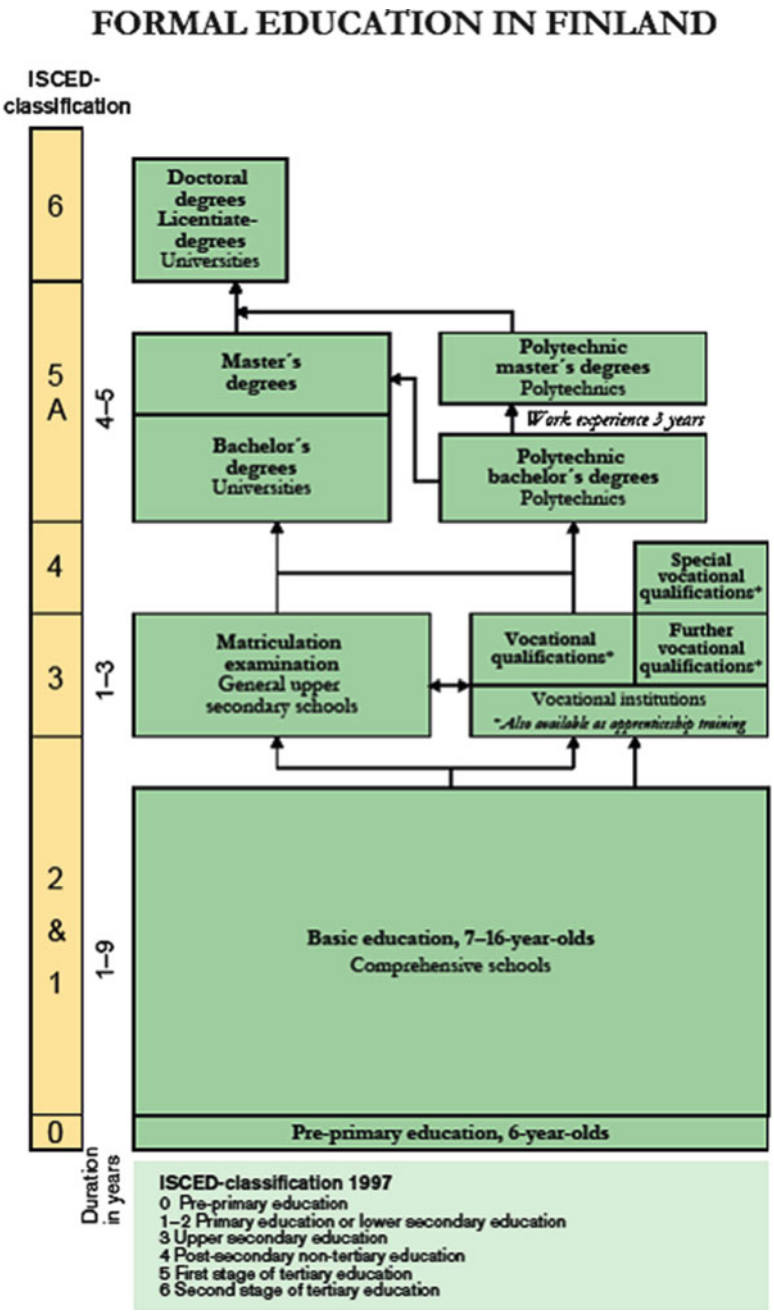

Fig. 5.1 Structure of Finnish education system

Children with special needs are provided special educational services. Since 2010, every pupil has a subjective right to a remedial support. Half of those in need of support were in 2009 taught in special education classes or special education schools. The other half was taught together with other children, either part or full time, having possibly a teacher assistant for a remedial support in the classroom.

The official intention in school politics is to integrate the children with special needs into their age group. This concerns both physically handicapped children, children with behavioural problems and slow learners. Despite the intention, the proportion of pupils in special education has grown between 2000 and 2010 from 5 to nearly 9 %. However, within the 9 %, a growing number is segregated from the age group only part time.

5.3 The History of the Equal Opportunity in Education

5.3.1 A Quest for Common Basic Education

Elementary common school, *folkskola*, was established by State in 1866. Previously, the Lutheran church had for two centuries run a literacy programme, the aim of which was modestly restricted to basic reading skills, considered sufficient for peasants. Only in towns, children not belonging to nobility or clergy received more advanced education, meant to support them in their future trade as artisans and merchants.

The idea of *folkskola* as 'a School for All' means making basic education universally available and expanding it to all layers of society, thus providing all people with equal opportunities to schooling.

Finland was at the time, 1809–1917, an autonomous grand duchy of Russia. The cultural and social tradition was yet firmly rooted in the six centuries of history as a part of Sweden. In the course of the 1800s, a strong national awakening took hold of the people. Finnish language became gradually the language of culture and trade, at the side of Swedish.

The new *folkskola* was ideologically bolstered by nation-building. Apart from social liberalists who expected the basic school to counteract poverty, nationalists urged universal education. The schools were expected to fulfil a nationally unifying legacy. The developments were in accordance with an all-European quest for universal education (Lindert 2004). According to J. V. Snellman, the leading national philosopher in Finland, the main precondition of a nation was education, as only through education a national consciousness could be developed. As a senator, Snellman was in the position to promote *folkskola* in both the Diet, constituted of four estates, and in the central administration. Beside him, a socially liberal clergyman Uno Cygnaeus pivotally contributed to the establishment of the common elementary school.

The two historical actors of the elementary school, the nationalists and the liberalists, did not work in full agreement. Their views deviated from each other in two respects.

Snellman wanted a broad general curriculum for the elementary school. He emphasised the role of 'national subjects', including apart from mother tongue also history and geography, which were needed for the construction of national consciousness. In difference, Cygnaeus, who had during his study tour of Central Europe assumed philanthropic and pedagogically progressive ideas, wanted to have an ample scope for practically useful crafts in the curriculum.

Another schism between the two actors of the elementary school concerned the access to the school. According to Snellman, for a Finnish nationhood to be built, the peasants needed to be both enlightened farmers, capable of prospering, and nationally conscious citizens, prudently running the recently legislated municipal self-government. However, even more crucial a precondition of nationhood was a national high culture, produced in the national language, which according to Snellman would be Finnish. The problem was that the residual high culture existing in Finland was produced in Swedish, which in the course of the previous centuries had been adopted as the language of interaction by nobility, clergy and bourgeoisie. Using the nationalist argument of 'one country–one language', Snellman urged a rapid construction of a Finnish-speaking elite through education. The future elite was meant to be raised in the schools of their own following a curriculum that would be more academic than that of the common elementary school. In Snellman's view, the elementary school would be left as common people's school, while Cygnaeus wanted it to be attended by all children together.

The new elementary school, *folkskola*, was adorned with an ambitious curriculum that was a compromise between the aspirations of Snellman and Cygnaeus. The pupils, aged 9–12, would study both elevating 'national subjects' and useful crafts. As the curriculum set high demands on teachers, teachers' seminars started working simultaneously with the common schools.

In regard to the second schismatic issue, the attendance of the new elementary school, according to the Act of 1866, the children of peasants and elites were in principle expected to go to school together. In practice, the elites preferred to send their children to private preparatory schools, wherefrom the children could in 3 years time move to grammar schools, from which a road opened to higher education. The common elementary school was not inevitably dead end, as through an entrance examination any pupil of elementary schools could at the age of 11 years enter a grammar school. However, only a tiny proportion of children went to grammar schools, partly because the schools charged a fee. The parallel school system, with adolescents divided into *folkskola* and grammar school students, was maintained until the comprehensive reform of the 1970s.

Moreover, a rivalry between the traditional church schools and secular basic schools slowed down the development of common primary education in Finland. The traditional literacy teaching by the church provided an economical even if educationally poor alternative for local authorities. As the establishment of secular elementary schools, *folkskola*, was not obligatory, many local authorities neglected

their introduction. In 1917, when Finland became independent, only two in three children attended a secular elementary school. It seemed that universal education did not fit the poor agrarian society.

The education was made obligatory for 7–12-year-olds in 1921. Nevertheless, only after the Second World War, every Finnish child was secured an opportunity to attend a local elementary school.

5.3.2 A Quest for a Comprehensive School System

After the Second World War, the idea of equity in educational services gained momentum in Europe. As common people had fought side by side with the elites in the war, they were considered justified to have an equal opportunity to pursue good life with education as a resource (Lindert 2004).

The building of the Nordic welfare state was accompanied by the pursuit of a comprehensive school reform, which would abolish the dual system of primary and grammar schools and remove the dead end the system meant for the career of a *folkskola* pupil who could not apply for a place in a grammar school because of economic or geographical reasons. By 1960, Finnish people had voted for the school reform with their feet, as the majority of 11-year-olds went to a grammar school, and new grammar schools mushroomed on private initiative.

Finland was the last Nordic country to undertake the comprehensive reform. The political Left had urged the state to grab the reform since the end of the 1940s, but as the Left became split and all the bourgeois parties resisted the comprehensive school up to the mid-1960s, the reform was delayed. In Finland the comprehensive reform was not achieved by social democrats like in Norway and Sweden, but through a common effort by social democrats and the agrarians. The Agrarian Union adopted a pro-comprehensive standpoint in 1965, due to the realisation that the young people in the vast countryside would greatly benefit from a common 9-year-long school that would open the doors to further education (Ahonen 2003).

The Finnish society experienced during the post-war decades a record-rapid change of the socioeconomic structure. While 46 % of people at the end of the war earned the living from agriculture, in 1960 the proportion was 35 % and 10 years later only 20 %. What was even more crucial was the rapid rise in the proportion of the service sector, being 46 % of all occupations in 1970. Proportionally, in 1970 as big a part of the population earned the living from services, that is commerce, transport and banking, as on agriculture in 1945. For the jobs in the service sector, the broad curriculum of the comprehensive school was in urgent demand.

The struggle for a comprehensive school was fought throughout the 1960s. A pivotal state committee report from 1959 proposed a 9-year-long free-of-charge school with a uniform curriculum. Only partial streaming into ability groups would be allowed. The committee report included several motions of disagreement. In the heated Parliamentary discussion in 1963, prompted by the law proposal composed on the recommendations of the committee, all nonsocialist parties resisted the reform.

The resistance concentrated on two main arguments. The first was socioeconomic. Members of the Agrarian Union and the small liberal party were concerned of the economic costs of the reform and, moreover, regarded the old 'folk school' with its patriotic and Lutheran ethos as the most appropriate school form for the rural majority of Finnish people. The second argument, supported by the political Right and Centre, was inherited from Snellman and accentuated the necessity of elite education. If all children would be taught together, the level of the Finnish education and culture would drop. This argument was supported strongly by the union of the grammar school teachers, who were doubtful about teaching whole age groups in common classes (Ahonen 2003, 126–7).

Equal opportunity to education was the main argument in defence of the proposed reform. It was in harmony with the ethos of the welfare state that was being built during the 1960s. Even if the main advocate of the welfare state in Finland, social scientist Pekka Kuusi, did not explicitly include the comprehensive school in the structures of welfare state, his argument of the necessity of welfare structures for economic growth supported the expansion of educational services (Kuusi 1961). His line of thought had resonance in the pro-comprehensive committee report of 1959, where a reserve of profitable human capital was assumed to exist in the geographical margin of the country. The 9-year-long comprehensive school would help to utilise the reserve. The socioeconomic argument affected the Agrarian Union, which in 1965 adopted the name 'Centre' and changed side in the school debate (Ahonen 2003, 116–21, 123).

The planned comprehensive school system was highly centralised. The distribution of teaching hours per school subject was the mandate of Parliament. The detailed curriculum was to be planned and prescribed by the Ministry of Education. The implementation was the duty of the National Board of Education, a massive office with separate sections for general education, including the comprehensive school and the gymnasium, vocational education, Swedish-speaking education and adult education. The Board would provide guidelines for teaching in single school subjects, and supervise social services provided by schools. Moreover, in every county there was a section for educational administration, with a duty to send inspectors to schools to control the implementation of the detailed national curriculum. In every local municipality a democratically elected school board supervised the schools according to the national norms and the orders of the central administration.

The former grammar schools, most of them previously privately owned even if publicly financed, were integrated into the comprehensive system. The private schools constituted a major cause of disagreement during the struggle for the comprehensive systems. As a compromise, the local authorities were allowed to decide whether grammar schools would maintain their private status. Only in five towns the old grammar schools were left in private ownership, submitting, however, their work to the national norms of free-of-charge education and uniform curriculum.

In the Parliament election of 1966, Finland turned politically left. The socialist parties won a majority in the Parliament. The victory and the support by the modernised

Centre Party decided the fate of the school reform. All parties, except a few individual members, eventually vote for the comprehensive school in 1968, making the school reform an issue of political consensus (Ahonen 2003, 148–9).

Comprehensive reform was meant to make educational achievement independent of a child's socioeconomic and geographical background as well as of her or his gender. In regard to the geographical factor of the equality of educational opportunity, the implementation of the school reform started in 1970 in the north of the country, where the access to education had been hindered by long distances and poverty. The reform reached the capital area in 1978. By that time a crucial amendment had been made to the rules in the name of equal opportunity. The streaming according to ability was renounced, especially as it was found disadvantageous to boys who were inclined to opt for lower streams and thus restrict their future opportunities.

Children with special needs benefited from the fairly generous remedial education services of the comprehensive school. The policy of inclusion was recognised in the school laws, but in reality the handicapped and behaviourally deviant children were most often educated in special education classes that were separated from the main stream.

The positive social effects of the comprehensive reform became obvious when the first generations from comprehensive schools entered adulthood. A difference in educational standards between them and their parents was striking. By the 1990s, nearly 80 % of the age group had achieved a post-basic school diploma, while in 1960 the proportion had been only 12 %. While the old basic school had been for many students a dead end, the comprehensive school opened the door to further education.

The comprehensive reform did not resonate in the development of the upper secondary education. A prestigious education committee proposed in its report in 1973 an integrated secondary education, where vocational and academic studies would be organised according to the domains of knowledge instead of the traditional division into academic and non-academic careers. The integrated model was borrowed from the Swedish 'youth school'. However, the same interest groups that had been reluctant to embrace the comprehensive school now entrenched themselves in the defence of the academic gymnasium (Ahonen 2003, 177–9; Meriläinen 2011). It took 20 years before the fortress of gymnasium crumbled as much as to allow curricular transits between gymnasia and vocational schools.

The equalising effect of the comprehensive reform became obvious in the light of the rising standard of the postprimary-school educational achievement of the population. However, as sociologists have pointed out, the attendance in tertiary education remained persistently dependent on the socioeconomic background of a student (Kivinen and Rinne 1995; Rinne and Vuorio-Lehti 1996). In the 1980s, when 'welfarism' started to lose credibility in the Finnish society, such attendance indicators became used as argument against the comprehensive school.

5.4 Evidence for a Transition into 'Post-comprehensive' School

The changes, produced by the shrinking of the public administration since late 1980s and the relaxation of norms by legislation between 1990 and 1994, indicate that the Finnish school developments entered a post-comprehensive era. Changes in the structures of the school system were in clear contradiction to the principles of the school reform of the 1970s which established the comprehensive basic school.

5.4.1 Structural Developments

The first domain of evidence of a post-comprehensive turn is provided by a look at the *structure* of the school system, especially of the primary school. A striking change happened in the school network. The removal of the law-bound division of the municipalities into fixed school circuits caused a wave of closures of schools. By 2010, basic schools were being closed be a rate of 100 schools per year. Their number of the primary schools in 2011 was 2800 which is about half of the number of 1990. The closures were and are made on the basis of cost-effectiveness. It is more economical to transport children than provide neighbourhood schools for them. For economical reasons, a partial integration of Finnish- and Swedish-speaking schools was suggested in 2011, causing a debate of whether such a policy would violate the constitutional right of national minorities to receive education in mother tongue.

On the secondary level, the number of the gymnasia was by 2011 down to 430 from 463 in 1993, and the trend is further down. Another trend, the curricular integration of local gymnasia and vocational schools, may possibly save some individual gymnasia, but, as at the same time vocational schools are amalgamated with each other, the trend may lead to the emergence of big, concentrated secondary schools.

Apart from economical rationalisation, the opportunity to elevate the standards of school facilities and curricular opportunities is used as the argument for the concentration of educational services. The curricular flexibility of secondary education is growing, even if by 2010 only a minority of local authorities have organised the schools in terms of combined studies and shared facilities.

Another characteristic even if less impressive structural change is the emergence of a small private sector within the primary education. After the pivotal codex of new school laws in 1999 eased the establishment of private schools, the Ministry of Education has been cautious in delivering the necessary licences. Nevertheless, there are a few tens of new private schools, the most of them religious Christian schools. A few schools working in terms of an alternative pedagogy had their existence guaranteed by law already at the comprehensive reform and still flourish with the financial subsidy by the State. In pre-school education, private commercial enterprises are common, especially in the municipalities where pre-school education is subjected to social services instead of a school board.

Outsourcing educational services is one of the post-1990s trends. Actual teaching is not allowed to be outsourced, but schools may well utilise private enterprises to provide building, cleaning and catering services. In that sense many schools have ceased to be self-sufficient institutions with a nonteaching school-based personnel.

5.4.2 Governance

The second aspect when judging whether Finland has moved into a post-comprehensive era is the *steering* of education. The post-1990s school system is characterised by the dismantling of the central administration. The reduction of the size of the central boards and offices governing different domains of life started in the mid-1980s. The argument behind was a neoliberal trust in autonomous actors and the dismay of state control. Actors, for example, teachers, were believed to maximise their potential when being in charge of and accountable for their work. The policy included a substitution of the 'governance by norms' through 'governance by outcomes'. The National Board of Education is since 1999 dedicated mainly to the evaluation of school work. The Board produces every 10 years a short 'framework curriculum', but the actual curriculum planning is the duty of local authorities and schools. The Board concentrates on the outcomes of school work. Through national measurements the Board controls the quality of schooling. Measurement is based on samples of schools, and the results indicate rather regional variation of achievement than differences between individual schools.

Steering on the basis of outcomes requires a solid mechanism of regular evaluation. The scope of evaluation became narrower than planned on the first stages of the reform of the 1990s. After originally defining the cost-effectiveness of a school in broad terms reaching from financial input–output indicators to client satisfaction among pupils and parents, the National Board of Education restricted the focus on learning results. The measurement of the learning achievement is conducted by the Board in co-operation with universities. There are also other parallel measurements conducted by university departments in their own initiative and by different bodies coordinated by the Finnish National Evaluation Council, which also contributes to the influential Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), conducted by the OECD.

The measurement instruments for the national evaluation of learning achievement, conducted by the National Board of Education and intensified since 2008, are constructed by subject-specific expert groups elected by the Board from among teacher educators, experienced teachers and the representatives of the Board. The measurement is planned to happen every 3 years in mother tongue and mathematics and in most other subjects every 5 years and is targeted above all to the final year of the primary school (that is to the 16-year-olds). The Board aims at expand the testing in the key subjects to 9-year-olds and 12-year-olds.

The use of the results of the evaluation is left to schools to decide. Public ranking lists of schools are avoided, and the evaluation is supposed to rather serve than

control the teaching profession. Officially, the evaluation is meant to safeguard the equity of educational services (The Finnish Education Evaluation Council 2012). Measurement is focused on the efficiency of schooling, including the accessibility of education, the effect of teaching, above all the learning outcomes and the cost-effectiveness of the schooling (National Board of Education 1998). The results may be used to positive discrimination of weak schools in terms of providing them with extra financial resources for remedial teaching. A local authority can use the evaluation results to urge an improvement in a school's work.

The delegation of the steering of school work to local actors is complicated by the absence of a local school board in some municipalities. The disappearance of school boards was caused by local decision-makers using the freedom of local governance to integrate, for example, the social and educational services into one administrative unit. As a result, it is often the individual schools rather than the municipality that decide about the curriculum.

By the 2000s, the delegation of the subsidiary curriculum development to local actors had proved to risk the equity of educational services. The national framework curriculum left too much scope for local variation in educational services. Some local authorities may economise more than others in the provision of remedial support and curricular choices. Therefore, children in one town may receive worse education than those in another town. Moreover, the differences in contents and standards between towns harmed the migrant pupils of the modern mobile society. Therefore, when constructing the new national framework curriculum of 2004, the National Board of Education provided more detailed descriptions of the contents of the syllabi in different subjects. The control by norms made thus a comeback.

5.4.3 Children with Special Needs

The opportunities of children with special needs are a crucial indicator of the equity of educational services. Children with special needs require appropriate support in school in order not to be treated as second-class citizens. Moreover, their need of social belonging shall be recognised. The decision-makers have to balance between the contradictory demands of providing a child with special services and not separating him or her from the rest of the age group. Since 2011, a child has a legal right to an early remedial support if he needs one. The support can be general, intensified or specialised. The last mode, the specialised support, is constituted by the segregated special education classes, which, however, are not meant to be a permanent solution to an individual child. She or he has an opportunity to return to his normal class as soon as her or his needs are less special than before. In the course of the 2000s, the number of the old special education schools has decreased by a third, while the number of pupils provided with other kinds of special needs education has increased by 45 % (Nyyssölä and Jakku-Sihvonen 2009; Merimaa 2011).

The new law of special education is expected to help to cut the trend that had during 2000–2010 resulted in doubling of the proportion of children who were sent

to special education classes. In big towns, one child in ten had studied in a special class either part time or permanently. Early remedial support, preferably by a teacher assistant, is supposed to substitute the segregation and reinforce the principle of an inclusive school (Merimaa 2011).

5.4.4 Globalisation

National school politics can no more be conducted without a reference to global actors. Globalisation is especially obvious on the tertiary education but affects also the primary and secondary levels. Finland has participated in both the OECD-run PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) evaluation cycles in 2000, 2003, 2006 and 2009 and the extensive IEA (International Educational Achievement) measurements (e.g. ICCS about citizenship education 1999, TIMMS about science education 2011 and PRILS about literacy 2011). After each evaluation cycle, the OECD provides recommendations to national decision-makers. The critics in Finland have pointed out that the Finnish politicians and administrators have been even too obedient implementers of the recommendations (Rinne 2002; Rinne et al. 2004). Among the Finnish responses to OECD criticism, there has been the reducing of public expenditure in education in the 1990s and the transformation of the traditional early education into 'educare', i.e. into pre-school education. The institutionalisation of national evaluation in 2003 happened on the suggestion by the OECD, reinforcing the output driven modes of educational governance (The Finnish Education Evaluation Council).

In the Maastricht Treaty, education was included in the sphere of responsibilities of the European Union. In regard to primary and secondary education, the principle of subsidiarity was respected, but the Union has since Maastricht undertaken educational exchange and monitoring programmes that undeniably affect national policies. Like the OECD, also the EU is practising information management on national education systems. Comparative data tend to stimulate changes in national systems. For instance, there is a pressure from the internationally comparative indicators to lower the school-starting age down from seven and to point a special focus on the problems of the gifted children – both being aspects where the Finns have traditionally insisted on their own ways.

5.4.5 Equal Opportunity?

Equal opportunity as the guideline of school politics became threatened by the school politics of the 1990s, and, even if some steps back to welfarism have been taken, the primary school is no more the same as it was under the auspices of the welfare state. The losses have been proved by research, both into the history of the school politics (Ahonen 2001, 2003; Varjo 2007) and into the developments of

the socioeconomic structures of schools. Piia Seppänen has proved through her empirical study that the marketisation of primary schools since the mid-1990s has caused a polarisation of the socioeconomic background of the schools. Above all, the educational and professional status of the mother of a child determines whether the child goes to a 'better' school (Seppänen 2006, 285). According to Seppänen, in the big and middle-sized cities of Finland, 30–50 % of families had by 2000 adopted the habit of applying a place in a non-neighbourhood school. The 'better' school was most often situated in a socioeconomically stronger area than that of the applicant. As a result, primary schools had become divided into attractive, rejected and neutral schools. Nearly half, 40 %, of schools were rejected, while one third was among the attractive and the rest among the neutral (Seppänen 2006).

In the new market situation, prompted by free parental choice of school and the deregulation of finances, one in four children went to school which thanks to its attraction could choose its pupils and was therefore not a true 'School for All'. Entrance exams were prohibited by law, but through adopting a trademark through a curricular profile – extra lessons in music, sports, sciences etc. – a school could practise a selective recruitment policy. As the rejected schools lost students, their financial resources were reduced and their development potential weakened. They found themselves in the vicious circle of dropping attendance and dropping standards.

An ongoing research project *Skidi–Kids*, comprising the big (over 100,000 inhabitants) towns of Finland, the areas were differentiated into those where 70 % of the parents had a university degree and to those where only one in three had it (Rimpelä and Bernelius 2010; Skidi Kids 2010). The researchers then referred to the latest PISA measurements (OECD 2009a, b), which indicated that the differences of the socioeconomic background could be anticipated to be mirrored in a school's educational achievement.

According to the PISA indicators from 2009, Finland is still one of the most equal countries in regard to the educational achievement. Differences in achievement both within a school and between schools were smaller than in most OECD countries. Compared to other PISA-measured countries, the correlation between a student's family background and PISA record in Finland was not too strong but had grown since the previous PISA cycle. What was more significant was the widened gap between schools in socioeconomically strong and weak areas. Especially if compared to the indicators from 2000, the differences in educational achievement between schools had grown (OECD 2009b, 64). The influence of the socioeconomic polarisation on learning result would violate the principle of equal opportunity to education. Moreover, the availability of remedial teaching had suffered from schools shunning the reputation of a slow-learner school and using the resources rather on a more attractive profile. The educational opportunity of a weak student was at the mercy of the market effect.

The further two crucial aspects of equal opportunity are constituted by the independence of learning results on region and gender. The latest PISA results indicate that a differentiation is taking place between the South, the Middle part and the North of Finland. The performance of Middle Finland has gone proportionally down. Moreover, in Middle Finland the performance gap between boys and girls, in

favour of girls, is wider than elsewhere (OECD 2009b, 64). The explanation might be found in the deregulation of school finances which may leave a local school without resources to organise remedial teaching. The OECD indicators call for a policy discussion about the drawbacks of the freedom of choice accentuated in the post-1990s school politics.

Since the days of the comprehensive reform, when spending money on the primary schools was considered a worthy investment on future, the decision-makers have changed their priorities. Schools are expected to be cost-effective, even if both State and local authorities tend to cut the educational expenditure in times of scarcity. During the first decades of the 2000s, Finland fell from a generous spender on education to the middle rank. Expenditure on primary and secondary education fell from the 6–7 % of the 1970s to the 3–8 % in 2008 (OECD 2011, 224, 230). Relative expenditure varied between local authorities, which violated the principle of equal opportunity in education.

5.5 What Happens to the 'School for All' in the Market?

The availability of a trustworthy neighbourhood school was the goal of Finnish school politics since the late 1800s. In the school laws of 1999, 'neighbourhood school' was recognised as the subjective right of every child. It was a defence against the developments that already had shattered 'the equal opportunity to education'. The primary schools had become competitive instead of equal, selective instead of common and measured instead of trusted. In international comparison, they were still relatively equal, but the trend since the 1990s was towards the ethos of competition.

The changes in school politics happened step by step during the 1990s. Deregulation and decentralisation of the administration of primary and secondary education came as the first step and the introduction of competition within the primary school, accompanied by the liberation of the management of the public expenditure by local authorities, as the second step. When interviewed for research purposes, the civil servants who proposed the pivotal laws in many cases did not acknowledge the ideological umbrella of neoliberalism in their action (Virtanen 2002; Meriläinen 2011). Eventually, the chief of the Ministry of Education, Vilho Hirvi, in 1996 openly advocated a new understanding of the concept of equality. Equality should no more mean sharing a common school but providing an equal opportunity for everybody to receive individually tailored education that would be equivalent of individual aspirations and aptitudes. Equality was subordinated to the freedom of choice in order to boost the creative potential of free individual actors.

Finnish sociologists and sociologically oriented historians of education, inspired by Pierre Bourdieu, had since the 1980s paved the way to educational scepticism. They pointed out that the great efforts of the founders of the comprehensive reform had not produced equality in the sense that young people's educational achievement would be independent of family background, region and gender. Especially the family background persisted as a determinant of success in school, to the extent that a

young person's likelihood to access tertiary education rose ten times if he or she was born into an academic family. Equal opportunity was therefore 'a vain dream' (Rinne and Vuorio-Lehti 1996).

As a structural explanation, the transformation of society can be suggested to be a factor in weakening the significance of egalitarianism in educational thinking and politics. Finland was transformed between the 1970s and the 1990s from an industrial to a post-industrial society. The school form that suited the era of chimney factories and assembly lines did not suit the studios and think-tanks of the information society. The new middle classes were a diffuse lot of holders of a variety of occupations and a considerable income. Their aspirations and expectations in regard to their offspring varied from one family to another and consequently required flexible school provisions. To them, the uniform comprehensive school could well appear obsolete.

However, the change of a society is not linear. In Finland, a deep economic slump of the early 1990s reminded people of the contingency of life and the value of fair deal. The principle advocated by the American social philosopher John Rawls, according to which the opportunities of the weak constituted the best indicator of whether a society was just, gained new momentum (Rawls 1972). Education became again acknowledged as a social good instead of a private asset. The development of the school system was resumed as a political issue after having been for more than a decade left to bureaucrats. Like in the years of the struggle for the comprehensive reform, education was at the end of the 1990s lifted onto the top level in the national political agenda and submitted to democratic decision-making. The results were shown in a few reversals in the neoliberally tuned legislation, for instance, in the recognition of the subjective right of a child to her or his neighbourhood school.

Notwithstanding the odd signs of a will to defend welfarism in education, the change in the ethos of the Finnish education since the 1990s pointed away from egalitarianism, the core argument of a welfare state. The new ethos was reinforced by the new international affinities of the country, above all the membership of the European Union and the partnership in influential educational evaluation leagues like PISA. Since the early 2000s, the Finnish schools are internationally measured and compared as well as imposed demands of harmonisation with the international strategies of outcome-based look at education.

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Chapter 6
The Development of a School for All in Iceland: Equality, Threats and Political Conditions

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The history of public schools in Iceland is relatively short compared to that of other Nordic countries, spanning about 100 years. It has been underpinned by a focus on different aspects of equity, involving equal educational opportunities for children regardless of place of living, gender or learning ability. This has been reflected in legislation and curricula. Despite several obstacles, the Icelandic school system seems to have succeeded quite well in this respect, since international studies have shown high equity among comprehensive schools, meaning that student outcomes rely only to a small extent on what school they attend. This has been supported by centralisation, with a small private sector at the compulsory level. The main challenges lie at the secondary level (up to 18 years old), concerning equity within schools, or the inclusive school and School for All.

The main purpose of this chapter is to unfold the development of School for All using the following tasks and questions:

- Analyse the development of the Icelandic school system towards School for All with the following questions in mind: How has equality in education developed through the years and what are the main emphases and methods today? The history of the initial concept of *School for All* is included, as are current trends, which uniquely bring together *School for All* and inclusive pedagogies and active democracy and social justice.
- What has threatened the emphases on equality and how have they possibly affected the policy formation, the emphases and methods?

The concept of School for All has meant different things at different times. After 1974 the concept refers to equal opportunities for education in mainstream schools, regardless of background or physical or mental abilities. Prior to 1974, the term School for All was mainly used to communicate the right of all children to attend

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school regardless of place of living or social status. During the last decade of the twentieth century, the inclusive school emerged, emphasising equity and social justice within the mainstream school. Jóhannesson (2006a) argues that the vision on inclusion in the turn of a new millennium might have had silencing effects on other equality politics such as gender, class and culture. Consequently, inclusion tends to be the dominant focus in the discussion of School for All. In this chapter those terms are used in accordance with different meanings at different times.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the whole school system was under revision, with new laws going into force for all school levels in 2008, and new laws for teacher education and a new curriculum in 2011. The new curriculum guide focuses on definitions of learning outcomes and pillars that are meant to act as a foundation for the educational system. The most dramatic change is, however, lengthening teacher education by requiring a master's degree for teacher certification at all school levels. This decision can be seen as an example of transnational influences driven by the desire to rank higher in comparative studies such as PISA and TIMMS. Finland has been pointed out as an exemplar for this. The process for the change was initiated soon after the publication of results from an OECD study on the best performing school systems in the world (McKinsey & Company 2007), which indicated that good results rely primarily on teachers' competences.

The issues mentioned above are discussed in further detail in this chapter. It begins with brief information on the structure of the school system in Iceland. Next the discussion is divided into three main parts. First, the history of the development of School for All is described, including discussion on arguments and foundations for education in Iceland. Second, empirical evidence on School for All is given. The third and final part provides reflections and thoughts about current trends and matters of dispute, within a political context.

6.1 The School System in Iceland

The educational system in Iceland is divided into four levels: preschools, comprehensive (compulsory) schools, upper secondary schools and universities. Additionally, a fairly extensive adult education arena, parts of which are within the formal system of education, is provided. The system operates within the public sector and very few private schools exist in the school system (except at preschool level). Private schools receive public funds. There is no school inspection at a national level, but there are nationally coordinated examinations in grades four, seven and ten in comprehensive schools. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is responsible for monitoring the educational system at all levels. Municipalities operate the preschools and comprehensive schools, while the upper secondary schools and universities operate under the state.

As defined by law, preschools are the first level of the educational system, providing education for children until 6 years of age, at which point compulsory education begins. It is not a part of compulsory education but around 95 % of

Preschools 1–5 years	Comprehensive schools (primary and lower secondary) 6–15 years	Upper secondary schools 16–20 years
Attended by approx. 95% of children	Compulsory	School for All students up to 18 years old
Led by municipalities	Led by municipalities (since 1996)	Led by the state
National curriculum	National curriculum	National curriculum
Approx. 14% in independent public funded schools	Approx. 2% in independent public funded schools	–
Parents pay around 25–30% of total cost	Full public funded	Students pay low registration fee and book costs
Free school choice, limited number of children in each school	Restricted school choice, neighbourhood schools	Restricted school choice – student choice

Fig. 6.1 Overview of the Icelandic school system, legislations, level of governance and financial issues

children from the ages of 2–6 attend these schools. There is a long tradition of 'private' preschools that are funded by the local authorities to a similar extent as the official preschools operating under the same legislation (Fig. 6.1).

The comprehensive school (grunnskóli) became a reality by law in 1974, when the common practice changed from a selective school system to a school system that does not group the students on the basis of academic achievement or abilities. It is compulsory for pupils aged 6–16 years old. The most common form of organisation is that all ten grades are in one school building, although different arrangements exist. Compulsory education in Iceland has extended rapidly over the last century, from 4 years in 1907 to 8 years in 1946, 9 years in 1974 and then to 10 years as it has been since 1990. School hours each day have increased as well as the number of schooldays in a year.

Upper secondary education (ages 16–20) is not compulsory, but anyone who has completed compulsory education, and is under 18 years old, has the right to enrol in studies at an upper secondary school. The secondary education has two main roles: to award final degrees for vocational training and to prepare students for university studies. The length of the courses in vocational education varies, lasting from one semester to ten, but the most prevalent are 4-year study programmes. Most teenagers attend upper secondary school, but there is a high dropout rate, and about 30 % of people aged 25–34 have not graduated from secondary school (Blöndal and Jónasson 2010). This is regarded as one of the big challenges in the Icelandic educational system. According to an act on secondary schools from 2008 (Lög um framhaldsskóla 92/2008), all students that so wish are entitled to at least 2 years in secondary school or up to the age of 18. However, each school can set their own rules for selection of students based on grades at the compulsory level, which tends to lead to classification.

The Icelandic school system has for most of its history been centralised at the national level, with a small private sector, and with tendencies for decentralisation emerging by the end of the twentieth century. Municipalities have always led

preschools, with a national curriculum defining the main roles and overall means. The responsibility for compulsory education was at the national level until 1996 when municipalities became financially and professionally responsible, within a legal framework and national curriculum that at this time became quite detailed in objectives for each age level and subject (Aðalnámskrá grunnskóla 1999). Few private schools exist at the compulsory level and are attended by a small number of children, around 1.2 % in the year 2000 up to 2.18 % in the year 2011 (Statistics Iceland 2012). They receive public funds but are also allowed to charge tuition fees from parents.

The state is responsible for secondary schools. They are steered directly from the ministry, which until 2008 gave the schools very little freedom to decide on curriculum issues. Legislation for secondary schools (Lög fyrir framhaldsskóla 92/2008) provided each school with much more independence, requiring them to decide on curriculum matters and make their own plan.

Teacher education is at university level in Iceland and has been since 1971 for teachers at the comprehensive school level, and since 1994 for teachers at the preschool level. A 3-year bachelor's degree in education was required for teacher certification at the preschool and compulsory level until 2011. Teachers in upper secondary schools were required to add 60 ECTS in pedagogy to their BA or BS in their special subject. In June 2008, new legislation was adopted for all school levels in Iceland as well as for teacher education. The act on teacher education (Lög um menntun og ráðningu kennara og skólastjórnenda no. 87/2008), which took effect in July 2011, requires a master's degree (5-year study programme) for teachers at all levels: preschools, comprehensive schools and upper secondary schools. Teacher certifications according to older laws are still valid, meaning that no teachers will lose the right to call themselves a teacher and work in schools. There are no requirements for them to update or renew their certification.

6.2 Historical Emergence: The Development of the School System for All

The history of public schools in Iceland is described and discussed in an extensive study led by Loftur Guttormsson (2008), a study that was published to mark 100 years from the first Educational Act in 1907. In this chapter the development of School for All is discussed with a special focus on different aspects of equity.

6.2.1 The First Educational Laws: The Main Emphases, Rationales and Threats for Equity

Since the first Educational Act, the Icelandic education system has been growing relatively fast into the well-developed school system that it is today. For centuries, children were normally educated in their homes by their parents and later by teachers who travelled around as part of an ambulatory school system. This arrangement

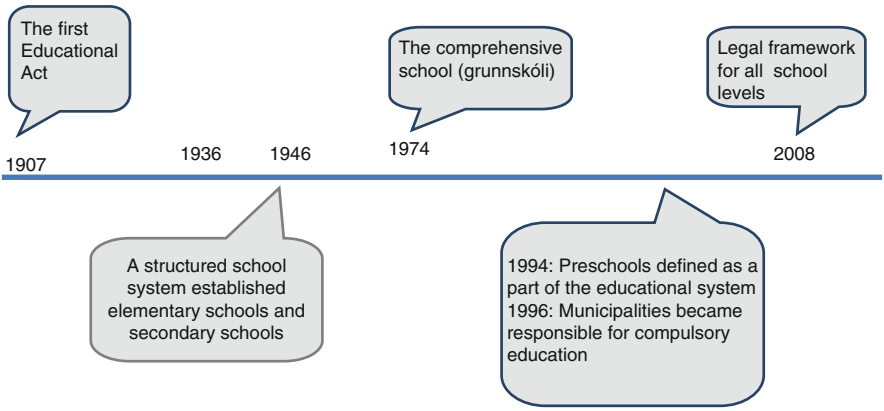

Fig. 6.2 Timeline for main turning points in educational legislation in Iceland

continued for many decades and well into the twentieth century in rural areas (Guttormsson 2008). Beginning with the first Educational Act in 1907, and subsequent acts in 1936 and 1943, Fig. 6.2 displays the timeline of some of the main turning points in educational legislation in Iceland. An act ratified by the Parliament in 2008 covered all tiers of the educational system.

The compulsory education was gradually lengthened throughout the twentieth century, stipulating parents' obligation to send their children to school. Legislation from 2008 introduced a student's right to complete the first 2 years of secondary school, which might be the first step to 12 years of compulsory education.

At the time of the first act in 1907, it was clear that Icelandic children had far less educational opportunities than children in neighbouring countries (Guttormsson 2008), which was the main argument for formal schooling. However, due to strong disagreement on compulsory education, the local authorities were allowed to decide whether they established formal schools or provided ambulatory schools. That accounted for all legislation until 1974. This resulted in a big gap between school attendance in rural areas and in villages or towns. This inequality of educational opportunities became one of the main discussion points until the year 1974 when the parliament agreed on a new educational act that focused on equal opportunities for all children with no exceptions (Garðarsdóttir 2008).

The first Educational Act, in Iceland as elsewhere, brought about discussion of establishing one school for the 'common people' and another for the 'elite', but with the small population running two different school systems was not realistic. In spite of the lack of private schools for upper-class society, there was a great difference in the educational opportunities offered to the upper and lower classes, such as preparation classes, available to upper-class children. This meant that these children received additional education and more preparation before attending the compulsory school and therefore most often did better at school (Garðarsdóttir 2008).

As the pupils attended compulsory school, they were grouped according to their reading skills but not by the year they were born. As a result of less preparation, pupils from the lower-class society were most often grouped in less skilled classes and often

received less stimulation to study (Garðarsdóttir 2008). After discussions and debates about the matter, the rules were changed in bigger towns and grouping depended on the year pupils were born. In bigger schools, the problem did not disappear because with additional groups at each age level pupils were still grouped according to their reading ability as they started school. More educated parents, or financially better off, prepared their children for the reading test and therefore the discrimination continued (Garðarsdóttir 2008). This did not change until the mainstreaming of the compulsory school in 1974 with equal opportunities for access to school.

6.2.2 Children with Special Needs in the First Half of the Twentieth Century

The first resource for children with disabilities was a school for deaf children, established in the year 1867. In the beginning it was organised for children aged 10–14, but in 1922 it was opened up for children aged 8–17. In 1933 the association for blind people founded a school for the blind, whose operation was off and on and finally it merged into a general school. Around 1945 a committee was organised to come up with plans for educating children that did not fit with other children in school due to their behaviour or home situation. The most common solution at this time was to send children with family or behaviour difficulties to the countryside to stay on a farm. The discussions from this period seemed to focus on finding solutions for these children that were far away from the city or towns. It is also worth noting that hardly ever was there a discussion about children in the countryside having behaviour problems or other challenges.

According to the school legislation passed in 1936, school boards could expel children with behaviour problems from school. Often children from low-class society and children with behaviour problems were grouped together as having the same problem. Many children did not attend school because of illness, and it does not look like the authorities responded to their needs until the legislation in 1946. Children who were physically or mentally disabled did not receive their education with other children, and it appears that the legislation in 1946 did not address this or come up with any solutions in the general school. On the other hand, institutions were established to provide appropriate upbringing and education for this group.

Institutionalising people with disabilities was the norm from the mid-twentieth century through the next 30–40 years. At first the institution was a place for caring, but little by little education was added to the programme. Often the placement and the education for children with disabilities depended on their families or people with a special interest in this group. On behalf of these children, they fought to establish a place for them to live and later on for their right to education. Another challenge is that by grouping children by their disability, discrimination continued because it was easier to deal with or organise education for children with certain disabilities. It has been a challenge to come to an agreement on how to address the needs of children with emotional and behaviour problems. At the beginning the

emphasis was placed on offering homes for these children, but as time went by they developed into a certain type of boarding school. This movement is related to changes in attitudes built on theories of mainstreaming that refers to the practice of educating students with special needs in regular schools and classes based on their skills. The education of children with disabilities began at institutions but moved little by little to special schools.

6.2.3 The Establishment of 10 Years of Comprehensive School

A shift in educational policy and school practices in the early 1970s was highlighted in the legislation from 1974 (Lög um grunnskóla 1974). It mandated education for all children in school, regardless of their ability. Instead of grouping students by ability, this law required that classes be organised into mixed-ability groups. Jónasson (2008) describes this as the final attempt to ensure schooling for all children, regardless of their place of residence, social background or their learning ability. Terms like social justice and democracy appeared in laws and national curriculum papers. After 1974, all changes in educational law and regulations have been aimed at providing education to all pupils in their neighbourhood school, without grouping them by learning abilities or disabilities. In actual practice, however, ability grouping remains in certain schools, especially among older pupils or those labelled with a certain kind of disability.

Lengthening of compulsory education was still the main debate at the national level. Children were needed as part of the workforce in the countryside as well as at the seaside, which was one of the main arguments against the lengthening of compulsory education. Inside the schools, the main discussions were concerned with social justice and equal opportunities for learning, regardless of learning ability or social status (Jónasson 2008). In response to these changes in educational law and international trends, Icelandic educators began to engage in innovative efforts in teaching methods and curriculum. They created a field of educational reform in which they assumed joint dominion over these tasks. Ensuing years brought a variety of workshops and summer institute programmes that focused primarily on preparing teachers to teach different subjects and to use newly published schoolbooks, followed by workshops on how to plan and organise the classroom (Guðjónsdóttir 1994; Jóhannesson 1992).

6.2.4 Some Obstacle for the Mainstream School in the Last Quarter of the Twentieth Century

Despite the legislation built on mainstreaming, the neighbourhood school was not for all children in reality. Mainstreaming strives for the placement of exceptional students to be in the least restrictive environment possible, which means that students with special needs will go to their neighbourhood school and receive their education in the special education environment if they cannot function in a regular

classroom. A school for mildly disabled pupils was established in 1960 and in 1980 another for severely disabled pupils. A school for physically disabled children was established in 1969 but was integrated into a general school in the year 1974. Still another school for pupils with behaviour or social problems was established in 1974. Most special schools were situated in the southwest part of the country, but a school for pupils with disabilities was also established in the northeast. Later, the school in the northeast merged into a mainstream school, but the two in Reykjavík remained as founded until 2011 when they merged. The number of students attending these schools has become smaller, and in 2011 it was less than 1 % of the student population. The mainstream schools set up special classes for children with learning and behaviour difficulties and emotional or social problems. In some cases these special classes were initiated for certain types of diagnosis disabilities, such as autism, behaviour problems or deaf children. To respond to pupils with learning difficulties, the special education schools offered teaching resources, and the most common practices happened outside the classroom. Support was mainly provided for reading or mathematics challenges. As noted, special schools were established, but children with disabilities received education at school like their peers. It can be said that this was the first movement towards integration where all pupils were educated in the same school building.

In the 1960s students who were previously excluded from school began to enter the school system. This trend has continued and children of immigrants have added to the diversity. This increasing diversity in the student population caused challenges for teachers, which were met by offering opportunities for professional development programmes (Marinósson and Bjarnason 2011).

6.3 School Policy and Trends at the Turn of a Century and Empirical Updates

This chapter discusses some trends in the turn of a new millennium and research findings that could inform consequences of political actions for School for All. New public management influenced political decisions during this period, which might have threatened the main idea of inclusive, regular School for All. However, equity is highly valued in different policy papers about education, but evidence on how it may or may not be realised in practice is controversial. This section discusses political trends and more recent empirical findings on issues concerning School for All. These are the inclusive school, management, national curriculum, individualised learning, school accountability and international comparisons.

6.3.1 The Inclusive School

The Salamanca Declaration that was confirmed in 1994 (Salamanca statement and framework for action 1994) and declared every child's right to education in a mainstream setting influenced the discussion in Iceland. The focus was no

longer on the obligation for each child to go to school but rather on the right of every child. As this goal was achieved, the focus moved to inclusive schooling, whether every child could or should fully participate in normal school life in their neighbourhood school.

Even though the inclusive school has been emphasised since the late twentieth century, research results on the success of the inclusive school are somewhat controversial. The percentage of students that are educated in mainstream schools is relatively high in Iceland compared to other OECD countries (Meijer et al. 2003). At the preschool level all children are in inclusive settings, with very rare exceptions, while at the compulsory level less than 1 % of all students attend special schools (Menntasvið Reykjavíkur 2008). However, the location of students with disabilities within the mainstream schools does not mean that they are included or acknowledged as participants in the school life. Participation has not been measured generally in Iceland, but authors of a recent study of the education of mentally disabled students concluded that the ground rules were that the school is still considered a 'normal' place where all major deviations were considered problems in need of 'fixing' (Marinósson 2007). On the other hand Bjarnason (2010a), who investigated how Icelandic parents of disabled children experienced support for the family and the child over a 33-year time span (1974–2007), noticed a shift in paradigm from focusing on disability in the family as a private trouble towards a public issue based on the child's rights as a citizen. It is also evident from Bjarnason's (2010a) study that Icelandic parents of disabled children do not seem to suffer from poverty and housing problems in the same way as parents of disabled children in Britain, the USA and to some extent the Scandinavian countries.

In general it can be said that the discussion about inclusive education is stronger at the policy level among school authorities than it is among teachers or within teacher education, as discussed in Sigurðardóttir (2010). The educational authorities at a national level and some of the local ones emphasise inclusion in their policy papers. Through the lenses of science for all, in inclusive school systems, Þórólfsson and Finnbogason (2010) analysed two policy documents that were used as the foundation for the national curriculum in 1999. They found that 'despite promising effects to meet the needs of a diverse student population and offering "science for all", the findings indicated a stronger emphasis on standardisation according to academic goals than multiform learning opportunities and originality' (Þórólfsson and Finnbogason 2010, p. 1).

The discussion is not so prevalent among teachers and in teacher education. Inclusion does not appear in teachers' union policy papers nor has it been a prominent feature in the overall policy for teacher education until 2011. Teachers in compulsory schools believe that they respond to students' needs in their teaching, but they call for various resources for students with special needs if they are going to be included in regular schools (Marinósson 2004; Ólafsson and Björnsson 2009). Teachers feel that today's pupils differ those in years past, in the ways they express themselves, behave and learn; to be able to respond to the diverse group of pupils, they call for knowledge that is more specialised (Jóhannesson 1999, 2006b).

Gunnþórsdóttir (2010) compared teachers' attitudes and understandings towards inclusion in two schools in Iceland and two in Holland. Her results indicate that after 30 years of process towards inclusion, the teachers in the participating Icelandic schools claimed that they did not have sufficient support for inclusive practice. Teachers in her study claimed to have little knowledge on inclusive schools, and if they did they had acquired it from work outside schools or from personal experience rather than from professional discussions or practice within the school or their teacher education programme. These results are somewhat in accordance with TALIS (Teaching and Learning International Study) where dealing with disabled students ranked highest among Icelandic teachers when asked where they would need further knowledge or skills (Ólafsson and Björnsson 2009). On the contrary, Karlsdóttir and Guðjónsdóttir (2010) concluded that the teachers participating in their qualitative study had positive attitudes and knowledge on inclusive practice through collaboration and policy work within the schools. These schools considered themselves inclusive schools (Guðjónsdóttir and Karlsdóttir 2009). Guðjónsdóttir (2000) studied the practice of six general teachers, whose students included those with identified disabilities in their classrooms. She found that these teachers were innovative and responsive professional educators who practised differentiated teaching and learning.

Preliminary results from a recent study on teaching and learning in Icelandic schools indicate that only about 49% of Icelandic teachers find it important that all pupils attend their neighbourhood school (Björnsdóttir and Jónsdóttir 2010). An explanation could lie in the fact that a large proportion (83 %) claim that teachers in general are not prepared to teach all pupils; around half of the teachers believe that the policy of inclusion has not improved school practices. Guðjónsdóttir and Karlsdóttir (2009) observed that only about a quarter of comprehensive schools mentioned inclusion in their policy statements as presented on their websites, while about half of the schools published policy statements regarding support to students with special educational needs in the comprehensive schools.

The number of students defined by the schools in need of special support in school has increased. In the year 2000 about 18 % of pupils in compulsory schools in Reykjavík received special support (Fræðslumiðstöð Reykjavíkur 2000). Five years later this percentage was 21 %, out of which around 75 % received their support outside the classroom (Helgadóttir 2006). The school year 2011–2012 about 27 % of pupils at a national level received special support, according to data from Statistics Iceland (2012), the majority of them outside the classroom. In preschools the percentage has remained the same since 2000 or around 5 % (Statistics Iceland 2012).

Johannesson (2006a) claims that different technological and market approaches at the policy level can hinder successful inclusive practices in schools. He stresses three aspects in this respect: students are seen as consumers of clinical services and diagnosable subjects; inclusion is a matter of management and an accountability rather than pedagogic; and the strong focus on inclusion has had a silencing effect on other types of equality such as gender, place of living, class and culture.

6.3.2 Management Policy and National Curriculum

Continuing school improvement in Iceland is reflected in changed curricula and new evaluation procedures. A national curriculum for compulsory school was published in 1989. In 1999, 10 years later, this curriculum was re-evaluated and new guidelines were published emphasising detailed descriptions of objectives for each school subject and age level.

The school policy from 1998 focused on creating a flexible education system that should be able to address (a) the needs of each individual student, (b) wider choices for students, (c) good work skills, (d) healthy competition and (e) enhanced student responsibility towards their studies (Menntamálaráðuneytið 1998). A critical aspect of the new school policy states that the equal right to education must offer teaching and learning opportunities in line with each student's abilities and interests and must provide education appropriate for each student. The goal is not to teach all the students the same things, but to provide them all with a solid educational foundation through flexible schooling and diverse teaching methods (Aðalnámskrá grunnskóla 1999).

The first part of a national curriculum for all school levels, based on the legislative acts from 2008, was published in 2011. The educational authority moved away from detailed objectives towards defining learning outcomes and basic educational ideas. Six fundamental pillars were defined to sit at the centre of educational discussions and to be a platform for school improvements at all levels. They are literacy, education for democracy and citizenship, education for equality, education for sustainable development, creativity and health. These pillars are intended to form a thread throughout the whole educational system and in doing so create a congruency between different school levels (Aðalnámskrá grunnskóla 2011). They are in accordance with the ideology behind the inclusive school as described in different materials from UNESCO where quality and equity is thought of as central for inclusive education (UNESCO 2009).

Free school choice was implemented in many of the larger municipalities in Iceland in the late twentieth century, which is stipulated in the act on compulsory education (Lög um grunnskóla 91/2008). The aim was to increase quality by encouraging school competition and the establishment of private schools through the 'money goes with child' approach. This could threaten the emphasis on equality in School for All, as it paves the way for greater sorting and segregation of students by ability or socioeconomic background as discussed by the OECD (2012a, Equity and quality in education). That has, however, not been the case since more than 90% of parents choose the neighbourhood school even though they could choose another one. The parents that participated in Sigurðardóttir's (2011) study on free school choice in one of the cities (Garðabær) expressed a high level of satisfaction with the school choice, although the majority of them still chose the neighbourhood school for their children.

6.3.3 School Policy at a Local Level: Individualised Learning

Having been made responsible for the operation of the compulsory schools (1996), many of the municipalities made an effort to establish their own policy and strengthen the quality of education in their district. One major example is the term *individualised learning* that was put at the forefront of policy documents in Reykjavík at the turn of the century as a response to inclusive education. This became a strong wave for school development all over the country in the new millennium, despite different opinions among educationalists (Sigurgeirsson 2005). The main argument for this policy was to emphasise education according to individual needs, which has been stressed in educational legislation since 1974 (Sigurðardóttir 2007). In order to avoid individualised learning being mistaken for individualism, it was referred to as 'individualised learning and student collaboration' in policy papers after 2001 (Fræðslumiðstöð Reykjavíkurborgar 2003). The focus moved from teaching to learning and pupils were supposed to take more responsibility for their learning and individual learning plans. Some of the larger schools, though, might have used that policy to justify grouping students by learning ability.

More open ways of working involving flexible learning spaces and team teaching were suggested at all levels (Menntasvið Reykjavíkurborgar 2007). As an example of this, results from a study on teaching and learning indicate that different designs of school buildings emerged under the provision of individualised learning, with open classrooms and transparency around the building. It is too soon to tell whether this will result in different ways of teaching or a good learning outcome. However, teachers do claim they collaborate more often with colleagues in open classroom environments than in traditional classrooms and allow students more choice concerning content and ways of working (Sigurðardóttir and Hjartarson 2011).

This policy was not criticised so much for political implication, but rather for the lack of transparency in the use of terms (Sigurgeirsson 2005) and the focus on learning instead of teaching. For example, Guðjónsson (2005) claimed that learning is always individualised and therefore individualised teaching would be more appropriate, and Sigurgeirsson (2005) suggested that the term *differentiated learning* might be more in accordance with the intention.

6.3.4 School Accountability

There are no formal inspections at the national level in Icelandic schools, but schools at all levels are required to do self-evaluations every year and publish the results (Lög um grunnskóla 91/2008). The ministry monitors schools through information from the municipalities and carries out its own evaluations on a few randomly selected schools every year. In addition, some of the larger municipalities, such as Reykjavík, have implemented an external evaluation in schools, a holistic evaluation covering most aspects of schoolwork (Sigurjónsdóttir 2010).

The national coordinated tests in grades four, seven and ten are also meant to measure students' outcomes under the provision of the national curriculum. Increased emphases on national tests appeared at the beginning of the twenty-first century with a growing number of subjects tested nationally in grade 10. This changed again in 2009 when the tests were made optional for pupils (Reglugerð um samræmd könnunarpróf 2009). They were also moved from being final tests carried out at the end of the spring term to being conducted in the autumn term at the beginning of the school year for students in grade 10.

The effects for schools, based on results from evaluations or national tests, are not prominent, except for the effect on their reputation as the results of national tests are published in the media every year. Resources are not decreased or withheld based on results. Consequences for pupils first appear when they are entering secondary school, which might be difficult for those with lower scores from national tests, as the schools choose the students. Furthermore, pupils' grade repetition within compulsory schools is an exception, and pupils are rarely delayed in going from preschool to primary school.

6.3.5 International Comparison and Transnational Influences

Iceland participated in international comparative research studies including Pisa 2000, 2003, 2006 and 2009; TALIS 2009; PIRLS 2001 and 2006; TIMSS 2001; and SITES 2001. In general, Icelandic pupils score close to OECD average or below. The effectiveness of the schools is considered to be low compared to the allocated budget. Many factors are a benefit for schools such as resources, parent level of education, cultural possessions at home, student-teacher ratio and equipment for teaching and learning (Halldórsson et al. 2010a), while teachers' level of education is relatively low (Ólafsson and Björnsson 2009). TALIS results indicate more teacher collaboration than in other participating countries. On the other hand, Icelandic teachers do not take part in professional development activities to the same extent as teachers in other participating countries. They have, however, relatively strong self-efficacy and are satisfied in their job (Ólafsson and Björnsson 2009).

In spite of the individualised learning approach, PISA results indicate that literacy among 15-year-old pupils is below average and scores became lower between 2000, 2003 and 2006 on all tested literacy skills (Halldórsson et al. 2010a). These results worried Icelandic teachers and educational authorities who launched various projects in schools with considerable positive results, according to PISA 2009 (Halldórsson et al. 2010b).

The differences between the highest and lowest scores are relatively small for social and economic conditions as well as student outcomes. Relatively few scores are in the highest level compared to comparative countries and fewer at the lower ends as well (Halldórsson et al. 2010a). This could indicate that the Icelandic school system is supporting pupils with special educational needs.

Based on information from the year 2008, Iceland spends the highest percentage of GDP on education at the compulsory and preschool levels of all OECD countries (OECD, Education at a glance 2011). This percentage was lower in the year 2009 (OECD, Education at a glance 2012b) but still well above the average of all OECD countries. Two factors seem to be the main explanation for this outcome; the number of students per teacher is among the lowest in the compulsory schools, and the percentage of teachers' working time spent teaching is also among the lowest. The teacher salaries are, however, relatively low and the length of compulsory education is similar to other countries.

Even though the Icelandic school system is organised according to the Nordic tradition, it has been influenced by ideas from other parts of the world as well. The influence from international comparative studies has already been discussed, but the further education of teachers abroad also brings international influences. It may in part be caused by a lack of opportunities for further education for teachers throughout the twentieth century. As a consequence of this lack of opportunities, teachers and other educationalists went abroad for further education to different countries, mostly other Nordic countries, the USA or the UK. They came back with new ideas and traditions and took on different leadership roles in education in Iceland. Currently these transnational influences find their ways through international comparative studies.

6.4 Summary and Reflections

The structure of compulsory education in Iceland is in accordance with the Nordic model, with 10 years of schooling, most often in one school. Most of the time it has been centralised, directed from the Ministry of Education, with tendencies for decentralisation over the last decades, as the municipalities became responsible for these schools in 1996. There are curricula at the national level defining pupils' learning outcomes and underpinning themes for education. Equity has been in focus at all school levels with the general understanding that the public school is for all students.

For most of the twentieth century, the educational debate in Iceland was characterised by conflicts between those who argued for formal, public School for All regardless of place of living and, although fewer, those who argued against formal schooling and for decentralisation, allowing municipalities to arrange the education of children according to the work life needs. The length of compulsory education was a central point in this debate. The concept School for All had different meanings in different periods. The Icelandic school system has always been underpinned by emphases on public education and equity. The focus on equity has moved from pupils living in the cities or villages and those living in rural areas to gender equity and the inclusive school.

As explained in the discussion above, the Icelandic school system has developed relatively fast since the comprehensive school was established in 1974. Put simply,

it can be said that the comprehensive school (grunnskólinn) was developed and built up in a social democratic atmosphere during the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s. However, continuing with such simple definitions, the 1990s and the 2000s can be characterised by technological and market-oriented approaches in education (Jóhannesson 2006a), involving deregulation, school competition and public choice. This technical approach was viewed as an inevitable condition for progress in the education system (Jóhannesson et al. 2002). During this period, increased privatisation of different public services took place (Kjartansson 2008).

The economical downfall in October 2008 influenced the political debate of the subsequent years. It is viewed by many as not only an economic downfall, but in a sense also an ideological and political turning point, as people started to review and question different fundamental values that underpinned decision making at a political level. It can be considered a turning point, since people refer to the period before the downfall or after it. In education, the downfall can be seen as a turning point in several different ways, and only a few of them are touched upon here. A debate about the role of the school system in society, touching on some ethical issues such as democracy involving societal responsibility, was revitalised. Educationalists or maybe rather educational authorities questioned whether the schools had failed in this respect. In addition, reacting to the cutback of resources in education has been an urgent task and has forced people to prioritise, which may provoke some worries about lack of additional support for students with disabilities. One reaction to fewer resources is the merging of schools, which was mostly done in rural districts, but during the years after the downfall, this happened in all districts including Reykjavík city. Furthermore, the downfall led to disbelief in political ideas, rooted in new public management and a neoliberal atmosphere, such as privatisation, competition and accountability. As a consequence, growing interest for private schools at the compulsory level and school competition slowed down, at least temporarily.

A new government took over at the beginning of 2009 (ruled until 2013), consisting of two parties, *the Social Democratic Alliance* and *the Left Green Movement*. In their political statement they gave a tone that challenges the neoliberal perspective. They emphasised the importance of protecting the national level of education. 'Basic education, free of charge, is the key to social equality and national success in the long term. …. and the policy of the inclusive school will be respected' (The political agreement, January 2009). New national curricula for all school levels, based on the acts from 2008 and published in 2011 (Aðalnámskrá grunnskóla 2011), reflect this policy with the six basic elements that are meant to be at the centre of educational discussions and a platform for school improvements at all levels. The inclusive school is emphasised more strongly in the 2008 legislation than it has been before, involving neighbourhood public schools for everyone.[1]

[1] Still a new government took over in the spring 2013 consisting of two parties on the liberal side, Independent party and Progressive party. They do not mention issues such as equity or inclusion in their political agreement, but instead stress variety in the schoolwork as a key to strong and creative community. http://www.stjornarrad.is/Stefnuyfirlysing/

PISA 2009 indicates that equality among Icelandic 15-year-olds is at a high level, among the highest in the OECD, in the sense that their achievement does not depend on their socioeconomic background. Differences in outcomes between schools seem to be increasing, which might be seen as a consequence of the decentralisation in the 1990s when the municipalities became responsible for the schools and individual schools were encouraged to create their own policy and uniqueness (Halldórsson et al. 2010b). In the OECD (2012) report about equality and quality, the Icelandic educational system is considered to be among those that manage to combine high performance and quality.

Even though the inclusive school can be considered one of the main challenges in the development towards School for All in Iceland, Bjarnason (2010b) concluded that the school system is on its way to inclusive education for all and that schools seem to have opened their doors to a diversity of students. There are, though, different perceptions and experiences of the process and obviously there is still some way to go. It could well be that the main threat against the School for All idea in Iceland comes from within the schools, rooted in the disbelief of teachers, rather than from political emphases. This should be taken seriously. Other aspects of equality also need more attention, such as gender, as Jóhannesson (2006) pointed out. We have argued that the idea one School for All survived, at least temporarily, through the strong neoliberal movement in Iceland at the turn of the new millennium. Which direction will be taken in the future depends largely on global movement and local political conditions.

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Part II
Thematic Chapters

Chapter 7
A Social Democratic Response to Market-Led Education Policies: Concession or Rejection?

Nina Volckmar and Susanne Wiborg

7.1 Introduction

Is the comprehensive school system – a School for All – consolidated by Social Democrats in the 1960s and 1970s being undermined by the Social Democrats themselves? Why have Social Democrats in Scandinavia endorsed and even initiated market-led reforms on education? For instance, why did the Swedish Social Democrats introduce school choice in 1991, which promoted a substantial private school sector? Why did they endorse the right-wing policy of allowing private companies to establish Free Schools for profit at the expense of the Swedish taxpayer? Why did the Norwegian Social Democrats relax state control on education and increase the autonomy of schools? When the Danish Social Democrats were in opposition, why did they agree to an Act proposed by a right-wing government on school choice in 2006 and risk generating greater social segregation?

The almost uniform view among educationalists is that market-led reforms of education are a result of the increasing power of the Right, which has gained sufficient power to push through reforms aiming at creating a quasi-market for education (Telhaug and Tønnesen 1992; Telhaug 2005; Telhaug et al. 2006; Lundahl 2005; Arnesen and Lundahl 2006; Korsgaard 1999). It is true that Social Democracy, in comparison to its almost unchallenged power in the 1960s and 1970s, has ceased to be salient. From 1982 to 1989 and again from 2001 to 2011, a total of 17 years, right-wing governments ruled in Denmark. In Sweden by mid-1980s, two centrist parties, the People's party and the Centre party, had joined the Conservatives in

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creating, for the first time in Swedish post-war history, a concerted bulwark against social democratic egalitarian school policy. In Norway, after many years of social democratic dominance, governments started from 1981 to alternate between minority Social Democratic governments and Conservative-led Centre-Right governments. When in power, right-wing governments have indeed brought about changes to their education systems along market lines, such as introducing a decentralisation process within the school system, increasing diversity of school provision, encouraging competition and promoting parental choice between public and private schools. Moreover, they have initiated a standardisation of the national curriculum in conjunction with national and publically available tests results. However, this does not explain why social democratic parties endorsed some of these right-wing policies that invariably stand in contradiction to their own policy agenda, and, more fundamentally, that they would initiate privatising reforms themselves, which has been particularly evident in Sweden.

Scholars of comparative education, who are concerned with how education policies 'travel' across borders, would argue that the introduction of market-led reforms is a result of policy borrowing. Proponents of this approach (Phillips and Ochs 2004; Morris 2012) suggest that the propagation of educational policies, ideas and practices across countries can be understood as a way governments seek 'solutions' in foreign countries to 'problems' at home. Aspects of perceived successful policy observed elsewhere, such as high PISA scores, types of independent schools or voucher schemes, might then be 'borrowed' to improve practices in the national context. Phillips and Ochs (2004) argue that such transfer of policies can be encapsulated analytically through four stages: (1) cross national attraction, (2) decision, (3) implementation and (4) internalisation. Although many examples of policy borrowing certainly can be identified in modern politics, this approach would fail in developing explanations as to *why* governments choose particular policies in the first place, and, more fundamentally, it cannot explain variations of outcomes across countries. For example, we would be able to shed light onto how the Swedish policymakers looked to Thatcher's United Kingdom for ideas of creating a quasi-market of education but unsuccessful in explaining why Sweden, the most 'social democratic' country in Scandinavia, implemented marked-led reforms on education that far exceeded similar attempts in Denmark and, particularly, Norway. It is ironic, however, that comparative education scholars employing a policy borrowing approach cannot produce credible comparative explanations, if this is understood as the process of the elimination of rival explanations of particular events, actors, structures etc., in order to help build more general theories (Landman 2007, p. 4).

The question therefore still remains why the Social Democrats are 'attracted' to a market-led approach to educational reform, and why the implementation of these reforms have varied significantly across Scandanavian countries. The aim of this chapter is to provide an alternative approach in explaining market-led policy diversity in Scandinavia. We will employ a political economy model, rooted in the *power resource theory,* for explaining education policy choices from the 1980s to the present. Political scientists, wrestling with this issue in regard to social service provision (Esping-Andersen 1985, 1990; Korpi 1989; Green-Pedersen 2002;

Klitgaard 2007a), argue that answers can be found in connection with the retrenchment of the Scandinavian welfare states, and the role social democracy has played in this. We will argue that this viewpoint is applicable to education policy and provides a powerful theory against which to analyse this comparatively. A comparative method – the case-oriented method (Ragin 1987; Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2004; Landman 2007) – will be employed, which aims at maintaining historical context whilst explaining variance of a given outcome by proposing causal relationships, understood in Ragin's (1987) terminology as 'complex conjunctural causation', drawn from insights accumulated in welfare state, coalition policy research and education policy literature. We will analyse education policy choices by shifting governments, which seek to create market-like conditions for educational provision. Hence, we will go beyond a narrow definition of privatisation, which entails a process by which educational provision, anything from schools to services such as school meals and cleaning, is outsourced straight forwardly to the private sector. By also including political attempts at creating a market-like education sector, for example, through parental choice, voucher systems and competition between schools, we seek to embrace the entirety of this 'new' reform agenda. This is a process we describe as 'market-led reforms of education'. Provided that we were only to look at privatisation strictly as outsourcing, it would be difficult to argue that education has been privatised on any significant scale in Scandinavia. For example, private schools in Scandinavia, in contrast to England, are not private as the word indicates as they receive substantial state subsidies.

This chapter is divided into three parts. In the first part, we briefly outline the power resource theory and in the second part employ this theory in the analysis of education reforms in Sweden, Denmark and Norway, respectively. The last part discusses the extent to which the Scandinavian school system, based on the idea of a 'School for All', is eroding, and whether social democracy can be held responsible for this.

7.2 Power Resource Theory and Market-Led Reforms of Education

The power resource theory was borne out of research on welfare state regimes (by, e.g. Korpi 1980, 1983, 1989; Esping-Andersen 1985, 1990) and is based on a theory of distribution in capitalist democracies. This theory holds that early welfare state consolidation and major differences between them, in terms of public spending and citizen entitlements, are explained by the relative political success of the Left, particularly Social Democratic parties aligned with strong trade unions and the middle classes, in the shaping of the democratic class struggle. As the Social Democratic parties have been particularly powerful in Scandinavia, their role in welfare state politics becomes even more important in scrutinising, especially their response to 'threats' from the outside to the welfare state that they once consolidated and, more fundamentally, their need to maintain in order to keep voters support.

Gösta Esping-Andersen (1985, 1990) argues that the Social Democrats not only aspired to create the universal welfare state, it was also a political instrument, which paved their way to power. The result of their many years in government was the development of welfare states in which the public sector was envisaged as a tool that pursues social equality through producing services itself and thereby disengaging citizens from market dependence. Today the public sector is still organised as a virtual state monopoly of a comprehensive social security system of flat-rate and income-related benefits and a wide range of tax-funded, publicly provided social services including health care, care services for children and the elderly as well as compulsory schooling and tuition-free higher education (Esping-Andersen 1985, 1990; Huber and Stephens 2001; Korpi 1983, 1989). Since almost all citizens benefit as social welfare recipients, a large proportion of the electorate has been provided with incentives to support the welfare state. As a result, a political link has been established between Social Democrats and a large proportion of the electorate from mainly the middle class employed in the public sector. This link is crucial for the party to exploit in order to muster political support.

In Sweden this 'symbiosis' of universal welfare state and social democracy appears stronger than in Norway and Denmark. Since the 1980s, the Social Democratic parties have been increasingly exposed to 'outside' threats usually in form of attacks from right-wing parties of 'their' welfare states and therefore have been 'forced' to respond to this. The social democratic response to these attacks, according to power resource theorists, is key to understanding why they have chosen, in some instances, to support right-wing government in their market-led policies, and why they have initiated these types of reforms themselves. It may be unexpected that the Social Democrats would engage in such acts as their support for market-led reforms entails a risk of undermining the very foundation upon which they historically have achieved their unprecedented level of political power. According to Klitgaard (2007a) '[s]ocial democratic governments effectuate market-oriented reforms to protect the universal welfare state as their most valuable institutional weapon' and 'in order to function as a power resource, the welfare state depends on popular trust and the democratic constituency to perceive welfare institutions as legitimate grounds for collective action' (p. 173). In case social democratic politicians have a reason to perceive particular issues as a threat to welfare state legitimacy, they may be prepared to endorse market-type reforms if these are believed to prevent loss of legitimacy and declining welfare state support. In the following, we will analyse this theory empirically on policy choices on education.

7.3 Sweden

At first sight, it appears a contradiction in terms that Sweden with a powerful social democracy and a universal welfare state would pursue market-led reforms on education in the first place. Even by comparison to Norway and Denmark, Sweden often stood out in the discouragement of, and even hostility to, private providers especially

within the health sector and the education system. By the 1960s, most of the pre-existing private providers had been phased out largely through lack of funding. For instance, less than 1 % of school children attended a private school. However, this was to change radically from the mid-1980s and early 1990s when a Social Democratic government initiated decentralisation reforms of the public sector (Blomqvist 2004).

The question is how this unexpected social democratic behaviour can be understood. From a power resource point of view, this is primarily due to the extent to which the Social Democrats were put under pressure by the Right-wing opposition and how they reacted to this. By mid-1980s, the Conservatives were joined by two centrist parties, the People's party and the Centre party in their quest for privatisation and consumer choice, creating for the first time in the post-war period an obstacle for social democratic welfare policies. When the Social Democrats assumed power in 1985, the Right-wing's condemnation of the welfare state had become so insistent that the government was goaded into action. In 1982, the Social Democrats accommodated the Right by enacting a new Public Administration Policy, which entailed decentralisation reforms and the development of a more service-oriented welfare state. The Social Democrats anticipated that this concession would pre-empt the Right-wing from making further demands for market-led reforms. However, not only pressure from the Right made them agree to this policy, there was also a growing dissatisfaction within the party itself that the government actions had not been sufficient enough to reform the public sector. The consequence was that the Social Democrats started to move away from their previous rejection of market-type reforms after the election in 1988. By the time the Budget Bill was passed in 1990, the party had relinquished most of its reservations. The Social Democratic party was not united in this stance, but views of the factious pro-market wing in the party, which revolved around the powerful Minister of Finance, Kjell-Oluf Feldt, came to represent the official party line (Premors 1998; Klitgaard 2007a).

The Social Democrats, during their period in government from 1986 to 1991, decentralised the education system by transferring the administration of Swedish schools to the municipalities, whilst the central state involvement was restricted to deciding general aims for education and providing general funding and inspection (The previous Conservative government, 1976–1982, had open the way for this by transferring state subsidies to the municipalities). In 1990–1991, a new funding scheme, an unspecified block grant, was introduced with the aim of giving municipalities more latitude in disposing resources and organizing schools they saw fit for purpose. The municipalities undertook responsibility for teachers and school personnel, and each school was requested to develop an educational profile. Most surprisingly, perhaps, is that this government introduced parental choice which was supported by a universal voucher system (Richardson 1999).

However, the Social Democrats anticipated that school choice would only be restricted to the public sector, but since the new funding scheme allowed private schools to receive public funding on equal terms with state schools, school choice was inevitably extended to the private sector, too. The Social Democrats, who had strongly opposed public funding of private schools during the 1980s as they feared that it would undermine the principle of creating a 'School for All', collided with the

Conservatives and Liberals over the issue. In a parliamentary committee, in which the government bill proposing the new funding scheme was debated, the Centre party, which was the main political ally of the government, suggested that municipalities should allocate resources to all schools irrespective of whether these were public or private. However, the Social Democratic government had in actual fact already endorsed this viewpoint by allowing parents to choose between state schools and public funded private schools (Richardson 1999; Klitgaard 2007b).

A conservative coalition government under Carl Bildt's leadership from 1991 to 1994 heralded a further shift towards market-led policy on education. A new national curriculum and new forms of state control were enacted, such as national tests and a revised grade system. Moreover, the government replaced the funding scheme, means-tested grants to schools, with a new scheme, which gave private schools the right to receive a sum per pupil of 85 % of the average cost of a pupil in state schools. This change in funding policy resulted in a sharp growth in private schools, the so-called Free Schools, from 60 in 1991 to 709 in 2009/2010, as private schools were enabled to compete with state schools on an almost equal financial basis. The paucity of interested parental and community groups in setting up schools resulted in private business expanding their interests as they were allowed to make profit (Wiborg 2010a).

From 1994 until 1998, the Social Democrats had returned to power, but during their time in office, they did little to alter the previous development of education. Since they had already embraced market-led education policy, it no longer appeared possible to revert to a position similar to that of pre-1980s. Regardless of disagreements within the Social Democratic party, it nevertheless accepted the legitimacy of private providers of social and educational services. However, the political conflicts over user's fees in relation to school choice can according to Klitgaard (2007a) be seen as an attempt by the Social Democratic party to reinvigorate the universal welfare state without betraying its basic principles. The right-wing government, in power between 1991 and 1994, decided that approximately 15 % of private schools' operational costs should be covered by user fees. The Social Democratic party, returning to power in 1994, abolished this legislation arguing that parents' financial situations should not determine the educational opportunities of their children. They decided that private schools should be fully state funded and not allowed to charge parents an additional fee. Private schools were in effect offered as a universal opportunity independent of private incomes. The cross-party consensus about the private schools remains intact to the present day, despite the fact that the Social Democrats have suffered unprecedented losses in the last three successive elections (Wiborg 2012).

7.4 Denmark

The Danish case is made interesting by the fact that even though the country was ruled by right-wing parties for many years (1982–1993, 2001–2011), market-led policies on education have been pursued only to a relatively small degree. To be

sure, when the conservative-led coalition government took over in 1982, it called for nothing less than a 'bourgeois revolution' to put an end to the social democratic 'nanny state'. The government succeeded in shifting economic policies from demand to supply-side economics, to further integrate the Danish Economy in the economy of the European Union and to weaken the role of central state institutions. However, their attempts to cut public social expenditure and reform the basic structure of the welfare state failed (Green-Pedersen 1999; Greve 1997). In regard to education, the long-serving Education Minister Bertil Haarder did not succeed either in bringing about major reforms of education along market lines. He managed to initiate a decentralisation process by which financial resources from the state were transferred to schools as well as pass an Act on School Boards in 1987, which ensured greater parental influence on school boards.

During the 1980s, the Social Democrats launched a devastating attack on the government's attempts to put forward a privatising programme of the public sector. The programme, which contained plans to increase the use outsourcing and lower benefits and wages, was met with such opposition by the Social Democrats and trade unions that the government was forced to withdraw their reform plans (Torfing 2001). In regard to education, the Social Democrats were joined by the small, but influential party, the Radical Left, spearheaded by Ole Vig Jensen, and the Teacher Union, who together attacked Haarder's liberal education policies and demanded a new Education Act that in effect would consolidate the comprehensive school system. It is this success of Social Democratic agitation, Green-Pedersen (2002) argues, that later prevented the Social Democrats from adopting market-oriented policies when they returned to power in 1993. The leadership of the party, inspired by Tony Blair's Third Way, sought to evoke a more positive stance towards market-oriented reforms of the public sector but to little avail. The issue for the Social Democrats was, according to the power resource theory, that they were 'locked' in their own political rhetoric of the 1980s. 'As they successfully defined market-type reforms as an ideological crusade against the welfare state, it has proved impossible to persuade the rest of the party – and the public – that such reforms are now a tool to achieve cheaper and/or better service' (Green-Pedersen 2002, p. 283). When the Social Democratic-led coalition government held power during 1993–2001, it stated that the provision of welfare services should remain a public responsibility. The government passed an Education Act in 1993 and although it was mainly prepared by the previous government and hence bore its imprint, it provided, nevertheless, that academic streaming in grade 8 and 9 would be abolished in favour of mixed ability classes. This Act did indeed consolidate the comprehensive school system that the Social Democrats had been striving for since the 1960s (Wiborg 2009).

The Social Democratic-led government was defeated in the 2001 election and replaced by a Liberal-Conservative coalition government that lasted until 2011. During this 10-year period, a turn towards a market-oriented policy of education became more evident. The government's policy statement from 2001 stated that 'a high attainment level in schools is paramount for success in the labour market in the future. The school of the future should be academic, flexible and forward-looking. In order to increase standards the government wishes to … tighten and specify academic

requirements, which should be achieved at each grade in all subjects, e.g. through the preparation of a more binding curriculum' (quoted in Holm-Larsen 2010, p. 101). In 2001, a new curriculum 'Clear Goals' (*Klare Mål*) was introduced, but just as the curriculum it was replacing, it only outlined a set of broad (but revised) guidelines. The curriculum still allowed teachers to create their own lesson plans to a great extent and utilise learning methods that they saw fit for their pupils' individual requirements. However, in 2003, this curriculum was replaced with a new one, the 'Common Goals' (*Fælles Mål*), which included a more detailed description of the knowledge, skills and understanding required for each subject. In 2009, the requirements of this curriculum were tightened even further resulting in less latitude to the teachers. The government also attempted to create an 'evaluation culture' in schools by requiring teachers to prepare 'pupil plans' (*Elevplaner*), which implied a continuous assessment of pupil's academic progress in all subjects. These efforts culminated in 2006 when national tests were introduced, although they only came into force in 2010.

Moreover, in 2005, an Act on School Choice was passed that extended parental choice to the public school system. Prior to this, parents in fact already had choice, which was made possible by a relatively large private school sector (Korsgaard and Wiborg 2006). This sector was accepted by the Social Democrats in contrast to their Nordic counterparts who took radical measures to reduce it in the 1960s. Now it also became possible for Danish parents to choose a state school across school districts and municipalities. In order to encourage parental choice, the government, with backing from its support party, the Danish People's party, required the schools to create a school website providing information about their educational strategies and detailed results from the national school-leaving exams (Rangvid 2008). During the political negotiations leading to these Acts on education, the government received support from the Conservatives, the Danish Peoples party and the Social Democrats, whereas the Radical Left, the Socialists and the Christian Democrats voted against. Initially, the Social Democrats and the Teacher Union were strongly against the government's education policy, particularly the issue of national tests, but they agreed with the government in the end. They defended their act of support in a social democratic manner by purporting that increasing academic standards would help avoiding middle-class flight from state schools and thus promote social cohesion in the Danish society. In 2011, a Social Democratic minority government returned to power and it remains to be seen to what extent they will continue the policies of the previous government or divert from them (Juul 2006; Wiborg 2012).

7.5 Norway

In contrast to Denmark and, particularly, Sweden, education in Norway has been subject to market-oriented reforms to a lesser degree at least until 2001. One important reason behind this is due to a greater consensus across the Right and Left in Norwegian politics. To be sure, market-oriented reforms have indeed been introduced and the Social Democrats have followed suit in ways similar to their

neighbouring counterparts. Most public sectors saw reforms in which management by objectives was implemented as a steering principle and state-owned companies were partly privatised (Slagstad 1998).

During the period of 1981–1986, the Conservatives initiated a decentralisation process of education by which economic resources and responsibility were transferred from the state to the municipalities. A revised national curriculum, *Mønsterplan for Grunnskolen*, which took effect in 1987, heralded a slight turn towards a neo-liberal and a neo-conservative stance by emphasising the autonomy of teachers and the development of a 'national knowledge community' (Telhaug 2005, p. 34; Telhaug et al. 2006). When the Conservative government left office, the Social Democrats assumed control from 1986 until 1997 except for a brief interruption by a Conservative coalition government in 1989–1990. The Education Minister, Gudmund Hernes (1990–1995), who made the strongest mark on education policy at the time, was, in the mean, supportive of traditional social democratic values on education by defending the strong state-controlled education system (although he accepted the previous governments' devolution of economic resources) and comprehensive education. Attempts at privatisation that would exceed what was stipulated in the Private School Act of 1985 were simply rejected during his time in office. However, in regard to the reform of the national curriculum, he made concessions to the Conservative's demand of raising academic standards by rejecting the traditional social democratic scepticism towards grades, exams and national tests that was still prevalent in his party. Strongly influenced by the cultural literacy movement, he introduced a more standardised and prescriptive curriculum. It is interesting to note that the centralised curriculum appeared to stand in contradiction to the management by objectives policy in the education sector and the Municipality Act of 1992, both of which were intended to enhance decentralisation and the autonomy of the municipalities (Volckmar 2008).

It is fair to say that market-oriented policies during the 1990s were introduced to a modest degree, but this was to change when a Conservative-led coalition government obtained power in 2001. The Education Minister, Kristin Clement continued the decentralisation process through transfer of regulative power from the central state to the municipalities, including teachers' working conditions and salaries. Wage bargaining was supplemented with local negotiations, and by 2002, the majority of municipalities had introduced merit pay for teachers although this was not linked to student's test results. A new curriculum, coined as the 'Knowledge Promotion', was introduced, which increased teacher autonomy and emphasised the formation of basic skills and result-oriented objectives in each subject. In 2004, national tests were introduced. The results of the national tests were made public in order to promote parental choice and competition between schools to attract the best performing students (although this requirement was withdrawn a year later) (Volckmar 2011). During the political negotiations about national tests, a majority agreement was reached across political parties including the opposition, but the Socialists and Centre party voted against. The Social Democrats were sceptical at first, but since they had already accepted the policy of raising academic standards, they were compelled to agree to the Act in the end. This concession to the Conservatives, however, did not

include the Swedish inspired Free Schools. The government passed an Act on Free Schools, which allowed private providers to establish Free Schools with state subsidies covering 85 % of the operational costs. However, in contrast to the Swedish Free School Act, it was not possible for private providers to make profit. This Act was in sharp contrast to the previous Private School Act from 1985, which stipulated that private schools were required to offer a pedagogical or religious/denominational alternative to public schools. Subsequently, a few Free Schools were established, but this development was stopped in its tracks when the coalition government made up by the Social Democratic party, Centre party and the Socialist Left party obtained power in 2005. The government immediately abolished the Free School Act and in its place introduced a new Act on Private Schools in 2007, which was largely based on the Act from 1985 (Volckmar 2010).

The coalition government proclaimed that Free Schools were undesirable, but, in fact, they accepted all other policies on education introduced by the previous government. Even the Socialist Left party who had traditionally distanced itself strongly from right-wing education policies endorsed these. The Knowledge Promotion reform shaped by neo-liberal ideology thus gradually became a unified political project, but one which allowed individual parties to have a say in the details of its implementation. An absence of a political alternative to this education reform is largely due to the emergence of a new consensus across the Right and Left. The Socialist Left Minister of Education, Kristin Halvorsen, stated that achieving high academic standards by itself justifies a state comprehensive school is indicative of this 'new' consensus (Volckmar 2011, p. 275). The coalition government supports the policy of a 'School for All' and regards the Private Education Act of 2007 as a bulwark against further expansion of private schools. However, the number of private schools has increased under this government anyway. In rural areas, where municipalities close down small schools in favour of bigger ones, which are financially viable and offer higher qualified teaching staff, parents tend to make use of the Private Education Act to reopen a local school usually a private Montessori School.

In 2013, a national election will take place. Should right-wing parties win the election further attempts at developing market-like conditions for education will undoubtedly result. Judging from the social democratic response to right-wing policies particularly during the last decade, they will more than likely continue to embrace this, thus allowing a 'creeping' privatisation within the public education sector. However, in comparison to Sweden, social democratic concessions to the Right have generally been more limited, which explains why Norway appears to have maintained its comprehensive school system more or less unaltered since it was consolidated in 1969 (Volckmar 2010).

7.6 Scandinavia Compared

In this chapter, we have demonstrated that market-led reforms have made their way into Scandinavian education albeit in different ways. In Sweden and Norway, decentralisation has featured much stronger in the reform plans than in Denmark as

a long-standing tradition of local involvement in education has prevailed here anyway. For historical reasons, private schools have played a stronger role in Danish education and have been maintained even under social democratic rule. This situation allowed a greater diversity of education provision and parental choice. By contrast, Social Democratic governments in Norway and Sweden almost abolished the private education sector by the 1980s, but Conservative governments have since then sparked new life to private education at least in Sweden thanks to private business involvement. In regard to the curriculum reforms and the introduction of national tests, the Scandinavian countries have followed remarkably similar routes. The publications of PISA results were exploited by politicians to legitimise the raising of academic standards and the testing of same. We have argued that right-wing governments since the 1980s have initiated most of the market-led reforms of education, but the extent to which they have been carried out across the Scandinavian states depends largely on social democratic consent. As this comparison has shown, the Swedish Social Democrats have given greater credence to market forces for improving education, whereas the Social Democrats in Denmark and Norway have been more reluctant towards this. The social democratic response can be seen as one contingent factor, but unlikely the only one, that helps explaining comparatively the variance of market-led reforms on education in Scandinavia.

7.7 Are the Social Democrats Undermining Their 'School for All'?

Finally, we will offer a brief discussion as to whether one of the tenets of Social Democratic education policy, a 'School for All', is being undermined. During the 1960s and 1970s, the Social Democrats consolidated the comprehensive school system in Scandinavia, which implied an all-through system of education from grade 1 to 9/10 with mixed ability classes (Wiborg 2009). It appears that education scholars are correct to claim that the comprehensive school system has persisted almost unchanged until today, but there is mounting evidence which suggests that the 'School for All' ideal underpinning this system has lost some of its impetus. The move away from using the traditional term to describe the comprehensive school (*Enhetsskolen*) in Norway to a new term (*Fellesskolen*), which the Right will accept, is indicative of this change (Volckmar 2010). It is beyond the scope of this chapter to address this evidence in any detail, but we will highlight a few issues, such as the effects of private education, decentralisation and school choice.

The private school sector in Scandinavia is still relatively small, although it has experienced growth over the last two decades, especially in Sweden. Given the increased state support to private schools and their popularity among the urban, professional middle class, this sector is likely to continue to expand. This will largely depend on business involvement, however, rather than private providers, such as parents, religious groups and charities. The latter has contributed insignificantly to the recent expansion of private schools in contrast to the profit-making education companies. Only in Sweden such companies are allowed to operate, and

they will probably continue to expand their business interests as long as profit can be made, although this is somewhat curbed by increasing state regulation and control as well as the smaller birth cohorts of the early 1990s, who are beginning to reach upper secondary education. The comprehensive school system has indeed been challenged by the expanding private school sector, but, Sweden aside, this has neither led to a public mistrust of state schools and its teachers nor to a common belief that state education is of less value than private education. At present, there are no plans by Norwegian and Danish governments to allow education companies to run schools for profit.

Scandinavian governments have been keener to structure public education according to market ideology than boosting the private education sector. Both Sweden and Norway abolished their long-lived tradition of centralised state control over education and devolved increasing levels of responsibility to municipalities and schools. This brought them in many ways *un par* with the Danish situation as local control has prevailed here throughout most of the post-war period. Not only did this process involve administrative decentralisation but also of regulatory and financial powers to municipalities and schools in order to meet the demand for increased participatory democracy at local level. The consequences of this major policy intervention in Norway and Sweden are still widely discussed, particularly the risk of producing greater inequality between municipalities and schools. For instance, the Municipality Act from 1992 provided municipalities in Norway the opportunity to test children in addition to the already existing national tests. Some municipalities have pursued testing more than others, which have resulted in greater differences in testing practices across schools (Marsdal 2011). There are still outspoken left-leaning politicians and educationalists who argue that reverting to the old centralised system would ensure greater equality through control over resource allocation and protection against privatisation.

The most consequential development for state education, perhaps, is the introduction of school choice. Typically, middle-class parents living in urban areas are increasingly exercising their right to choose the school their child will attend. The motives behind parents' choice of a school different from the one allocated by the municipality are complex. According to a recent study by Rangvid (2008) on Danish parents' school choice, parents tend to take their children out of a municipality school if the enrolment of immigrant children has exceeded 30 %. The study also found that parents will opt for a private school rather than a different municipality school. They tend not to be motivated by the test results of the school (in general, private schools have lower test results than municipality schools), but by the small size of the school and if it offers a particular pedagogical approach, such as child-centred education. In Copenhagen school choice is exercised more widely around 24 % are enrolled in private schools (The national average is about 12 %). The tendency is similar in Oslo albeit on a much smaller scale, but Stockholm, and other major urban areas in Sweden, is a very different matter.

After the rapid growth of Free Schools since the early 1990s, middle-class parents, enjoying choice for the first time since the establishment of the universal welfare state, started to enroll their children in these schools. In 1991 there were a

little over 60 non-public schools in the country and by 2009/2010 their numbers had reached 709. Private providers tend to be overrepresented in high-income areas. Free schools are represented in 64 % of the municipalities and 14 % of them are located in Stockholm (Wiborg 2010a, b). The Free Schools take various forms: from small parental cooperatives whose establishment may have been caused by the closure of a municipal school to schools with a particular educational approach or subject specialisation and schools, which are run by large for-profit education companies. The Swedish National Agency for Education and a number of researchers have provided evidence that school choice has augmented social and ethnic segregation in particular in relation to schools in deprived areas. The private sector is contributing to social polarisation due to their capacity through strategic marketing to attract students from middle classes. This inequality is likely to be exacerbated by the strong tendency to individualise teaching in the Free Schools. The so-called strategy of equity of learning based on child-driven curriculum, free choice and educational flexibility is likely to increase the differences in pupils' academic achievements between different groups instead of reducing them.

The increased devolution of management responsibilities, private education and school choice seem to have created a competitive ground which is not conducive to comprehensive education to continuing to flourish. The inequalities that these have generated already stand to grow wider and more entrenched as market-led reforms of education consolidate as the only imaginable policy paradigm. Social Democrats have until recently remained a bulwark against market-led reforms, but under increasing pressure from the Right, they have given up some of their reservations and endorsed these although in various degrees. It is essential to scrutinise the decisions the Social Democratic parties will make in assessing the extent to which market-oriented policies on education will continue to be implemented and, ultimately, whether the comprehensive school will survive as a 'School for All' in the future.

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Chapter 8
Progressive Education and New Governance in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden

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8.1 Progressive Education at Risk?

A School for All rests on both political visions and educational ideologies. The history of its development throughout the twentieth century is not only one of political reforms in education but also involves new educational discourses, new practices, and new teaching and learning content in school. The revival of schools was partly motivated by a need for new kinds of competence in a society experiencing rapid technological and economic development. The educational system should serve the needs of the society and had to be changed from within if it was to fulfill the political ambitions of *a School for All.* Another important motive for school renewal was that of solving the new pedagogical challenges faced in the classroom that structural reforms had brought about. A school that was to embrace all pupils confronted a quite different kind of pedagogical challenge than that of the old, segregated school consisting of relatively homogeneous student groups.

The educational reform movement and, in particular, progressive educational ideas spread over most parts of the western world at the same time as a comprehensive School for All pupils was introduced in the Nordic countries. Progressive

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education became an important ideological platform for internal, pedagogical reforms within schools. It supported the vision that a School for All could actually be realized, as it inspired new ways of organizing classrooms to make them inclusive for large student groups. Progressive education has been a controversial ideology from its origin at the beginning of the twentieth century, as it has been contrasted to the subject-centered, whole-class teaching method. Not surprisingly, it came into the line of fire when new, transnational governance systems urged schools to obtain increasingly high test-based results at the end of the century.

Against this background we will pursue three questions:

1. What is the status of progressive education in Scandinavia today? In what ways is it expressed at the formal document level, such as national curriculum plans, and what is the status of progressive education in school practice?
2. What happens to progressive education when it is confronted with neoliberal technologies that build on competition and rational choice (see also Chap. 1) within national educational policies?
3. Which aspects of progressive education seem to cohere with neoliberal elements of educational policies, and in what ways do they contradict each other?

The Scandinavian educational systems have in many ways experienced development in parallel as regards structure and content, but there are also differences. A fourth question to ask is therefore:

4. What similarities and differences do we find between Denmark, Norway, and Sweden when it comes to progressive education, and how can we relate recent developments to neoliberal elements in their respective national governance systems, like New Public Management (see also Chap. 1)?

8.2 Progressivism as an Ideology for A School for All

The educational reform movement in Scandinavia at the beginning of the twentieth century was an amalgam of both continental and American influences that was brought about by educationally pioneering schools that broke with "tradition" and developed new programs. Well-known European contributions included Georg Kerschensteiner's "Arbeitsschule" (labor schools) in Germany, the reform schools initiated by Otto Glöckel in Vienna, Makarenko's experimental democratic school in the Soviet Union, and Ellen Key's child-centered ideas about the "Child's Century" in Sweden. From the USA, John Dewey's progressivism has been the main inspiration for the school reform movement in Europe, as well as the project method developed by his student William H. Kilpatrick. All these reformers have, to different degrees, inspired new teaching and learning methods, new ways of organizing student groups, and new educational content in schools. John Dewey's philosophy has undoubtedly had the most long-lasting impact, in particular, his belief in activity-based pedagogy and the slogan of "Learning by doing."

This became an important ideological foundation for a comprehensive school system embracing all children throughout most of the twentieth century.

The target groups of both the American and the European traditions have involved a wide spectrum of students; they have aimed at problem-solving, practical life tasks, and home- and life-related responsibilities and have placed emphasis on social community, independent work, and active methods for learning. An important issue has been the fact that students in a School for All have different interests and abilities, and that it is important to design the learning environment in a flexible way so that the needs of individual students could be met in meaningful ways. According to the American curriculum researcher William F. Pinar (Pinar et al. 1995), there were several scholars that made the way for John Dewey and his ideas. Already at the end of the nineteenth century, Lester Frank Ward argued against the social Darwinist view which holds that social differences are "natural," based on the principle of "the survival of the fittest." Social differences were, in contrast, considered to be the result of social circumstances and could therefore be altered. The school system held significant potential for ensuring a more equal distribution of knowledge and for improving each individual's ability to participate in the growth of society.

There are some core characteristics within progressive education that operate across societal conditions. The child is at the center for teaching and learning, and education should be based on their natural needs and interests. This also forms the grounds for the students' motivation for learning. The child should participate in deciding upon learning content and how it should be organized in different activities, such as project-oriented programs. The child is active by nature; therefore, activity must unfold itself in the learning situation. Activity is also a prerequisite for *experience,* the main result of the teaching and learning process. Experience means recognizing the connection between one's actions and the results they produce; this can be considered as the essence of Dewey's concept of learning. Knowledge is never finished, it has no end, but is in continuous development and change, like development in nature. Acquiring knowledge is therefore an infinite process of growth, and learning and experience are never-ending endeavors. According to Dewey, progressive education, therefore, emphasizes the process of experience and not its outcomes. In Dewey's view, the process of experience was more important than the actual achievements. Ultimately, results have value only when they can enrich and provide a structure for the ongoing process of reflecting on and learning how to reform society. This forms the core of Dewey's concept of democracy: because experience is educational, trusting in democracy is tantamount to trusting in experience and education (Dewey 1939; here quoted from Vaage 2000). Individual learning does not result in community and democracy, but to unhealthy competition. This is expressed clearly in Dewey's own words:

> The mere absorbing of facts and truths is so exclusively individual an affair that it tends very naturally to pass into selfishness. There is no obvious social motive for the acquirement of mere learning, there is no clear social gain in success thereat. Indeed, almost the only measure for success is a competitive one, in the bad sense of that term … (Dewey 1900, repr. 1990, p. 15.)

Progressive education reconciles both individualism and community by stimulating the child to develop in its own way and to learn from its own experiences and by concurrently organizing the learning process to encourage cooperation and social interdependence. This educational ideology is well suited for a school system that aims to embrace all societal groups and a wide variety of students. Unfortunately, Dewey's notion of democracy as a way of life is an aspect of progressivism that has been overshadowed by recent neoliberal and user-oriented claims for adapted teaching and effective learning for the individual child.

Educational reform initiatives, and especially progressive programs, have consistently met with resistance and been confronted with competing ideologies. In the USA, from the outset progressive education has been considered to be in opposition to the Herbartian, subject-matter-oriented tradition; in subsequent years, it has encountered disapproval on the one side from the social efficiency movement and from psychological child-centered pedagogy on the other (Kliebard 1985). According to Eisner (1994, 1996), several competing ideologies struggled for hegemony in the development of the American public school. Progressivism has incorrectly been considered as the leading ideology in the USA, which it was not, although it flourished in some small, independent schools. In general, progressivism was object of more talk than practice.

Progressivism met many challenges in the second half of the twentieth century. The Sputnik crisis in the 1960s directed attention toward programs oriented around mathematics and natural sciences, while since the 1970s, American school policy has focused on effectiveness and high standards: national tests have held a strong position in the USA for a considerable time. From the 1990s, neoliberal strategies such as accountability, competition, and choice were introduced as the main motivating powers in forming educational policies. The destiny of progressivism is summed up by Eisner (1996): "Hence, since the late 1960s public concerns about the quality of American education have grown, and as a result, interest in progressive practices, often seen as antithetical to what is truly educationally substantive, has decreased" (p. 321). The American preference for achievement tests can also be an explanation of its fate, according to Kliebard. The values that Dewey sought to promote through his curriculum were difficult to measure and therefore resisted fitting into a system that depended on "that kind of external inspection which goes by the name of examination" (Kliebard 1995, pp. 74–75; quoting Dewey 1901).

Three elements in the American curriculum tradition posed a particular challenge to progressivism. First, the idea of curriculum objectives, originating from among others Franklin Bobbitt (1924); second, the conception of "learning outcomes" as an entity that can be measured objectively; and third the technological means-end model formulated by Ralph Tyler (1949). These three elements have all contributed toward seeing education as an end rather than a process, such as Dewey proposed. They serve as important tools in the neoliberal governance systems that have been developed from the 1990s onward, both in the USA and across the world.

In Europe, progressive pedagogy had a less ideological character than in the USA, being directed more toward providing normative advice about how to organize teaching and learning programs. Often, we find a mixture of visions from

several sources, partly supported by research about good practice. One of the most famous initiatives for progressive education in Europe was the English Plowden Report of the 1960s (Central Advisory Council for Education 1967). It exerted considerable influence in Scandinavia: some of this report's proposals are still being implemented in practical pedagogy, not at least in schools where a form of open education is practiced. One of its central features involved increasing the freedom for teachers to form their own judgments about learning content and methods. The learner should be the main focus, not the subject matter. Centralized prescriptions on what to learn should be avoided. Progressive education also served as a tool to meet the challenges belonging to a system in which compulsory schooling was extended to 16 years of age, and where respect for individual differences was considered to be of considerable importance. The differences in students' ability and cultural background made it impossible to fix standards for what they should learn. Like progressive advances in the USA, the Plowden Report also fuelled strong debate and also lost much of its influence. When the English National Curriculum was implemented in 1989 and was later followed by new regimes of testing, accountability, and Ofsted inspectors, the Plowden Report's idealism was rendered moribund (Sugrue 2010).

The destiny of the Plowden Report may serve as an example of what can happen to the admirable intentions involved in placing students' learning at the center of an educational system when political, structural, and cultural frameworks for school practice are changed and new governance regimes are introduced. Is it possible to say that there has been a parallel development in Scandinavia?

8.3 Progressivism in Denmark

Looking back on a hundred years of school development in Denmark, one gets the impression that this has been a cyclical century: one cycle involves a move from individualized teaching through to classroom teaching then back toward individualized teaching. Another cycle can be seen in the focus of education: in the early 1900s, there was a focus on basic skills (learning the text of the Catechism by heart), followed by an increased focus on furthering student reflection and the acquisition of knowledge and insight, then back toward teaching for basic skills (focused on obtaining good test scores). Those patterns should, of course, be read cautiously: individualism and basic skills in 1900 and in 2010 are not identical; the actual content of those concepts differs from one epoch to another. In the midterm, progressive forms of education and teaching are clearly discernible.

A general picture of teaching in small, rural, basic schools can be characterized as involving poorly built school houses with almost no learning materials and poorly educated teachers who only taught one student at a time or relied on senior students to instruct their juniors according to the "mutual instruction" method (Nellemann 1965). As a reaction against this huge waste of students' time, Ernst Kaper, leader of a Gymnasium and later a school major of Copenhagen, introduced

the "class teaching" model (Kaper 1903/1923). At its core was the special way in which teachers should address the whole class: pose an unaddressed question, wait for some seconds and then pick a student to answer, leaving some time for all students to speculate over and find an answer to the question. This model has been adapted and adjusted in numerous Danish classrooms since then but has also sometimes been replaced by other teaching methods.

Parallel to this development, since the mid-1800 s, many Grundtvig-Kold Freestanding Schools have been established and run by groups of parents with state funding; these are built on the theories and experiences of the Danish philosopher N.F.S. Grundtvig and the Danish educationalist Christen Kold, who believed in the "living word," in narrative and dialogue as the best way to reach out to children (Nørgaard 1977).

8.3.1 Consolidating and Challenging "Class Teaching"

Following the First World War, many Danish educators found inspiration in Germany and other continental countries. Two prominent influences were George Kerschensteiner and Maria Montesorri. Kerschensteiner developed the concept of the "Labor School" (German: Arbeitsschule). One core aspect of his theory was that he considered children to be active by nature, a characteristic which should be given room for further development in school. This is in line with contemporaneous psychological and philosophical trends geared toward building education on children's nature, sometimes called "child-centered" education or, in German, "Vom Kinde aus." The other main aspect of Kerschensteiner's theory was that learning in schools should take place in peer groups and student communities so as to strengthen social education (Kerschensteiner 1928/1980).

The second major inspiration came from the Italian physician and educational theorist Maria Montesorri. In line with Kerschensteiner and psychological theories of the time, she believed that children were perfectly able to learn if they were allowed to act according to their own needs and interests. While Kerschensteiner inspired teachers of children at lower secondary level, grades 8–9, Montesorri was more influential upon preschool and first-grade teachers at the basic school. The impact her ideas exerted is most evident in the Vanløse experiment of the 1920s and the School Act of 1937.

The "Free Classes" in Vanløse, a district of Copenhagen, were established with inspiration from progressive, child-centered theories and practices. Classrooms were furnished like private living rooms and children were encouraged to take up activities of their own choosing. Teachers did not teach, but sought to inspire children to explore new activities: one found that it would be a good idea for children to learn knitting, so she sat on a chair and started knitting; soon after, one or two children asked her what she was doing and whether they could do the same (Nørgaard 1977). After 4 years, the school major of Copenhagen, who was Ernst Kaper, closed down this experiment.

The ideas of the "Labor school" survived a bit longer, as they inspired educationalists and politicians to propose a new level of "the practical middle school" in the Act of School of 1937 (Schacht 1971). This involved a smooth movement from grades 8–9 with no exams and with the introduction of more practical activities (such as woodwork) and of thematic, cross-disciplinary work inspired by the students' everyday life.

8.3.2 New Inspiration After World War II

For obvious reasons the inspiration from German educational models vanished in the early 1940s; as a result, Danish educationalists looked more toward the USA for inspiration more than they had done before. Some visited the USA and found them to be "the Educational Laboratory of the World" (Øland 2011). What they found harmonized with current philosophical, educational, and political trends in Denmark. Many people were looking for ways and means to avoid repeating the undemocratic dictatorship experienced under National Socialism. Therefore, they looked for and found ideas about how to raise new generations of citizens who were willing and able to participate in democracy. The major inspiration was Dewey (Dewey 1916, 1937) who insisted that "the route to democracy lay in a democratic educational system."

A number of experimental schools were established. The Experimental School in Emdrupborg tested how to include all children in the same class without streaming. Another important experiment was undertaken with support from the Marshall Fund: The Bernadotte School, which taught many creative subjects in workshops and promoted student participation in decision making at all levels through the Student Council.

The trend toward a welfare state and a participatory democratic school was emphasized by the School Act of 1956 and the "Blue Report" that accompanied it in 1958. This Act advanced the comprehensive school with late or no streaming and so minimized the focus on exams and on learning by heart or memorizing. Thus, thematic studies across subjects (history, geography, and biology) and broad integrated studies, as well as creative and art subjects, were introduced. Many schools and teachers also experimented with experience-based teaching, which takes students' everyday life experiences as the point of departure for learning activities. The Act also brought decisions on curriculum and school life closer to individual schools and parents.

The same educational trends were followed in the education acts of 1973 and 1993, although by the 1970s, economical-political legislation had already changed from being driven by social democratic welfare ideology to that of the neoliberal competitive state. In Denmark's case, there has been a clear development over the past century from a highly segregated educational system toward a more comprehensive school with no streaming whatever.

8.3.3 The Class/Form/Grade

One concept seems to have gained sacred status over the past century in the Danish Folkeschool: the "class." This is a group, mostly consisting of around 20–25 students of the same age, that remains consistent from grade 1 through grade 5, and later on through grade 9. The "class" normally lives in the same classroom for a year: it is the students' home, which teachers visit when they give lessons. This tradition could well remnant from the progressivism of the 1920s: it is designed to make students feel at home in school.

The importance of social relations in school is underscored by the "class-teacher" model that was introduced by legislation in 1918 but had been a part of municipal custom for 50 years (Coninck-Smith 1990). In the beginning of this period, there was a need to look after children's health and nutrition because their families were often poor; later, however, the 1975 Act stipulated that the "class teacher" was expected to take care of a number of tasks: social and general educational activities, teaching so-called lesson-free subjects such as traffic and sexuality, facilitating student council work in class, coordinating the liaison between colleges and leaders, and school-home collaboration.

In order to facilitate these activities, a special weekly lesson, the "class lesson," was introduced in the same Act of 1975. This was often seen as the room for student voice and argument and for dialogue between students and between students and teachers.

In a survey of 1998 (Harrit et al. 1998), we found that one third of class teachers stayed on in the same class from grade one through grade 9, one third left after grade 6 or 7, and the last third changed for various reasons at other levels. According to the report (ibid.), this has contributed to stability and a sense of belonging to the community. Over the first decade of the second millennium, we have seen that demands on class teachers are changing from facilitating participatory processes toward managing classes (Krejsler and Moos 2008).

8.3.4 Leaving Progressivism?

One particular educational method, project work, was developed in line with the active, participatory trend: teacher and student decide on a problem they want to investigate, and groups of students conceive ways and means of doing so. They implement their ideas and display the results to the whole class. This method was made a national standard, involving a special exam, in an Act of 2005. This took place at the same time as individual student plans were legalized and national testing was expanded from applying only to school leaving grade to all grades.

One could speculate whether those two initiatives are still signs of progressivism or whether they have been used as methods for the competitive state to educate willing, competent, and employable students because they are implemented in a school that places a greater emphasis on national standards, testing, and basic skills:

literacy and mathematics. At the same time, there is a greater focus on individual students through the student plan and also on individual, national tests, not least the "teach to the test," that seems to be unavoidable.

8.4 Progressivism in Norway

The ideas of the reform movement were brought to Norway from the European continent at the beginning of the twentieth century by practicing teachers, mostly female primary school teachers. They constituted a well-educated group with good resources and appeared as pioneers when the comprehensive school was developing at the political level and when child-centered ideas began to become widespread. They were enthusiastic, excited about the revival of classroom teaching, and went abroad to gain inspiration from new international ideas. They tried out their ideas in practice, especially in the lower grades, where female teachers were in the majority. Unfortunately, we have little systematic knowledge about how comprehensive the experimental attempts actually were.

8.4.1 Progressivism in National Curriculum Plans

The first formalization of progressive ideas in the Norwegian educational system appeared in the national curriculum plans of 1939 (Normalplanen av 1939). They did not restrict themselves to advising about the subject knowledge to be taught at each age level – they also gave advice and directions about teaching and learning methods. The principles of reform education were clearly formulated and emphasized student activity, individualization, and group work. The intention was partly to counteract the significant social differences in school learning that had been empirically demonstrated a few years earlier (Ribsskog 1936a, b; Ribsskog and All 1936). The research also revealed that students remembered very little of the subject matter they had been taught in social sciences and natural sciences over a period of time. The school years should be spent pursuing more useful activities than that of saturating students with knowledge they would not even be able to recall, it was claimed. More active ways of learning that promoted initiative, independence, and strength of character should be privileged. Individualization of teaching and learning processes was suggested as a guiding principle aimed to solve the challenges connected to differences between individual students, both socially and in aptitude. Every child should work with tasks that was interesting and at a pace that they could master. The aim was to give students an education that was in accordance with their strengths and abilities.

This radical plan probably existed more at the rhetoric level than in reality. At the same time, it set minimum academic requirements for all students, and there are strong indications that the traditional whole-class teaching method continued for several decades, emphasizing oral instruction and overloading subject matter. At the

national level, attention continued to be directed toward the pedagogical challenge of conducting a comprehensive school that embraced all students.

The next national curriculum plan of 1960 was in many ways similar to its predecessor, except that the obligatory period of schooling was extended to 9 years. The problem of differentiation was solved by streaming students in mother tongue, mathematics, and English. The main pedagogical method remained whole-class teaching. Individualization was more a theoretical ideal than a practical reality.

It was in the next curriculum plan, the Model plan of 1974 (Mønsterplan for grunnskolen 1974), that progressivism took fuller hold on school practice. This did not determine minimum requirements in different subjects, but indicated frameworks for subject matter that teachers could supply with different content of their own choice. At the same time, the Anglo-American movement of school-based development, emphasizing the school as an organization and the importance of school leadership, became widespread in Norway. The ideas of the Open School movement were again on the agenda, and the M74 gave the teachers the flexibility needed to try out new methods and introduce new subject matter. Streaming at the upper levels was replaced with new pedagogical methods, such as team teaching and project work, both in open school buildings and in more traditional schools. Until the 1990s, school-based developmental work in the spirit of progressivism was flourishing, both in the organization of teaching and learning and in the choice of subject matter. There was very little central control over these activities, no inspectors, no national tests, and no results-based benchmarking.

An evaluation study of the 1974 curriculum plan undertaken in the early 1980s confirmed the well-known truth that schools change rather slowly. The freedom that teachers had been given to choose subject matter was not exercised to any great extent. Teacher-directed whole-class teaching with the textbook at the center was still the most widespread way of directing the learning process, and there was limited variation in subject matter for students of different abilities. Variation in group size, i.e., lecturing for large groups and more detailed explanation within smaller groups, was seldom used. At the same time, teachers were positive toward non-streamed classes and adapting teaching to the students' abilities. Research on students' knowledge showed stability over time (Grunnskolerådet 1983). This paved the way for a continuation of the progressive-oriented strategy which started in 1974. The national curriculum plans were revised in 1987, which marked a strengthening of locally based development work (Mønsterplan for grunnskolen 1987). It is no exaggeration to say that the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s were a golden age for progressive ideology and for school-based development work, where emphasis was placed on the democratic, social, and caring aims of schooling.

8.4.2 New Legislation for Progressivism and Project Work

New national curriculum plans implemented in 1997 (Læreplanverket for den 10-årige grunnskolen 1996) marked a change in the liberal curriculum tradition initiated in 1974. This plan decided what students should learn at each grade and

went some way toward regulating methods for teaching and learning. Management by objectives was introduced, but only in terms of the process, and a very moderate system of evaluating schools' practice and their results was still in place. The compulsory school period was extended to 10 years by lowering the starting age from 7 to 6. This was a controversial decision, both politically and pedagogically. Among preschool teachers there was much concern that, for the youngest students, whole-class teaching would harm their learning and development. The compromise was reached that the whole comprehensive school, especially at primary level, should implement some of the traditions of preschool pedagogy that emphasized play, cross-disciplinary themes, and project work. Ironically, progressivism was the winning ideology in a curriculum plan that was overloaded with subject matter. A certain percentage of school time should be used for project work, from 50 % at the lower levels to 20 % at the upper. Because national curriculum plans ranged as statutory regulations, it was no longer possible for schools to escape progressive practices. Behind this, however, was a preschool, child-centered ideology and not an explicit progressive ideology aimed at enhancing democracy and reducing social inequality. The plan tried to compensate this by emphasizing a balance between individualized teaching and community in the classrooms.

The 1997 Reform was evaluated a few years later (Haug 2004; Imsen 2003). This was the first large-scale investigation of classroom practice in Norway. The results showed, among other things, that one fourth of the teachers held that specified learning objectives were difficult to combine with cross-disciplinary theme and project work, and that every fifth teacher realized that the amount of project work was not fulfilled (Rønning 2002). This implied that 80 % of teachers carried out a considerable amount of project work in their classes. In spite of this, the textbook still had a strong position in the classroom, often in combination with computers.

It was also investigated to what degree progressive elements were present in ordinary, discipline-centered lessons. Teachers expressed strong support of adapted education, but observations revealed that that far less variation was discernible in practice in relation to students' different abilities. Group work was widespread according to the teachers, but the study's observations did not confirm this. Constructivist approaches and inquiry teaching varied among school subjects, with mathematics proving to be a particularly isolated and textbook-driven subject. Generally, teachers expressed strong support of progressive teaching methods, but did not practice them to the same degree (Imsen 2003).

Individualized teaching and the realization of community in school may be conflicting principles. Klette (2003) showed that individualized classrooms differed from other classrooms by extensively using written tasks, i.e., reducing use of the whole-class community as a learning arena. Adapted teaching was carried out by letting students work independently according to their own written work programs, often following tasks supplied by the textbook. This, of course, runs counter to the principle of community. Individual variation was restricted to fulfilling different numbers of tasks, or a few more difficult tasks for the brightest students.

To summarize, before the new millennium, there was a slow, but steady, development in the Norwegian comprehensive school in a progressive direction, both rhetorically and in teachers' attitudes. When it came to carrying it through in

practice, the old, textbook-driven tradition lingered. In addition, the teachers' interpretations of individualized teaching were realized in ways that Dewey would never have approved. Dewey's idea of democracy and the notion of community promoted by the national curriculum plan were about to be sacrificed on the altar of individualization.

8.4.3 A New Era After the Millennium

From 2001, a new era in Norwegian education policy began. Its models were taken from a neoliberal, commercial world and not in that of educational idealism. The three most prominent elements were decentralization, result orientation, and an individually, right-leaning legislation. These trends in educational policy are evident in a considerable number of countries and are to a great extent inspired by supranational agencies like the EU and the OECD.

The Norwegian comprehensive school has traditionally been governed relatively strongly at the national state level, which may be a benefit in a small country with only five million people, but with 430 municipalities, some of which are small and remotely situated. Vital parts of school policy were decentralized to the municipalities after the millennium, including giving them the right to form their own, municipal curriculum plans and their own systems of quality control. This has resulted in a reduction of the professional influence of the teachers; an increased constraint on school leadership by contracts requiring certain achievement targets from the students; and, in many municipalities, greater pressure on tests and control mechanisms.

The shift from process to results in education was decided by new national curriculum plans in 2006, which emphasized result objectives in all school subjects (Læreplanverket for Kunnskapsløftet 2006, L 06). It was called "The Knowledge Promotion," but in reality the very concept of knowledge was abandoned and replaced with competence aims. These are behavioral objectives, describing what students should visibly display from their learning. The progressive spirit of 1997, with its emphasis on process objectives, was disintegrated. The same objectives applied to all students, except those that had formally been granted special education. The teachers were given full freedom to choose their teaching methods and ways of organizing them, and the demand for project work was removed. National tests were introduced in the mother tongue, English, and mathematics; mediocre results on PISA created forcible media pressure and a high degree of benchmarking. Evaluation of the "Knowledge promotion reform" indicates that teachers' planning has become more technical, with emphasis on effective learning strategies, textbook orientation, and increased attention on the evaluation of students' learning. Progressive learning methods seem to be on the decline. This is indicated by teachers who express their relief that they can drop project work and reestablish the traditional, teacher-directed whole-class approach (Hodgson et al. 2010). This is not entirely surprising, considering the immense pressure caused by the emphasis on quantified learning results.

8.4.4 From Welfare to Individual Rights

The Norwegian Education Act of 1998 placed a stronger emphasis on individual rights in education compared with former acts, which put greater stress on education as social welfare. This increased the parents' ability to claim certain benefits for their children. One consequence of this is that the principle of individually adapted education has acquired a new meaning: from being a progressive, educational principle it has obtained status as a legal right for the individual child. This may, of course, support adapted education and the progressive agenda, but it may also turn in the opposite direction when parents claim tailored, individual education for their child. This implies diminishing the educational community and promoting new, neoliberal individualism. According to this logic, which originates in social economics, students are considered to be customers and the school owner a provider, a relationship in which the customer is always right. An important progressive principle may therefore become the worst enemy of a School for All when it is managed by new governance systems formed on an economic basic. An early indication of the negative consequences of this approach is that teachers spend a considerable amount of time documenting their plans, activities, and results, so as to avoid being sued for not doing their jobs properly. Another consequence is that greater emphasis is placed on written tasks that follow textbook-driven work programs which are forwarded to parents by internet-based communication platforms. Cooperation between home and school is, of course, very important. At the same time, in this writing and objective-oriented regime, education can become chained to linear result-based planning and deprived of the flexibility, creativity, student participation, and spontaneity that characterize high-quality teaching and learning.

Progressivism was introduced in the Norwegian comprehensive school to develop a pedagogy that could help to solve the practical challenges that a School for All groups of students entails. The educational reform introduced in the millennium has resulted in a development in which the individualization of progressivism has been disconnected from its societal mandate and where learning is torn away from its social context. The neoliberal meaning of individualism takes center stage once more, in which freedom is decoupled from social responsibility. The important balance between individualization and community that has underpinned the development of the comprehensive school throughout the twentieth century is being displaced by a kind of individualism that is alien to the basic ideals of a School for All.

8.5 Progressivism in Sweden

8.5.1 The Development of a State Progressivism

Carlgren (2011c) observes that the emergence of interest in Sweden for progressive ideas coincided with the political struggle for a comprehensive school. In the early twentieth century, political ideas that reacted against earlier approaches toward

organizing education that separated rich people from poor gradually took hold. Egidius (2001) describes how the ideals of the French Revolution inspired left-wing radicals such as Fridtjuv Berg. Alongside liberals, he proposed a School for All children where each had the right to personal and intellectual development. These ideas were also accompanied by a new pedagogy, in reaction to previous authoritarian systems, which aimed to foster children to become democratic citizens. The political forces joined in a School Commission of 1946.

This investigation found that "The inner work of school" upheld by the German pedagogy, which had strongly influenced Swedish policy, was out of date (Egidius 2001). The report mentioned the American Dalton plan, which posited that students should work independently under the teacher's supervision. However, they concluded that Sweden was probably insufficiently prepared for this as yet but proposed that integrated teaching should replace the current division of different subjects, which made learning an abstract undertaking for students.

When Carlgren (2011b, c) reflects upon progressivism in Sweden, she begins with Dewey. She (2011c) describes how Dewey's texts were quickly translated into Swedish, read by the school reform supporters of the early 1900s, and soon integrated into Education Acts. The problems related to teaching different students in the classroom, which was a consequence of the comprehensive school reform, were supposedly solved with student activity. From this point, Carlgren (2011c) states, a curriculum language was created around notions such as student activity, individualization, subject integration, and students' learning interests. Those curriculum texts developed into a kind of state progressivism. But, says Carlgren, this was accompanied with a psychological thinking which grew strengthened in the early 1900s and which focused the psychological development of the individual student, which was stressed in the curriculum texts; in the light of Dewey's texts, this appears to be one-sided. For Carlgren (2011c), Dewey never decoupled the psychological functions of the individual from knowledge content, which was realized in the curriculum's emphasis on individual capacities such as problem-solving, creativity, and collaboration. This implies that those capacities could be trained and improved separately without taking account of their relation to the individual's understanding of specific knowledge content. Dewey opposes this dualism between knowledge content and psychological functions. Carlgren posits that it is therefore important to develop from henceforth teaching method that places content at its center and to which students' psychological function and development relate. State progressivism was clearly visible in the curricula of 1962 and 1969 and also of 1980, in which the democratic aspect of education was a prominent feature.

8.5.2 The Opposition to State Progressivism in 2000

Does state progressivism still exist in Swedish schools? We would say yes. It still prevails in the text of the curriculum, where student activity and influence is stressed, but according to Lundahl's analysis (2009), it is increasingly opposed by the administration of national tests and the regulation of individual development plans; these

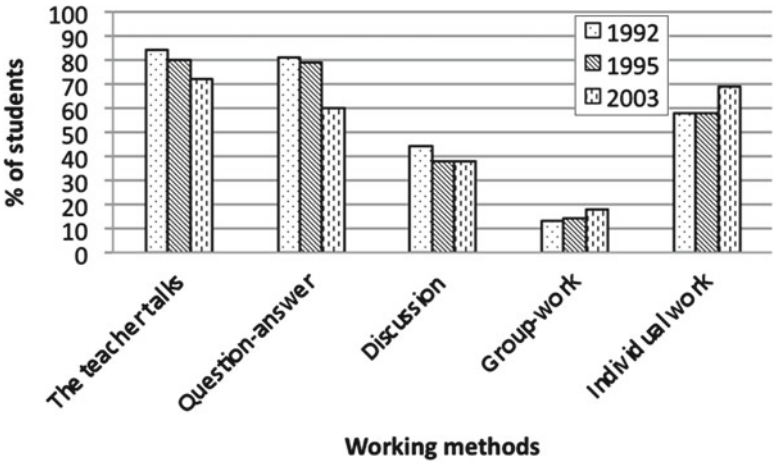

Fig. 8.1 Percentage of students that indicated that different working methods have been used every day. 1992 $N = 8{,}771$, 1995 $N = 10{,}249$, 2003 $N = 6{,}788$

could be said to foster the traditional German values of student passivity and independence that the school commission once reacted against. The new liberals that came into power in 2006 quickly introduced official investigations to prepare for the "new school." However, we hold that the new syllabuses' emphasis on "clear goals and knowledge demands" (SOU 2007:28), on an investigation at upper secondary level that exacerbates segregation (SOU 2008:27, 2008:109), and on examining teachers' training (SOU 2008:27, 2008:109) mean that these changes are entirely retrograde and lack any progressive qualities.

When the neoliberals have attacked the "old school" in Sweden, progressive ideas about the active role of the student role and the time management have been central to their arguments. Neoliberal politicians have labeled schools of the 1980s as "flummig," or muddled, meaning that too much room was given to student activity and that teacher training had a low status, resulting in a lack of instruction for basic skills in schools. This is, in fact, the principal argument that Björklund, the education minister, used in 2012 to explain the plummeting results in Swedish schools as measured by international assessment bodies, such as PISA.

8.5.3 Research on Working Methods in School

Ekholm (2007) has compiled research data addressing how time is used in schools using the results of national evaluations that were undertaken in 1995 and 2003 (Skolverket 1993, 1996, 2004). These investigations asked students to think back over the teaching they had received over the past year in all subjects. A number of pedagogical methods were explained to the students, who then indicated how often they had experienced each type of approach. Figure 8.1 displays the percentage of students who identified particular methods as being used several times each day over a 3-year span.

Table 8.1 Percentages of observed 15-min periods. Observed 15-min periods in 4–6 $N = 15{,}365$, 7–9 $N = 9{,}193$

Working ways	Year 4–6	Year 7–9
Individual work	58	60
Listening to the teacher	23	20
Discussing with the teacher	7	10
Discussing to students and teacher	32	32
Working with students	19	13
Investigating	20	20
Working at computer	9	8

The students' answers form a stable picture of how different working methods were in use between 1992 and 2003. Ekholm (2007) observes that the lecture method, in which the teacher delivers a talk combined with a question and answer session, was used every day, but that fewer students identify it as a teaching method in use at the beginning of the twenty-first century, when marginally more students indicate that group work and individual work are used. However, according to the students, group work is not common practice during the 12 years investigated. Ekholm notices that discussion between teachers and students occupies a stable position and takes place on a daily basis, according to the one third of the students questioned.

Ekholm and Kull (1996) ask if the picture formed by the students' account of these working methods corresponds with that of the teachers. They found that more students than teachers identify lecturing as an everyday routine, while more teachers than students indicate that group work takes place every day. Concerning discussion, students' and teachers' experiences have almost coincided over the 25-year span. Approximately 50 % of students and teachers identify this as an everyday routine in 1994. These observations give the progressive perspective a more positive outlook.

Table 8.1 displays the total number by percentage of 15 min periods spent using different pedagogic methods as observed in two municipalities (Lindvall 1999a, b). As the observers used more than one category to indicate what happened in each period, the sum in each column exceeds 100 %.

Ekholm (2007) notices that the pattern of working methods used in years 4–6 is very similar to that of years 7–9. Individual work is the most commonly used approach, especially when compared with listening to the teacher lecturing, which stood out in the questionnaire investigations. Ekholm also observes that a substantial amount of time is taken up by independent student research, such as conducting laboratory work or finding out things in the library or on the internet.

From a progressive perspective, we can conclude that during the twentieth century and into the beginning of the twenty-first century, ideas about student activity have unquestionably made their way into the curriculum and, as research shows, into the classroom too, even though this development has been rather slow (Blossing and Ekholm 2008). It has placed the child in the center of the learning process and promoted students' activity and influence. Granström (2003) supports this conclusion but also complicates the picture. Using empirical research, he states that

whole-class teaching has given way to individualized student work. He concludes that this means that students miss out on important communication with the teacher, which could foster knowledge development, and moreover that they seldom get the opportunity to develop collaboration skills through group work with fellow students. To summarize, the working methods used in Swedish schools have increasingly assumed a more individualistic form, supported by the neoliberal belief that each person has the right to fulfill his or her own life project. Furthermore, Granström concludes that families with good economic and cultural capabilities benefit from this and so can follow their life projects to a greater extent than other, more disadvantaged families.

8.5.4 Institutionalization of Progressive Schools

Another indication of how the progressive movement has permeated the society is the extent to which progressive schools have been institutionalized.

The Montessori pedagogic model is the most widespread and institutionalized example of the progressive movement in Sweden. According to their website (Montessoriförbundet 2012), this movement in 2012 comprised over 250 associations and schools across Sweden, mainly consisting of preschools. The Freinet movement occupies a significant place within this context. Their website (Hemberg et al. 2012) lists only ten schools, but their pedagogy effectively coincides with ideas about student activity and student influence and (as they state themselves) with the national curriculum, too. Since the reform of independent schools in 1992, it has become easier to establish such institutions and therefore schools with a progressive orientation. However, they have to follow the national curriculum and take national tests, and they are also assessed by the School Inspection.

8.5.5 Criticism of Current Progressive Trends

Student activity is the one principle that has been manifested in the everyday work of students at both municipal and independent schools in the form of individual study. However, research (Skolverket 2009; Österlind 1998, 2005) shows that this has taken place at the cost of collective learning, and that the independent study does not necessarily nurture the student's ability to develop their own knowledge. Carlgren (2011a) suggests that it perhaps would be more accurate to promote student active *teaching* instead of student active *working methods*.

Carlgren (2011a) is also critical of another principle upheld by the progressive approach to pedagogy: subject integration. The main argument for subject integration holds that, as children do not experience the world divided into subjects, the learning in school should not be organized in such a way either. However, school

subjects are meaningless when detached from their context, i.e., from their relation to questions that have been formed in specific subject areas. According to Carlgren a one-sided focus on questions that have arisen out of students' everyday lives is insufficient. Research has shown that everyday knowledge and scientific or subject-based knowledge need not coincide to be meaningful for the individual. Subject knowledge is connected to the individual's circumstances and acquires practical meaning whether or not it is scientific. Instead of subject integration, Carlgren proposes leading the student into the specific sphere in which the questions and knowledge belonging to particular subject areas become meaningful.

Following Ellen Key's idea of the child in center, we conclude that the student in 2012 is at the center as never before, especially as neoliberals have emphasized the place of individual rights within legislation concerning schools. Yet, as Carlgren (2011a) suggests, the question remains what the child is at the center of. Independent schools have appropriated the idea of student activity from the progressive movement and transformed it into the concept of individual work, combined with a market-oriented goal-and-result perspective. Municipal schools appear to be developing in very much the same direction. In line with Carlgren, we ask: is a progressive knowledge movement what we need for the future?

8.6 Progressive Education on Its Way Out?

Progressive ideas were widespread across three Scandinavian countries at the beginning of the twentieth century. Interest in this new way of thinking about education was partly motivated by a psychological, child-centered ideology and partly by a social democratic strategy designed to realize the vision of a School for All children. Only after World War II were progressive ideas gradually implemented in school practice, at about the same time that a comprehensive school for children up to 16 years was introduced in all three countries. Central issues in school practice concerned student activity, democratic participation, cross-disciplinary curriculum, individualized instruction, and inclusion. The school should be a social community, embracing all children, regardless of ability, social class, and gender. The long-term political aim was to increase social mobility and to reduce social differences in society.

In Scandinavia, the social school community has been realized in different ways: the development of a comprehensive School for All with no streaming is the most significant, but another important feature is the organization of students in permanent groups or school classes to reflect all categories of children. Progressive activity pedagogy has been implemented within this class community, creating variation in the teaching and learning environment in order to afford meaningful learning for children of different abilities and cultural backgrounds. A participatory, democratic school has been formally implemented by different education acts and in national curriculum plans over the years and still exists on the documentation level in Denmark and Sweden.

In Denmark, Norway, and also in Sweden, we see that progressive ideas have been toned down in the latest school reforms for the benefit of basic skills, outcomes, national standards and tests, streaming, competition, and free school choice.

Evidence indicates that the individualization aspect of progressivism is gaining ground in school practice in all three countries, and that project work and more complex and developed forms of group work and pedagogic communications are declining. It seems that the dominant test-based concept of educational quality entails a backlash for the activity part of progressivism and a reduction in curriculum variation. This variation is paramount for the inclusion of all students and, in the long run, for the prevention of dropout in upper secondary school (see Buland and Mathiesen, Chap. 12, in this volume).

There are both similarities and differences between the Scandinavian countries in terms of how they implement progressive ideas in practice. A combination of whole-class teaching and individual work prevails in all three countries. Denmark is exceptional, as it has introduced project work as a national standard since 2005, at the same time as it was removed from Norwegian curriculum plans. It remains to be seen how project work will survive in Denmark, or if the test-based governance system will stimulate old-fashioned classroom teaching as it seems to have done in Norway.

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Chapter 9
Assessing Children in the Nordic Countries: Framing, Diversity and Matters of Inclusion and Exclusion in a School for All

Karen Andreasen and Eva Hjörne

9.1 Introduction

The general background of this chapter is an interest in how schools deal with diversity between children when organising teaching and learning practices with a specific focus on *the role of* assessments *in these processes*. A comprehensive school of the kind the Nordic countries offer implies that the variation in the population, with respect to social background, health, age, interests, educational ambitions and many other factors, will be visible in most classrooms. The explicit political ambition of having 'a School for All' signals an expectation that it is possible to organise teaching and learning in the classroom in manners that make it possible for all students to profit from the activities.

In this chapter we will especially discuss different ways of using assessment and framing assessment practices in lower secondary education in Nordic *countries with a focus on formal assessment tools such as standardised test and examinations*. The discussion will include theoretical perspectives and different conceptualisations of a School for All. Assessments are being used for many different purposes of which selection, certification, control, competition, supporting learning, etc., can be mentioned (Broadfoot 2007; Harlen 2006). In addition, assessments play a key role in processes of differentiation and in the implementation of one School for All. The different forms of assessments being used in lower secondary education reflect a wide-scaled variation ranging from experts assessing pupil's abilities in formal and standardised ways to *teachers' assessments of pupils' academic progress and skills*

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using different kinds of mandatory test and assessments, and to assessments of a more informal character, including presentations, portfolio, and self-assessments, course assignments, standardised testing, etc., just to mention but a few. Whether the question concerns the more formal differentiation of pupils to be selected and placed into different educational tracks or the more informal differentiation in social communities and groups according to status and roles – such as in the school class, family and other similar communities – assessment will play a role by being a part of these processes. In a School for All, it is important to explore and highlight such processes. Our research is a contribution to this field of knowledge.

The formal framing of assessment in Nordic countries reflects a wide variation, ranging from a rather low degree of public regulations seen in Iceland to strong regulation including the use of national standardised testing in combination with one or two more types of assessments in Denmark and Norway. In between is an area characterised by some regulations according to the use of national standardised testing as it is seen in Sweden and Finland (European Commission 2009). As different ways of framing assessment practices can be expected to influence processes of inclusion and exclusion of children at school, we will consider possible consequences of these according to a School for All. The different role and purpose of formative and summative assessment practices, given by the focus on respectively the process and the product (outcome) of pupil activities at school, can be considered to play a key role in such processes. As a consequence of their different focus, they will play different roles in social differentiation and in processes of inclusion and exclusion of pupils at school. Thus, the formal framing of approaches to assessment and the way they are integrated in teaching and learning practices in school must be considered to be of relevance in a School for All.

The discussion will have its starting point in an analysis of the use of assessments in comprehensive school in Nordic countries, as we will also include different kinds of documentary and empirical studies in the argumentation. We will focus on which kinds of assessments are being used and for which purposes and also the role of assessments in the perspective of society and in differentiation between pupils. More contemporary trends reflecting neoliberal education policy will be discussed, specifically the use of standardised testing. At a theoretical level inclusive pedagogical practice has been emphasised in Nordic schools. Discourse has reflected an interest in promoting more inclusive pedagogical practices and in segregating fewer pupils to special needs education (E.g. Meijer et al. 2003). At the same time, more standardised ways of assessing have gained currency both worldwide and in the school systems of some of the Nordic countries. This will be discussed further below. However, we will start with a brief discussion of such tendencies from a historical perspective.

9.2 Inclusive School and the Concept of a School for All

The emergence of lower secondary educational systems throughout the world was initiated by the formation of modern society in which formal education of all citizens became a necessity and turned into a key question. The complexity of

modern society has made it necessary to improve and expand lower secondary education according to its duration, content and demands, as to what should be learned at school, who was expected to attend school and for how long. At the same time the democratic state from time to time has considered the question of how to realise ideas of democracy in educational system. The history of such developments reflects different understandings of the concept of a School for All.

During the early 1700 religious education, the so-called popular teaching organised by the churches became mandatory for everyone for religious purposes (Mediås 2004). Such tendencies were seen in all of the Nordic countries. Already at this period of time, assessment and strategies for differentiation were seen as called for. For example, children's ability of reading was assessed, and the children were divided into three different groups depending on their ability to read and understand Christian texts in Sweden (Warne 1929, pp. 33–34). Furthermore, in 1738, Salvius, an editor of a Swedish economics journal, debated the motives of rationally sorting out the 'quick-witted' individuals (in Swedish: 'kvickare ämnena') (Salvius 1738) for enrolment (Warne 1929, p. 128). This was seen as a more profitable strategy than enrolling all children. Thus, the idea of differentiating pupils within educational practices seems to have been an option discussed from the very beginning of mass education.

Later on, lower secondary educational systems evolved, characterised by different kinds of schools and teaching in, for instance, urban and rural areas (Mediås 2004). Despite such variation, school system was meant to realise the idea of establishing a mandatory school and giving as many children as possible the opportunity to attend. During 1900, more homogenous school systems emerged throughout Nordic countries, implementing lower secondary education as an opportunity but also an obligation for all children. However, not everyone did fit into the school in the expected manner. Schools and classes were organised for children who were disabled in different ways, who needed special needs education or who of other reasons did not fit into the ordinary school system. For example, children classified as 'poor' or 'unintelligent' were marginalised by being offered a very short period of schooling – in Sweden called minimal course. However, since the term 'poor' could be assigned to most of the pupils attending compulsory school during these early periods, the result was a situation in which most pupils went to school for a short time only (Nordström 1968). Special classes or schools for children assessed to be in need for special education could be integrated in the ordinary school system or have a more separate position. For instance, such education was in Denmark organised in 'auxiliary classes' (in Danish, 'hjælpeklasse') often integrated in school system and by schools for special needs education called 'Værneskolen' (Skov-Jørgensen 2005).

From such short descriptions it is clear that it is easy to point to very different possible conceptualisations of a School for All. Do we mean ONE School for All or do we mean one School for All? (see also Hjörne and Säljö 2008 for a deeper analysis). As pupils have different needs depending on their background and different resources, teaching and learning strategies need to reflect diversity. However, this is practised in different forms: by keeping an (in principle) undivided school but offering different kinds of teaching or classes within the same school context (special

need classes, talent classes, etc.), by separating pupils into different tracks within compulsory educational system, by offering an extra year at school, by keeping children regardless of their abilities in the same class and offering individualised teaching to match their needs, etc.

Being aware of conceptual understandings of a School for All is central when discussing assessment related to this idea; it might raise questions as for what purpose assessments are used, with which effects and consequences.

In Nordic countries comprehensive school was formally established during 1800 and early 1900, with intentions and initiatives of providing same schooling for all pupils at the primary school level. But providing formal frames for such educational intentions did not mean that pupils had equal opportunities in the school system. The concept of a School for All included much more than this. As pointed out by several sociologists, such as by Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990), school did not at all realise the idea of equal chances for all. On the contrary, the school strongly tended to reproduce social structures and social classes. Social background, gender and other social categories were early seen to play a significant role in the differentiation in school.

In 1945, the idea and intention of a School for All was explicitly framed in UNESCO's constitutional act, where the signing countries claimed their belief in 'full and equal opportunities for education for all' (UNESCO 1945). This was later followed by the UNESCO Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (1994) and the Dakar Framework aiming on 'education for all 2015', also dealing with this question. With the Salamanca World Conference on Special Needs Education 1994, inclusive education was addressed and intentions to realise this were formulated. Questions of adapting teaching to fit pupil's needs, individual resources and improvement were brought into focus and thus conceptualised the School for All in a way reaching beyond the formal framing and discussing the demands of inclusive practice.

Researchers, engaged in questions of inclusive education, have formulated key points on such practice. One such researcher, Mel Ainscow (2005), who has done significant research in this area, points to the question of learning to deal with differences at school as central:

> Inclusion has to be seen as a never-ending search to find better ways of responding to diversity. It is about learning how to live with difference and learning how to learn from difference. In this way differences come to be seen more positively as stimuli for fostering learning, amongst children and adults. (Ainscow 2005, p. 118)

Furthermore he states that such practice 'involves a particular emphasis on those groups of learners who may be at risk of marginalization, exclusion or underachievement'. Inclusive thus is about 'the presence, participation and achievement of all students' and is 'concerned with the identification and removal of barriers' (Ainscow 2005, p. 118).

Assessments play an important role in how schools are dealing with such diversity. Bernstein (1997) points to strong or weak framing of pedagogies reflecting different ways of understanding knowledge (see also Chap. 2 by Blossing and

Söderström, this volume). The stronger the academic content is framed and defined, the less room there will be for 'alternative' knowledge and thus for diversity. Assessments would assess and reward only the canonic and accepted academic knowledge and not be able to catch competencies reaching beyond this. Thus, inclusion and exclusion of pupils at school is mediated by assessments, bringing pupils who do not present the kind of knowledge considered as the 'right' and 'accepted' into processes of exclusion (Bernstein 1997). Thus, the assessments of the strongly framed pedagogy do not seem to meet the demands of an inclusive practice as described above.

9.3 Assessments for Different Purposes and with Different Techniques

As described assessment is and has always been used in educational settings for many different purposes. In a historical perspective, all of such purposes can be identified in the way assessment in compulsory school has been practised and has been framed by legislation. *Formal assessment tools of different design* have been used by society to point out differences among pupils and have played an important role in school systems to emphasise transitions, in keeping such transitions and realising them. As such practices have been defined and designed by those who have had the access and power to do this, they have at the same time reflected certain ways of thinking of society, knowledge, role of educations, etc. In such processes assessments have played a very important role in the reproduction of structures of power and classes of society (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990).

For example, in the beginning of the twentieth century, a new institutional strategy was developed for handling diversity in many parts of the world. The strategy now relied on 'objective' and 'scientific' instruments when dealing with issues of differentiation and segregation. At the same time, the testing of intellectual capacities of children and their maturity was introduced. The testing movement was grounded in medical and psychological accounts of school readiness and school problems. This strategy also represented a more standardised and scientific approach to diagnosis. For example, when moving a pupil to a remedial class, the decision had to be preceded by a comprehensive testing of the child by a medical expert. Ability testing eventually became the accepted tool for evaluating pupils' capacities to manage school (Mercer 1973; Sundqvist 1994).

Assessments and how to assess pupils' ability have changed over time, but at the same time it has more or less remained the same at important points. For instance, assessment by the use of standardised questions and scoring is well known, as mentioned, in accordance to rote learning and religious education several hundred years back, and has lately gained wide currency in several Nordic countries. More project-based ways of assessing in lower secondary education were introduced in the last decades of 1900 and have been mandatory in some countries, for instance, in Denmark and for some years in Norway too (Andreasen and Rasmussen 2011).

A common distinction is between assessment for summative and formative purposes. With a reference to their typical purpose and use, formative assessment is often referred to as assessment *for* learning and summative assessment as assessment *of* learning (Harlen 2006; Lundahl 2011). Both purposes can to some extent be identified in any kind of assessment. Formative assessment is supposed to point forward and support pupils' learning processes, while summative assessment is meant to state a level at a specific time, often by the end of a course. Due to such differences in purposes and use, these two kinds of assessment have a different character. The aim of summative assessment is summing up and thus often use standardised and comparable ways in the communication of results (marks, scores, fail-pass, etc.). Formative assessments are not meant to point to differences to select between pupils. Instead they should supply teachers with information needed to support pupil improvement. Thus, formative approaches to assessment seem to relate more to the idea of a School for All than the summative approaches.

In the inclusive school formative purposes of assessments can be considered as essential (Harlen 2006). Such use will support teacher's possibilities and intentions of giving pupils the necessary support to improve. Assessments for summative purposes and with summative character might on the contrary affect processes of inclusion in negative ways and can thus in general not be considered as supportive for implementation of the idea of a School for All. To further discuss these questions according to comprehensive school in the Nordic countries, we will give a brief summary over the framing of assessment in these countries.

9.4 Assessment in Comprehensive School in the Nordic Countries: Short General Descriptions

The general structure of comprehensive school in Nordic countries does not show significant variation between the five countries. The durance of compulsory education is approximately 9–10 years, children starting school at age 6 or 7 and moving automatically to next grade in all countries, except in Finland (European Commission 2011). The general syllabus is also comparable, reflecting some variation across countries. But turning to the question of assessment and how such practice is framed by legislation, important differences appear. It includes an extensive variation between the countries when it comes both to the kinds of assessments demanded and to their frequency and use (European Commission 2009). It can be considered what the consequences might be from such differences according to the School for All. We will start by taking a closer look at the specific assessment practice as framed by legislations in the five Nordic countries.

Iceland introduced standardised assessments in 1977 (Shiel et al. 2010), but these differ apart from other Nordic countries by the absence of explicitly strong framing of assessment in compulsory school. Neither pedagogical assessments as practised by teachers nor their use is standardised (European Commission 2009). Recently trends promoting self-evaluation in pupil assessments have dominated.

Thus the standardised assessment can be said to work as a tool for teachers to consider how to use and integrate more formative assessment in their teaching and pedagogical practice (European Commission 2009, p. 20). On the other hand, results from standardised testing are used in external evaluations, and local authorities have access to results from their own area. This fact works as a contradiction of conclusions going in direction of weak framing of assessment in Icelandic comprehensive school. It is well known that the effect of external purposes or consequences of assessment is considerable and must be expected to have profound pedagogical effects.

Using Bernstein's terminology assessment in Sweden and Finland can be considered as somewhat stronger framed than in Iceland, but weaker than it is the case in Denmark and Norway.

In *Finland*, teachers should give feedback on pupil progress by the end of each school year using a report which should include different kinds of documentation. Since 1999 legislation has demanded teachers to promote pupil self-assessment (European Commission 2009; Ministry of Education Finland 2009). From grades 1 to 7, the feedback could be given either verbally, using grades or in a combination. Assessments in the last school years should include grades (European Commission 2010). National standardised external testing was introduced in 1998 and is monitored approximately two times during compulsory School for All pupils. Test results are being used both internally and externally, and especially their external use must be expected to have a profound impact on pedagogical practice.

Sweden was the first Nordic country to implement the use of standardised testing in comprehensive school. This was done in the 1930s (see Chap. 2 by Blossing and Söderström, this volume). From 1994 the test became strongly related to syllabus and to a marking system (Nordenbo et al. 2009, p. 22). It is intended to have formative uses in grades 3 and 5 and summative use in grade 9 by the end of compulsory school. As a supplement to the national test, the test system provides teachers with several other kinds of pedagogical test and material for diagnostic purposes (Nordenbo et al. 2009, p. 23). The system thus reflects considerable contradictions, on one hand pointing to weak framing of assessments and little use of it in comprehensive school and on the other hand encouraging an extensive use and also to some extent using testing for external purposes. To this should be added that there is a formal demand of the use of a so-called individual 'lesson plan' (in Sweden an IUP, individual development plan) in which also test results play a role (Danish Ministry of Education 2010, p. 6). All such factors point to a strong framing. Swedish legislation concerning aims and use of pupil assessment during compulsory school reflects a focus on reducing the negative effects of assessments according to its role, for instance, in processes of exclusion of pupils.

Denmark and Norway share some trends when it comes to assessment in comprehensive school and the implementation and use of standardised testing.

Norway is characterised by the mandatory use of diagnostic test (grade 2, in Norwegian and mathematics), national testing according to syllabus (grades 5 and 8) and a final examination by the end of compulsory school in grade 10. Thus, Norway seems to represent the most extensive use of assessments among the Nordic countries. On the other hand, Norwegian legislation also has a demand on continuous

evaluation, reflecting the summative use of assessments, and assessments are not being used for external purposes. These characteristics are of importance according to the possible effects of assessment and point towards a less strong framing than, for example, in Sweden.

Denmark was the last Nordic country to make a full implementation of national standardised testing in comprehensive school in year 2010. But compared to the other Nordic countries, the way this kind of assessment is used in Denmark has an intensive character with test being monitored several times through compulsory school in different subjects (Nordenbo et al. 2009). The test is designed to match the goals of the national syllabus, and there is a demand of using test results in a mandatory lesson plan. Add to this there is a final exam in several subjects by the end of compulsory school. Test results are not made public, but the grades from the final examination are published at school level. Neither test results nor results from the final examination are of any external use. However, since the local county has access to the results from both kinds of assessments and since schools are obliged to make a quality report to be published at the homepage of the school, results might be considered to have some external use.

As those short descriptions show, assessment practice is at some points framed in similar ways in the Nordic countries but differs at other points in important ways. Before discussing the impact and role of the different ways of framing assessment described above, according to processes of in- and exclusion in school, we will give some examples from our own research on the processes and practices by which this happens and which would also illustrate how possible effects of assessments manifest itself in the practices it is a part of.

9.5 Assessments and Its Role in Different Practices and Discourses

The processes of inclusion and exclusion of school are strongly related to the creation of identities, positions and roles in the school class (Hjörne and Säljö 2012). These positions, identities and roles can be understood as social constructs (Hacking 1999). They are based on identification of differences, thus referring to processes of seeing – or considering – something as different from something else. As a central idea of assessment is to point to differences, they might play an important role in such social processes. They might become a part of the formation of social structures, of defining positions and identities in the community of the school class (Andreasen 2008). Their role in such processes will depend on factors such as the character and design of the assessment, how it is reported, how it is used, discourses related to it, etc. (Broadfoot 2007).

It has been discussed how learning disabilities in accordance to such perspectives can be considered as social constructs, as a ‘cultural preoccupation and production’ (e.g. McDermott et al. 2006). Theorists such as McDermott are pointing to the importance of seeing social categorisations as depending on and integrated in social processes. Extensive research has been made by Mehan and colleagues (1986) on the

process of assessing and sorting pupils into categories such as 'normal', 'special' or 'educationally handicapped' in an American context. They found, for instance, that the social language of the school psychologist has a strong position when discussing pupils' problems in a decision meeting at school. In these psychological categorising practices, the problems of the child 'are treated as if they are his private and personal possession' (Mehan et al. 1986, p. 154). This also shows that there is a strong tendency in school to explain children's difficulties in terms of individual disorders. As a consequence, the problems become located '[b]eneath the skin and between the ears' (Mehan 1993, p. 241) of the child.

Thus, these characteristics contribute to the understanding of the child and also to the construction of the role or identity added to the pupil in the social community of the school class (McDermott et al. 2006).

As mentioned above, assessments will play an important role in such a process and in the implementation of different understandings of the School for All depending on its design, purpose and use. We will give some examples of this from our own research. The examples will give some insight into these processes. They will also illustrate how assessments strongly affect conversations about pupils' skills and development in different contexts, for example, in conversations between teachers and different kinds of experts, between the teacher and pupil and in pupils' own dialogues.

The first example shows how *summative assessments as the national tests are referred to* in experts' negotiations of pupil problems and welfare in the Pupil Health Team (PHT). The team is an institutional arena which can be seen as a community of practice, i.e., as a group of people 'who share a concern, a set of problems' and 'who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis' (Wenger et al. 2002, p. 4). The discourse of this community reflects the ideologies and preferences of the institution as interpreted locally at a specific level in the social structure. When discussing a particular problem, the members make visible their assumptions and priorities, and they have to respond to issues, *make an assessment* and come up with solutions.

The second example shows how summative assessments are having attempted formative use according to the 'lesson plan'. Finally, the third example shows how products of tests and assessments (scores and marks) are understood with a reference to different categorisations and hierarchical positions in the social communities among the pupils.

We are fully aware that the practices according to the use of assessments will depend on factors in the national contexts even if situations like these might have similarities across countries. It is beyond the aim of this chapter to go into deeper discussions of that; the examples are meant only for illustrating the processes.

9.5.1 Assessments in the Pupil Health Team

During a meeting in a Swedish pupil health team, experts (educational psychologist (*EP*), school nurse (*SN*), principal (*PR*), special needs teacher (*ST*), assistant principal (*AP*)) meet, define and *assess* pupils who are considered to have difficulties in

reaching the goals in school (Hjörne and Säljö 2004; Utbildningsdepartementet 2000). During the meeting the experts are expected to come up with different perspectives on the problems. However, certain ways of selecting what is in focus and the order in which it will be presented frame the discussions (Bernstein 1996). Assessments and results *from different tests, as, for example, the national tests,* seem to play an important role in such negotiations as illustrated below.

Excerpt 1, David, 11 years old

1	ST	yes he refused he..he didn't want to receive help he absolutely did not want to be in the classroom, he wanted to be like the others but he is not a grade five, he's a weak grade four if I look at what I've [done[a]]-
2	PR:	[is he] like this both in or is it all over or is it specifically in maths
3	ST:	he isn't really mature and he doesn't understand (short pause) instructions either when he reads or when he hears, he he is not that mature, actually
4	EP:	but he is in grade five now, you said (?)
5	ST:	yes
6	EP:	and read or [write]-
7	AP:	[and we]are really [convinced]
8	EP:	[or simple]
9	AP:	to speak frankly, we are rather convinced that he won't pass the-
10	ST:	no
11	AP:	national tests

[a][] means overlapping speech

In this case, there is a strong framing, to use Bernstein's (1996) terminology, of the boy as having learning difficulties and being a boy in need of special support. David is assessed as being 'a weak grade four' (1) already in the initial presentation. The arguments selected to support this assessment are that the boy is found to be not 'really mature' and 'doesn't understand instructions' (4). Furthermore, he is assessed as not being able to pass the national tests (10, 12). Implicitly, this means that he is assessed as being in need of special support, and in this particular case, this also implies that he probably will need an extra year in school. The labelling of the boy could analytically be seen as a function of the framing (Bernstein 1996).

In the next excerpt, the educational psychologist is supposed to report on an intelligence test concerning Maria, 16 years old. In this case, the girl and her described problems are framed as being a matter of lack of intelligence.

Excerpt 2, Maria, 16 years old

1	EP:	well, I don't really remember but it was in principal almost as low as last time, extremely low, a disaster, although it is something about her that makes me uncertain
2	ST:	mm
3	EP:	I told you that afterwards too
4	ST:	mm
5	EP:	it is not only that simple
6	ST:	no
7	EP:	it is not only unintelligence

(continued)

(continued)

8	ST:	no
9	EP:	and then you become more uncertain
10	ST:	mm
11	EP:	I think
12	ST:	I think that's pretty much how it is, we'll see
13	EP:	you cannot only look at the numbers, but it will be difficult for her in the upper secondary school in regular, in a regular program
14	ST:	yes, I am sitting with her national test and it is not that simple, you don't know where, it is very hard to assess cause you don't know really what you're assessing cause after all some things runs very well but then something is wrong
15	EP:	no
16	ST:	it is very difficult to decide, like what is it?
17	EP:	don't get it together

The psychologist reports that the intelligence test was extremely low, 'a disaster' (1). Still, he is unsure whether the girl is unintelligent since 'it is something about her that makes me uncertain' (1), he adds. The special needs teacher supports the psychologist by saying 'I think that's pretty much how it is' (12). During the meeting they continue to further elaborate on how difficult it is to make the assessment, and they do not contribute with something essential that makes it more clear or widens the understanding of the problem. 'It is very difficult to decide, like what is it?' (16), the special needs teacher confirms. In spite of a rather long conversation concerning Maria, it is difficult to assess her capacity and whether she would benefit from regular schooling. As a result, she was later on placed in a segregated programme, in Sweden called an individual programme, for pupils who do not finish the school with complete grades. The strong framing of the problems at hand makes the educational psychologist in control of the situation, and further discussions concerning how to change the teaching or what the girl actually manages are left out (Bernstein 1996).

9.5.2 Assessments in Teachers and Pupils' Dialogue About the Lesson Plan

In Denmark and Sweden, teachers are required by law to make lesson plans (in Sweden called an individual development plan). In Denmark this lesson plan should give 'information about results from continuous evaluation in all subjects' (Ministry of Children and Education 2009). In Sweden there are similar directions concerning an individual study plan for each child. The intention is described as to strengthen 'the base for the planning and preparation of teaching', 'continuous evaluation' and 'the cooperation between school and home' (Ministry of Children and Education 2009). Based on the lesson plan, teachers conduct mandatory dialogues with pupils and their parents. *Results from assessments of different design, both summative and formative, are used for this purpose*, but the standardised national test plays a key

role in the content of the lesson plans and thus also in these dialogues. Results from the Danish national test are reported in ways making it possible for teachers to refer directly to results using phrases such as 'average', 'above average' and 'below average' (Ministry of Children and Education 2010). Observations from such dialogues between a teacher and a pupil about the lesson plan show how this might frame some of the dialogues (Andreasen 2011). In the conversation, the pupil's reading skills are described like this:

> As the teacher points to the scheme in which there are marks in three categories "Above average, "average" and "below average", she explain to him [the pupil), that he actually has done well in the reading test, pretty well in fact, and that the marks show his position compared to the average of the whole country. (observation. Andreasen 2011, p. 309)

The reference to the results from the national test and some of the questions to which he gave a wrong answer appear in the dialogue that follows. However, the test report does in fact point to different kinds of mistakes to make it possible to understand and explain the reason for wrong answers; it still leaves questions open where he should make more effort in order to improve. The test situation might even let the pupil have the wrong impression that it is all a matter of being fast to get high scores. Observations done in the test situation show this might give rise to problems of being stressed and nervous, especially for children with reading problems (Andreasen 2011, p. 310ff).

9.5.3 Assessments in Pupils' Communication About Roles and Identities

When pupils describe the types of assessment, they refer to different categories and hierarchical positions in their social communities, and such interpretations will highly influence their constructions of identities, their understandings of themselves and their potentials and general opportunities in school and in life. *Especially assessments of a summative design will play a role in such processes.* For instance, this becomes clear when pupils in level 9 in Danish compulsory school are interviewed about marks (Andreasen 2008). Pupil descriptions clearly illustrate how different social categories are constructed with a reference to understandings of assessments and their results (Andreasen 2006, 2008, p. 114).

A description from a Danish girl interviewed about marks shows how she considers marks to play a role in how teachers see her as a person. Getting low marks she thinks indicates that she is less skilled and would make teachers attach her to a low position in hierarchy:

> […] to many teachers, you would like to be skilled, not being one of those of who they think, well she can´t anything, but it is compared to many people, you would not like to be the one who is the lowest. (Alberte)

Pupils' categorisations as it manifests itself in their communication will play a role in how they perceive themselves. For instance, a girl, Josefine, describes how

marks indicate pupils' academic potentials, and 'if someone are exclusively getting the highest marks, you would think like, oh, he is a genius' (Josefine). Such categorisations also influence pupils' considerations on their future related to positions in society. Another girl, Alberte, says about the pupils in her class, considered to be lazy, that he or she would be seen as someone who 'will not get high marks and who will not make it'.

The social relations between the pupils and the social structures between them are in fact very sensitive to such tangible marking of differences produced by summative assessments. Getting high marks will not necessarily lead to a high social position in the group, but might even lead to a marginalised position, depending on the culture of the specific group. Expressions like 'nerd' and the like are commonly used in the descriptions of the social position of pupils getting high marks in school. Although the expression for some might have a positive sense, it usually indicates someone being excluded from or being in a sort of marginalised position in the community of the school class. As one of the boys (Chris) describes, bullying might start from this:

> […] you see that all of the time, those who are nerds and those who are being bullied, often it begins if they get high marks. (Chris)

The use of standardised ways of assessing early in school will make such processes start at earlier stages. These excerpts from interviews with pupils in level 6 in Danish compulsory school illustrate this.[1] Several of these describe that they are in fact very sensitive to felt expectations from people in their social surrounding concerning their test results, whether these expectations are real or not. A boy tells:

> I was afraid that I would not make it and then you become a little stressed. And when your father is going to see it, and if you did not do well, he will not be so happy about that. […] Most of all I am afraid to do badly. (John)

The assessment as a factor playing a role in social relationships and communities is described by this girl:

> You would like to do well. If your friends results are in the top […] it is not funny to be the lower, you would like to do well. (Helen)

9.6 Assessment in Nordic Countries: Comparative Considerations

Tendencies in design and use of assessments in schools in Nordic countries show an increase in the use of summative designs, such as standardised tests. Although these tests in some of the countries are mostly for formative purposes, the real effect of such designs on assessment has to be considered. *The empirical examples show*

[1] Interviews are made as a part of a postdoc research project financed by Danish research Council, focusing on assessments' practice in Danish compulsory school (2009–2013).

clearly the role of such assessment design in processes of inclusion and exclusion of children in school. They also show by which practices it influences these processes as, for instance, in pupil's dialogues or in dialogues between teachers and different experts. Furthermore, standardised ways of testing tend to realise the idea of ONE School for All which the pupils have to conform to, rather than one School for All where teachers adapt their pedagogy to include all pupils. This has consequences for the political goal of offering an equal and democratic education that includes everyone. In addition, research shows that they might influence the way pupils understand themselves, their classmates and school in general in ways that can be considered as a possible threat to the comprehensive school, the School for All. The empirical examples show assessments tend to frame interactions, dialogues and judgements on matters playing a role in processes of inclusion and exclusion of pupils in the school context. This is particularly the case for assessments of a summative character. These interactions will have an impact on both pupils' approaches to school activities and on their self-perception. Furthermore, this will also have consequences in a wider perspective according to pupils' lives and positions in society after leaving school.

If syllabus is strongly linked to standardised assessment, as it is the case in, for instance, Sweden and Denmark, this would have a negative impact on diversity, on the room left for alternative knowledge and alternative ways of presenting knowledge. Consequently this can be considered as a threat to inclusion.

As mentioned above assessments used for formative purposes are an important element in the inclusive school. Only Norway is explicitly demanding such use of assessment and continuous evaluation, but both Finnish and Swedish legislations reflect similar intentions. Formative uses of assessments takes that information given by the test can be used to show how and by which means pupils can improve. Thus summative assessments are usually not suited to give the necessary information to be used for formative purposes, unless their design integrates such intentions. To support formative purposes, teachers are often offered material to interpret results from summative tests to make it possible to give instructions pointing forward in pupils' developments. But formative use of assessments means that it has to be designed to supply the teacher with such information enabling teacher to point to specific initiatives and activities. This is crucial for the extent to which teachers find they can use tests and assessments and to which extent they are inclined to make any use of the results at all (Nordenbo et al. 2009, p. 61). From this can be concluded that the impact of assessments of a summative character being used for external purposes can be significant on teaching and learning, but such characteristics might on the other hand lead to that teachers do not find the results relevant or useful for formative purposes, to support learning (Nordenbo et al. 2009, p. 63). For instance, in the Danish national test, problems concerning this question can be identified (Andreasen 2011).

The feeling of influence and ownership has an impact on how relevant and useful teachers find assessments (Nordenbo et al. 2009, p. 62). National standardised testing with some external purposes is implemented in all of the Nordic countries. Teachers have no influence on these tests and thus a poor feeling of

ownership. If such design and framing of assessments will make teachers find them useful is questionable. Thus, such testing might not have a positive impact on nor contribute positively to pupil's profit of activities at school or inclusion in general. It clearly points to differences between pupils and makes a hierarchical approach to their performances possible for everybody involved, teachers, classmates, parents, etc. In this way, assessments might play a role in processes of exclusion having an effect on the social structures of the school class and in the shaping of self-conceptions and identities of pupils.

In such perspectives the framing of assessment practice reflects serious contradictions in several of the countries. Especially the intended positive influence from more formative approaches to assessments has bad conditions when standardised national testing is used at the same time and especially if it has external purposes, as is the case in several countries. This contradiction or field of tension is reflected in all of the countries. Although the external purposes might not be related to formal consequences for schools or teachers, the effect of such purposes can be very strong and can be expected to overrule so to say more formative approaches.

9.7 Concluding Remarks

Realising the idea of one School for All is calling for considerations on how to handle diversity between pupils in schools – the diversity that will always be present in relation to their social backgrounds, experiences, etc. Processes of inclusion and exclusion of children in school are strongly related to this and are affected by the way differences and diversity are handled and met in classrooms, by teaching strategies and in different pedagogical practices. As illustrated by our empirical examples, *institutional categories will play an important role in such processes as mediated by assessments and the practices they are a part of. Such role depends on the specific design and use of assessments. Especially assessments of a summative design might influence such processes in unintended ways.* By pointing to differences and children's shortcomings in relation to certain kinds of knowledge and academic skills, they can be used to compare children and to indicate who should be included in school and who should not. This can be in a physical sense, by selecting pupils for special needs education or more figuratively by adding different statuses to pupils at school. For instance, the pupils with a low status can be exposed to being ignored or simply treated as less accepted member of the social community of the school class. Often such processes can be identified when children lose interest in school activities as a consequence of feeling unable to meet demands in the 'right' ways to feel included and accepted. Possible key points in such considerations could focus on questions to which extent diversity is considered a resource and not a problem, how it affects pupils' access to participate in activities to make learning possible (include or exclude pupils) and to which extent differences are being used to point to possible activities to support learning (Ainscow 2005; Harlen 2006).

On this background, contemporary trends in neoliberal education policy as reflected, for example, in the extended use of assessments and especially in the use of summative assessments have to be problematised and considered a threat to the School for All. Assessments are based on ideas of pointing to what can be considered as the expected and accepted knowledge of school and ways of communicating it. Thus, the children whose experiences, knowledge and skills do not fit into these ideas are at risk of being placed in marginalised positions in school. This practice reflects a conceptualisation of the School for All, in which pupils do not have equal statuses or rights. As for children with special educational needs, the effects of the stronger framing of assessment that were introduced in some Nordic countries recently could be discussed. Such design, structure and way of using assessment might make teachers focus even more on minimising diversity, seeing it as a potential problem and teaching pupils in ways to make sure that they are able to deliver the expected knowledge in the accepted way. Thus, pupils who do not have the social background that provides them with such knowledge are in risk of being categorised in marginal positions by the system, both in the school in general and in other social communities to which the pupil belong, such as school class and family. Moreover, this will have considerable consequences for children's future career in school and in life.

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Chapter 10
A School for All? Different Worlds: Segregation on Basis of Freedom of Choice

Marianne Dovemark

10.1 Introduction and Background

The three general principles of parity, equal access and equality of qualifications governed Swedish school policy since the 1950s. Lundahl (2002) has examined these principles and characterised Swedish education policy up to the end of the 1970s as centralised and regulated through collective interests. Reforms that included mechanisms such as detailed national curricula, earmarked State subsidies and tight central control over the constitution of organisational resources, curricula, staff time and learning practices have been noted. State strategies are now depicted in opposite terms. Things are becoming less collectivistic with more individualised instruction and increasing moves towards deregulation, decentralisation and also re-centralisation (Gustafsson 2003; Dovemark 2004a; Wass 2004; Dovemark and Beach 2004; Henning-Loeb 2006; Båth 2006).

From 1990s onwards, there has been a period of neo-liberal economic restriction within welfare State education. The public sector as a provider and regulator of services has been questioned (Wass 2004), even within the field, amongst practising teachers (Henning-Loeb 2006), and the highly egalitarian system of strongly State funded and regulated education was no longer officially expressed as a politically and economically feasible project (Lindblad et al. 2005). This marked a clear break with past ideologies and democratic interests in Sweden (Båth 2006) and in the Nordic countries in general (Gordon et al. 2003). The Swedish school system was transformed from being one of the most highly regulated education systems in the world to being amongst the least regulated. Through new discourse on schooling (Lindblad et al. 2005), the cultural production of education was

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materialised in new ways (Dovemark 2004a, b). The changes in the education policy/system have had significant implications for the work, responsibilities and roles of teachers and schools. Aspects such as the image of a school, its education and claims and how it is talked about and materialised in everyday work will be explored below as well as interaction between pupils, teachers and school managers where responsibility, flexibility and freedom of choice are keywords in policy and organisation (Dovemark 2004a, b, 2007, 2008; Beach and Dovemark 2007, 2009, 2011). It is particularly interesting, I argue, to shed light on conditions for pupils of different social backgrounds. What has become of 'a School for All' in this neo-liberal area of education? Although Sweden is still officially claimed to have a cohesive school with general principles of parity, equal access and equality of qualifications, the outcome of the education system shows a strong differentiation based on class, gender and ethnicity (Broady and Börjesson 2006; Svensson 2006; Bunar and Kallstenius 2007). Even though schools are complex and incoherent social assemblages (Ball et al. 2012:3), my understanding is that the data explored and discussed below is relevant and useful beyond the specific cases and shows how the discourse of freedom of choice works and materialises within a Swedish school context.

The current chapter is based on an ethnographic Swedish Research Council project (VR: 2004-7024). Using long-term participant observation and interviews, it investigates how pupils provide different frameworks for the acquisition of skills depending on which school/classroom they belong to. The chapter consists of five sections. The first one gives an overview of researched settings; the second one introduces the theoretical toolbox used. In the third and fourth sections, the knowledge content and organisational principles of knowledge are studied and compared in relation to the two researched settings. In the final section of the chapter, the limits established for the acquisition of skills and consequences for the social distribution are discussed.

10.2 Studied Settings

The research has been conducted in two 8th-grade classes in two secondary public schools, called Pine and Spruce school, located just about half a kilometre apart in a middle-sized (60,000 inhabitants) town on the Swedish west coast. The schools, both with about 350 pupils and grade 1–9 intakes (ages 6–16), highlighted, on their websites, their characteristics as being schools with a 'great atmosphere and fantastic facilities', and descriptions of 'security' and 'comfort' were frequently used. According to their websites and at a first glance, the schools looked similar to each other in many areas. The school buildings were about 30 years old; the facilities were partly renovated with bright open spaces with easily accessible libraries as hubs in the middle of the schools. The external environment consisted of green spaces with surrounding woods. According to field notes, the indoor environment at the two schools can be summarised as open with a permissive atmosphere

expressed through humorous commentaries and intimate conversations between pupils and staff.

Both Spruce and Pine profiled themselves as working for a 'good environment for learning' where 'everyone's opportunities' would be the starting point' (Spruce's and Pine's websites). Concepts such as 'responsibility', 'flexibility', 'freedom of choice' and 'influence' occurred frequently in the descriptions of each school. The schools promised 'stimulating learning environments' in which pupils were inspired to 'take responsibility for their own learning', in other words a commonly used profiling amongst today's Swedish schools (see, for instance, Dovemark 2004a, b). The importance of collaboration with parents was also mentioned.

A number of similarities between the two schools were found in their official policy. However, Spruce was newly established at the time of study and regarded as a 'magnet school'.[1] It was located in a predominantly middle-class area of privately owned 'low-rise' houses, while Pine was situated in an area of 'high-rise' rented accommodation. One third of the pupils at Pine had moved to Spruce during the first years of establishment. According to one of the headmasters at Pine, '100 % of those pupils had Swedish as mother tongue', while: 'Pine had been drained of its successful pupils'. Left at Pine were those pupils with another ethnical background than Swedish, and according to Swedish Statistics (Statistiska Centralbyråns kommunfakta, school year 2005–2006), 60 % of the pupils at Pine had migrant backgrounds. In the 8th-grade studied at Spruce, there were twice as many pupils in year eight (31) as at Pine (15), and while 9 of the 15 pupils at Pine had a non-Swedish ethnical background, there were none at Spruce.

Even though there were many similarities in terms of physical conditions, it turned out that the differences dominated. When checking the websites of the Swedish National Agency for Education regarding school performance statistics (siris.skolverket.se/reports), a number of variances between the schools were found. One quarter of the pupils in grade 9 at Pine, for instance, had not received a pass mark in Swedish regarding written production, one third had not passed in English and in Mathematics, the corresponding figure was 10 %. Even the rating level of current core subjects was low by national standards. The picture of Spruce was a complete contrast with its high-grade level and almost 100 % effectiveness. Performance statistics showed differences, so did socio-economic background factors including family average income (Swedish Statistics, Statistiska Centralbyråns kommunfakta), which was significantly higher at Spruce than at Pine, and as mentioned, the absence of migrants at Spruce was conspicuously compared to Pine.

The schools' different opportunities, conditions and constraints were also something that both teachers and pupils pointed out. On my very first visit to Spruce,

[1] Spruce was not only attractive to those pupils who lived in the neighbourhood but also for pupils who lived relatively far from the school. Spruce can in this respect be regarded as a 'magnet school', a school within the public education, but is said to have something special to offer beyond the 'normal school'. Schools simply are seen as examples and models and are therefore likely to attract pupils from outside the normal neighbourhood.

several teachers said that the school was 'special' just because the pupils were 'very motivated and ambitious' (Sune). Siri, another teacher at Spruce, even stressed that there might be a problem with the high level of ambition amongst pupils (and parents), since they had unrealistic demands on themselves. The pupils 'focused too much on marks' feeling an 'explicit peer pressure about the need to succeed in school and get high ratings', she said. The teachers also expressed that they expected, due to the pupils' social and cultural capital, that they could get help from their parents: 'Parents show such an interest. They even phone us if we don't make clear what's up'. With few exceptions, pupils were highly motivated and ambitious as numerous field notes illustrate. The one below was written down on an occasion when the teacher met the pupils the day after an exam:

> The teacher stands in front of the white board. The pupils pose a lot of questions about yesterday's test in science. There is a rollicking and fun atmosphere in the classroom. The teacher says: 'You wrote the science test yesterday and it really is a fantastic result/…/ several of you didn't end until 3.30 (pm) even though your schedule ends at 2.30… many of you will get the highest degree. (Field-notes, Spruce)

If motivated, ambitious pupils embossed Spruce, the picture of Pine was something quite different. Here, the pupils and teachers identified their school as a 'problem school' (Paula, student) with 'unruly and unmotivated' (Paul, teacher) pupils, a 'school with a lot of migrants with a dissimilar cultural background with their roots in other countries than Sweden' (Peter, student), a school for 'those children we use to call socio-economically disadvantage groups' (Patric, teacher). Pia, another teacher at Pine, even emphasised that Pine 'lacked secure pupils with secure families'. She actually made a clear distinction between 'secure families' and those 'families with children at Pine'. Considering schools as successful or not, depending on whether pupils are identified as 'Swedish' or 'migrants', was not uncommon (Dovemark 2011), and both pupils and teachers constructed differences in relation to ethnicity (see also Gruber 2007).

To sum up, both staff as well as pupils talked about each other and themselves in terms of Spruce as a popular high-performance school with highly motivated pupils, while Pine was described as a 'problem school' where the labelling of pupils as 'problematic and weak' with 'insecure homes' (Pia, teacher) was especially evident.

A large portion of research has given attention to pedagogical circumstances in relation to social class reproduction and persistently maintained inequalities (see, for instance, Beach and Dovemark 2009, 2011; Bunar 2010; Öhrn et al. 2011). What processes and organising principles result in such different outcomes? What factors lead to the production and reproduction of a culture and society? Education is one of these factors, and the current study illustrates how social relations, identity, knowledge and power are constructed in the ongoing process of education where a strong neo-liberal agenda has taken place. What different processes and organisational principles do pupils meet within a strongly decentralised school? The organisational principles and the content of knowledge were clearly produced differently at Spruce and Pine. Before clarifying my results, I will go through the theoretical tools used.

10.3 Horizontal and Vertical Discourse: Unequal Social Distribution of Knowledge

Bernstein's theoretical framework has been central in the research process both for finding, interpreting and understanding the patterns that appeared in the specific educational practice under study. An important point in Bernstein's theory building is how differences in educational outcomes can be explained by children's backgrounds (Bernstein 1990). In his analysis, Bernstein interconnects the student's family with school: Children understand and value the codes of a classroom in different ways depending on what social and cultural capital they bring into the school practice. In that way, he has been able to show variations both within and between social classes. Bernstein sees the educational outcome as a result of the ability to interpret regulations and codes in order to understand the educational context rather than the result of the cognitive ability. In other words, pupils' success or failure in school can be seen as a result of their ability or lack of ability to 'decode the grammar of school's classification' (Hultqvist 2001:33).

Historically there has always been an unequal social distribution of knowledge amongst different social classes. Already in the early 1970s, Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) posed the fact that the education system contributes to a breakdown in manual and intellectual work (see also Bourdieu 1981). We can see that this division will strengthen its positions in Sweden today with the new upper secondary school reform with special apprenticeship programmes (SOU 2008:27). My point in this chapter is to show the fact that working class and lower officials' children are destined to vocational training long before they supposedly 'choose' them (Dovemark 2012), due to the way teaching processes and pedagogical organisational principles are made of within different educational practices. In my analysis, I look for assumptions and justifications implicitly or explicitly expressed by teachers and other actors to justify the choice of content and organisational principles of knowledge for the pupils at Pine and Spruce, respectively. Who are pupils anticipated to be? For what positions are they to prepare themselves within the social labour distribution? The field of education is a field of symbolic control, and like the economic field, it can be seen in terms of a division of labour or more precisely as a function of class relations (Bernstein 2000, 2003). According to Bernstein (1990), there is a strong link between the knowledge we acquire and the identity we get (see Young 2008), which has also been recently researched within Swedish upper secondary school (Korp 2006; Norlund 2011; Hjelmér 2011a, b; Nylund and Rosvall 2011; Rosvall 2011a, b; Dovemark 2011, 2012).

By using the concepts of *horizontal* and *vertical discourse* (Bernstein 1990, 2000), I want to analyse the various options pupils from Spruce and Pine, respectively, were offered. Educational institutions exercise symbolic control through different codes. While the restricted code, with context dependency and high predictability, is characteristic for some classrooms, the elaborated code is characteristic to others. According to Bernstein (1971), most working-class jobs are characterised by the restricted code, while middle-class jobs are based on the elaborated

code, characterised by context independency and unpredictability, a code the education system as well as the official language takes for granted. Bernstein thus understands working-class children's relative academic failure *as a social* rather than a cognitive phenomenon.

The horizontal discourse is based on the restricted code and refers to practical everyday knowledge, 'how it is', a kind of 'practical benefit', an organisation strongly related to specific practices in a local context. Context-bound everyday skills cannot easily be used in other contexts and possess a limited potential for a change of conditions outside the context it is bound to, thereby lacking any potential of power. According to Young (2008), horizontal knowledge cannot generate vertical knowledge while there are no principles for decontextualising, except between similar contexts. Organisational principles and content of knowledge within practically oriented upper secondary programmes are identified within a horizontal discourse (see Norlund 2009; Hjelmér 2011a, b; Rosvall 2011a, b). Vertical discourse, based on the elaborated code, is on the contrary characterised by being theoretical and abstract and is by that weakly bound to context. Knowledge organised in a vertical discourse is more indirectly linked to a material world, which in turn opens up more alternative ways of thinking about a phenomenon. This gives the vertical discourse power to think the unthinkable (Bernstein 2000). If the horizontal discourse is a feature of the vocationally oriented upper secondary programmes, the vertical discourse is a feature of the academically oriented programmes (Norlund 2009; Hjelmér 2011a, b; Rosvall 2011a, b).

A basic problem for the social distribution of knowledge is that education in a class society is organised so that already subordinated groups usually meet a curriculum in which knowledge is organised primarily in horizontal discourses with short-term expiration dates (Nylund and Rosvall 2011:87). This is, on a social level, an important pattern to be aware of. Pupils, due to their cultural and social capital, meet and confront different pedagogical organisational principles and knowledge content. The educational class-based outcomes (Svensson 2006) raise social as well as political issues and point to the importance of researching educational practices to find, describe and interpret organisational principles in an effort to understand the educational outcomes. The pattern we see in the Swedish upper secondary school is already founded already in pre- and elementary school.

10.4 Different Demands and Expectations

According to Bernstein (2000), the vertical discourse is hierarchically organised, and through analysing grading criteria, we can see what is considered as valuable knowledge within a school context (Norlund 2009; Nylund and Rosvall 2011). According to Swedish grading criteria, competencies like general universality arguments, like analytically considering cause and effect and demonstrating awareness of the importance of both evaluating and ideological source criticism, are

measured as highly valuable knowledge, all valid competencies within a vertical discourse. This kind of knowledge is the basis of generalisations and exemplifies beyond the specific case giving those who have these skills opportunities to consider alternatives. Those who can generalise their arguments can also obtain power that extends beyond a specific local context which is contrary to horizontally organised knowledge, which can only be useful within the context it is already being used (Bernstein 2000).

The grading criteria looked different at Spruce compared to Pine. While the teachers at Spruce stressed cognitive competencies like 'critical thinking, creativity, communication and problem-solving within realistic situations' as Sara, one of the teachers at Spruce expressed it, teachers at Pine more focused on a level of doing. While most criteria at Pine had their focus on 'describe' and 'provide examples of', the criteria at Spruce had its focus on reflection, discussion, argumentation, analysis of consequences and different perspectives. Criteria and goals written at Spruce were thus more often phrased in a more cognitive and abstract level than those set out at Pine. The criteria below for how to pass an assignment dealing with ethical principles illustrate the expectations of cognitive skills at Spruce:

> You are supposed to: a) reflect for and against an ethical problem; b) know about and use three ethical principles; c) use different texts and articles (do not forget to enter your sources!); d) be able to discuss your own opinions on the matter; e) argue and understand different views; f) discuss diverse impact different views can get. (Grading criteria for pass at Spruce)

Several of the above criteria are aimed at pupils' self-analysis and metacognitive skills (see also Korp 2006), skills within a vertical discourse. The pupils were in a way prepared for adult life as active citizens when focusing discussing, arguing for their own opinions and understanding (see also Öhrn et al. 2011). They were in a way encouraged to think the things not yet thought of, the unthinkable or what Bernstein (2000) looks upon as the *discursive gap*. Again and again, in my observations at Spruce, I was struck by how consciously teaching was directed towards cognitive skills as argumentation, analysis and comparison:

> References to higher education are conducted regularly. Teacher: 'In upper secondary school and at university you will be forced to discuss and argue, use references and of course, be source-critical and analytical'. The teacher reminds the pupils once again that 'quality is more important than quantity'. (Field-notes Spruce).

On the whole the grading criteria and the image of teaching at Spruce were characterised by high expectations and demands on student performance where the pupils' own thoughts and opinions were requested. Focus was put on a vertical discourse, based on the elaborated code, characterised by being theoretical, abstract and conceptual (Bernstein 2000). Teachers took their struggle towards the highest grading criteria for granted, and they believed all their pupils could reach them:

> Everything written on the white board and pupils' own notes are now related to the Swedish National Agency's goal formulations: 'These are excerpts from the national goals… you can easily handle them'. Throughout the conversation the teacher focused goals at the highest levels rather than basics and just a pass. (Field notes, Spruce)

The teaching aims at Pine looked quite different. While Spruce's teachers were constantly focused on higher education and motivated pupils with what was expected of them when they went to upper secondary school and university, Pine's teachers were set to 'basics' and a pass. There were 'no candidates for the highest grades' as Paula, one of the teachers at Pine said. Paula as well as several of her colleagues at Pine stated that they 'were more than pleased if as many pupils as possible could only pass'. Pupils at Pine were enticed into a 'making' culture where criteria like 'a) able to describe…; b) able to read, write and formulate…; c) know about different…' where in focus. Most criteria were organised within a horizontal discourse based on the restricted code referring to a local context as the example below:

> Patricia, the teacher stands in front of the white board. She holds up the textbook in social sciences in one hand and a bunch of stencils in the other: 'In order to get passed in this area, you are supposed to read the chapter on various religions and answer all questions I have done on stencils. You are also supposed to describe similarities and differences'. (Field-notes, Pine)

The criteria for a pass at Pine focusing on 'answering' and 'describing' were in stark contrast to criteria for pass at Spruce focusing on 'discussing', 'arguing', 'reflecting' and 'understanding'. If the majority of teachers at Spruce talked about their pupils as motivated and ambitious, the majority of teachers at Pine talked about their pupils as 'unwilling' (Petra, teacher in Maths), 'quiescent' (Paul, English teacher) and even as 'lazy' (Patricia, teacher in social sciences). Within the direct lesson situation, the teachers' analysis of pupils' behaviour often stopped at a psychological analysis on an individual level where reasons were turned into personal shortcomings. However, at deeper conversations and recorded interviews, teachers also presented reasons based on pupils' social and cultural capital. Many pupils were 'simply not encouraged enough or helped at home', as Paul expressed it.

How the requirements and criteria were formulated was also something teachers at Pine discussed and reflected upon. Many of the teachers showed concern about this, and Paul illustrated that anxiety: 'the bar had been lowered because today the pupils come exclusively from a socially burdened area'. He went on and said that the 'requirements were different when no vouchers or freedom of choice existed', when 'the school's catchment was larger and more heterogeneous'. Paul expressed concern about the segregation that had occurred since the system of freedom of choice and school vouchers had been implemented. Pine used to be 'more heterogeneous' with 'pupils with many different backgrounds', he said. Several reports have recently demonstrated the increased segregation and demolition of equality in Swedish schools (Lindgren 2012; Swedish National Agency for Education 2012; Teachers' Association 2012). Paul's concern was based on awareness that the staff put fewer demands on today's pupils due to the fact that the catchment area had become more homogeneous. The teachers at Spruce also expressed that they had a homogeneous catchment but based on completely different reasons: 'ambitious and motivated pupils with very interested and enthusiastic parents'. Characteristic differences between the two classes were precisely this, and the teachers seemed to have different aims with their teaching depending on the pupils' social and cultural capital.

The pupils at Pine which the teachers had assessed as 'weak' did not obtain the same descriptions of aims and grading criteria as did the group at Spruce,

particularly with regard to the higher achievement levels, nor were pupils at Pine presented with these as regularly as pupils at Spruce. The pupils at Spruce were judged as most successful and were enticed into a performativity culture in this way far more intently than were the 'weak' groups at Pine. These types of differences in demands, presentations and expectations in communication have also been noticed elsewhere and written on previously (see also Beach 1999, 2001, 2003; Dovemark 2004a, b; Beach and Dovemark 2007, 2009, 2011).

The pupils were given various opportunities to understand and achieve the goals of the school, and as a consequence of this, they were offered various opportunities to attain the highest grades. Pupils at Spruce had thus already begun the first steps of a theoretical training course (see also Baudelot and Establet 1977).

10.5 Different Organisational Principles and Content of Knowledge

The different ways of regarding criteria manifested themselves within teaching practice. Even though both studied classroom practices were strongly linked to curriculum goals and grading criteria and to the teachers' efforts to highlight these, there were many differences. I was struck above all by the differences with regard to demands and expectations. The pupils at Spruce were constantly spurred and coached to intensify performances through references to future educational requirements:

> Stina describes again what had been on the 7th grade syllabus and took up a couple of common lines leading up to upper-secondary school. She emphasises in particular the science content in the 9th grade and the first year of upper- secondary level. She pointed out particularly the common presentation of aims for the sciences courses in year 9 and first-year upper secondary A course. She uses these descriptions to motivate the current content in year 8. Stina also points out that the present course is often regarded as the most difficult and that the level they are working at is above the work needed for a basic pass. As she puts it, 'it's for those who try a little harder'. (Field notes, Spruce)

As stated earlier, teachers at Spruce were contrite to emphasise the aims and the need for good grades amongst pupils as a motivational device, which also seemed to work in the manner intended. The notion of the carrot and the stick can be illustrated in amongst other ways, such as by recourse to notes about pupils staying behind after school and lessons during breaks and at lunchtime, to take part in extra-curricular work related to course contents. Most of the time, they did not really need to do so in order to get the good marks they were looking for and that they felt they needed for a good future education and a good career afterwards. The following field note extract pertains to these ideas. It refers to a full class presentation by the teacher during a lesson in Maths at Spruce:

> 'We have the green course for the two highest grades… and this, multiplication with variables, which is really quite advanced. You don't actually need it even for the top grades but I'll go through it with those who want to. The others can go back to the home room and the rest continue your maths here…' None of the pupils get up. The teacher starts by writing: 5(x+4)-2(7-2x)=3(2x+3). Teacher: 'These are worth more points than the others on the

> test.' The pupils watch the teacher's demonstration intently, writing down what she writes down and listening to what she says. A pupil asks: 'The yellow course only gives a pass doesn't it?' The teacher answers, 'yes, if you want more then it's the green course you need.' Another asks if the green course will give the top grade. The teacher answers, 'yes you can get it. It has to do with your analytical capabilities'. (Field-notes, Spruce)

Performance aspects were given attention regularly at Spruce – particularly in key subject areas. Entire lessons were commonly focused on test content and questions, which were in turn related verbally by teachers to the course aims:

> 'This next test will be quite a big one' (Teacher). 'Remember the course aims'… 'We went through what was needed to get a distinction… but I want to go through what you need to do for a top grade. You will manage that!' Stina goes through the requirements/…/Always focus on requirements as analyse, evaluate, argue and compare. (Field-notes, Spruce)

Teachers at Pine also focused on course aims, but not at all as much as the teachers at Spruce. At Pine, it was more in connection with passing than obtaining higher marks and distinctions. The skills focusing at Spruce, such as analysing, arguing and evaluating academic knowledge within a vertical discourse, create room for manoeuvre and the achievement of greater generality (Bernstein 2000). The field notes below come from a social sciences lesson at Spruce when Sigrid, the teacher in social sciences, is about to instruct the pupils about a new work:

> The teacher goes through the different grading criteria. She gives examples of how pupils can proceed as how to outline. (Again, I am struck by the teachers' clarity on the visibility of grading criteria). She shows great determination and a clear inventory of what can be regarded as different grades. On the white board there are also examination tasks and suggested sources written. The pupils are supposed to write reports on this work. Sigrid refers once more to higher education and stresses the importance of sources and references. Pupils are encouraged to read, evaluate and argue about their chosen content. She points out that the examination is being an individual task but she also invites the pupils to work together in groups to seek information here at school as well as at home. (Field notes, Spruce)

Sigrid expected the pupils to analyse, evaluate and compare the chosen content. It was not uncommon to encourage them to write a report and that these were supposed to be reviewed at a 'vent' in which an 'opponent' discussed the work and the author was expected to defend it, in an academic standard common presentation form. The pupils at Spruce were clearly well prepared for higher education. The teachers at Spruce took for granted and also urged the pupils to bring work home as Sigrid did at the introduction above.

Pupils' opportunities to discuss school assignments with parents, siblings and friends showed out to be of great importance for managing the tasks. Help from parents and siblings was simply essential and critical when it came to succeeding or failing and probably also essential if the school situation should work or not (see also Dovemark 2004a). Bernstein (2003:64) stresses that the logic core in all pedagogical relations mainly consists of the relationships of three rules: hierarchical, sequencing and critical. The hierarchical rule refers to the relation between the transmitter (the teacher) and the acquirer (the student), a rule which is governed by rules of social order, character and behaviour. These are relationships that condition interpretation of preferences in pedagogical relations. The sequencing rule is about

how the transmitting is carried out. The critical rule allows the acquirer to understand 'what counts as legitimate or illegitimate communications, social relations or position' (Bernstein 2003:65) in the pedagogical situation. Bernstein classifies the hierarchical rules as controlling and regulative and the sequencing and critical as instructive and discursive. In other words, Bernstein stresses that it is not enough for pupils to know they have acquired the knowledge they are supposed to learn. They must in some way or another understand and act as it is expected in a school situation as in the above example when the teacher took for granted that the pupils wanted to bring home school work during the weekend. I could not identify any protests from the pupils; on the contrary, they rather seemed to see it as an opportunity to produce work with potentially highly rated value.

The teachers' expectations in regard to cognitive skills at Spruce stood in stark contrast to Pine's focus on atomistic knowledge areas. While Spruce's teachers talked about their pupils as 'strong' and 'motivated' and constantly focused on higher education, the pupils at Pine were talked about as 'weak' and occupied by transcribing what the teacher had written on the whiteboard and were frequently working with direct study questions like in the example below, which comes from an ordinary lesson in social sciences:

> Pia, the teacher gathers the pupils in front of the whiteboard. She draws two circles and writes schematically the percentages for sea and land… and for the Atlantic and Pacific oceans respectively. Pia then tells the pupils to pick up their notebooks and to 'draw of the circles and what is written on the white board'. Then she hands out stencils and calls the pupils to 'answer all the questions. You will find all the answers in your textbooks'. (Field-notes, Pine)

Teaching materials such as textbooks, study books, outline maps and copied tasks were frequently used: 'Pupils were given the task to read several pages in the textbook. They were then given questions related to the text, which they had to answer individually' (Field notes, Pine). The content was mostly strongly classified with context-bound tasks where the pupils reproduced material, which the teacher had gone through, or that the pupils themselves had read in a textbook. The pupils at Pine were offered a simplified and less challenging form of teaching compared to the pupils at Spruce. The organisational principles and content appeared to be context bound and predictable, all within the restricted code (Bernstein 1971). The pupils were offered a horizontal discourse linked to a material base with immediate concrete situations within a specific context. By that they were limited to transcend different contexts, far removed from the vertical discourse pupils at Spruce were offered.

The strategy to offer tasks within the horizontal discourse and restricted code, as most of the teachers at Pine did, can also be understood as a way for the teachers to maintain control during lessons. Behind the teachers' classroom discourse, there is, according to Bernstein (2000), a representation of the ideal student or even the ideal citizen. Within the restricted code, teaching is primarily focused on getting pupils to follow instructions, be on time and behave (see also Korp 2006) what Bernstein (1999:163) describes as the regulative discourse, 'a discourse of social order' with the goal to create order, relations and identity. During my fieldwork, I found that a

sense of calm settled over the class at Pine when these, strongly structured and framed (Bernstein 1975) tasks were made. The pupils worked intensely and looked concentrated in stark contrast to those few occasions when the pupils got tasks which could be considered as weakly framed as in the example below during the technology class when teaching friction and rate:

> The pupils get the task to construct a sledge and a cart. The teacher puts a lot of different materials in front of them: 'Your task is to draw a sketch of a model and write down how the sledge/cart is supposed to be constructed and how it will work'. The pupils were supposed to build the model out of offered material, describe the workflow, photograph and then load it and make tests. They were finally asked to 'draw conclusions what might be done differently'. (Field notes from Pine)

Sighs, anxiety and unease were spread all over the classroom, and questions were raised both to the teacher and to each other. Most of the pupils made other things and simply ignored the task. It was clear that the pupils were not used to these kinds of issues and quite soon the teacher lost control over the classroom. He got into an untenable situation, and the pupils could after a short time renegotiate the task to be transformed into what the teacher expressed as 'an ordinary question and answer task'. The pupils simply had to read a text and then answer a series of questions. The teacher transformed the task into immediate goals within an ongoing everyday practice (see also Beach and Bagley 2012) instead of challenging the pupils with other organisational principles. The important question is whether the pupils at Pine ever will challenge themselves if they do not get the opportunities to train and by that get used and accustomed to tasks that require time, energy, reflection and analysis to solve. Tasks characterised by being theoretical, abstract and conceptually integrated, weakly bound to context, quite different from the 'question and answer tasks' pupils at Pine seemed so familiar with that it became almost impossible for teachers to challenge them without losing control over the classroom.

10.6 Discussion

When talking about segregated schools, we may think of big schools situated within giant cities' suburbs or between independent and municipality-owned schools (Bunar 2010). The Spruce and Pine schools were both quite small (approximately 350 pupils) compulsory public schools located in a middle-sized Swedish municipality on the west coast of Sweden. On a first comparison between the two schools, there were a number of similarities to be found: organisation, location, facilities, presentation on the web, etc. A closer study revealed a number of differences though. The chapter draws particular attention to differences related to pedagogical organisational principles and content of knowledge in the both studied classrooms. In my analysis, I look for assumptions and justifications implicitly or explicitly expressed by teachers and other actors to justify the choice of pedagogical organisational principles and content of knowledge at Pine and Spruce, respectively.

An overall comparison of Pine and Spruce showed a pronounced systematic differentiation between the two groups of pupils. While teachers at Spruce had focused on the highest grading criteria and future university studies, the teachers' main goal at Pine was that pupils should just pass. Pupils at Pine were offered a simplified and less challenging education compared to the pupils at Spruce. The pedagogical organisational principles and knowledge content were almost exclusively within the horizontal discourse, with tasks defined as direct and inextricable. Pupils at Pine were seldom offered advanced tasks in the sense that they required analytical skills and they were seldom (if ever) presented to academic preparatory content. The lessons were based on powerfully classified and framed, highly structured lectures organised round textbooks and questions. Tasks offered pupils at Pine were characterised as context bound, strongly rooted in the material base, and they were bound to reproduce the content of knowledge teachers had gone through or what they had read in textbooks, an atomistic view of knowledge. While the tasks almost exclusively consisted of a horizontal discourse, it lacked potential for application and by that it did not challenge pupils to think and discuss the unthinkable.[2] Pupils at Pine were simply not offered to challenge the discursive gap (Bernstein 2000), which in turn leaves them unprepared to develop skills like analysing, interpreting and evaluating, skills called for in the public debate (see also Player-Koro 2011).

The pedagogical organisational principles at Pine stood in stark contrast to what was offered to pupils at Spruce. Both organisational principles as well as content of knowledge were mainly based within the vertical discourse. This kind of knowledge has strength through its indirect connection to the material base, which in turn creates room for manoeuvre to develop new concepts and principles (Bernstein 2000). Pupils at Spruce were constantly trained for analysing, evaluating and arguing. With this content, they were also given significant possibilities to challenge the 'discursive gap' (Bernstein 2000) and prepare themselves for an active citizenship.

In reality different rating scales were used within the two classes. Students at Spruce were expected to demonstrate analytical as well as interpretative skills already for pass, while students at Pine were asked for context-bound abilities such as 'describing' and 'doing'. At Spruce, teachers seldom gave just a pass; the effort was rather to make all pupils receive higher grades, while at Pine the main goal was to get all to pass. One teacher even claimed that 'pupils at Pine were not interested and that there were no candidates for the highest grades'.

The differentiation was legitimised by teachers' (and pupils') beliefs, expectations and demands in the way students were talked about as 'strong' or 'weak', a pronounced superior educational ideology within the institution. This legitimises an activity based on different demands and expectations (Beach 1999; Dovemark 2004a, b; Beach and Dovemark 2007). It is in this sense that cultural production, cultural reproduction and social reproduction are connected (Willis 1981). By identifying the pupils as 'strong' or 'weak' in relation to their social and cultural capital, those children who had a second site of acquisition (their families) to

[2] Exceptions from these patterns are discussed in Dovemark (2010).

interpret regulations and codes in order to understand the educational context were those who were likely to succeed (see also, e.g. Swedish National Agency for Education 2009).

10.7 Conclusions

The reported study notes that the Swedish school is far from equal even though it is organised as a coherent system. All children are not offered the same chances. Historically there has always been an unequal social distribution of knowledge amongst different social classes. Already in the early 1970s, Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) posed the fact that the education system contributes to a breakdown in manual and intellectual work (see also Bourdieu 1981). This was clearly done at Spruce and Pine. My point in this chapter is to point to the fact that working class and lower officials' children are destined to vocational training long before they so-called choose them (Dovemark 2012), due to the way teaching processes and organisational principles are devised within different educational practices. The question is if the unequal distribution of knowledge has been intensified through the possibility of freedom of choice? According to the teachers in my study, the differences between schools had increased when schools became more homogenous and it seems to be more and more important what school children and their parents choose. Thus, the current study confirms the recently published reports about increased segregation and demolition of equality in Swedish schools (Lindgren 2012; Swedish National Agency for Education 2012; Teachers' Association 2012).

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Chapter 11
Nordic Upper Secondary School: Regular and Irregular Programmes – Or Just One Irregular School for All?

Anne Nevøy, Annette Rasmussen, Stein Erik Ohna, and Thomas Barow

11.1 Introduction

The Nordic countries hold a strong belief in education as a means of creating democracy, and they share a strong commitment to equality, social justice and inclusion. In this regard, the countries embody resembling traits of an egalitarian school system (Wiborg 2004). The endeavours towards an inclusive School for All have been long-lasting, as noted in the country reports, and gradually the vision of a comprehensive School for All students has widened its range and applies at present to primary, lower secondary and upper secondary school.

The key topic of this chapter is the enactment of the inclusive vision of a School for All in upper secondary education and training in Denmark, Norway and Sweden. In these three countries, it has become apparent that the ambition to include all students, regardless of place of residence, social background, gender, ethnicity, ability and attainment, faces major challenges. Particularly the high number of students leaving school with no formal qualifications raises political and public concerns. As a response to this problem, commonly addressed as dropout (Bäckmann et al. 2011; Markussen 2010), the three countries issue a range of alternative and targeted programmes. These programmes are in various degrees connected to and disconnected from the regular upper secondary programmes, and they form a band of special or irregular programmes.

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Our aim is to bring a selection of these irregular programmes to the fore through an analysis in which focus is on the educational purposes of the programmes and how they play into the construction of a School for All. The research questions we seek to answer are:

- What irregular programmes are introduced to meet and reduce the dropout problem?
- How do the educational purposes of these programmes play into the construction of a school all?

The context of this investigation encompasses an outline of the theoretical framework, which concentrates on the notions of *inclusive education* and *purpose of education*, and of upper secondary school and the dropout situation in the three countries. Here we set the scene for the subsequent case presentations of irregular programmes in Denmark, Norway and Sweden. We will not provide a broad outline of measures to prevent dropout. Rather, we will report on specific national cases of irregular programmes. These programmes differ in terms of entry procedures, structures, contents and goals. What they have in common, however, is a distinct target group. The students are characterised by a number of 'soft categories': 'low academic attainment', 'lack of motivation' and 'high levels of absenteeism'. This being the common ground, the chosen cases are *Schools of Production* as an individually planned education programme in Denmark, *Alternative strand of courses with extended workplace practice* in Norway and (the Individual programme and) *the Introduction programme* in Sweden. Through a cross-case reading, the final discussion returns to the questions of the educational purposes of the programmes and how these programmes contribute to an upper secondary School for All.

11.2 Theoretical Framework

11.2.1 Inclusive Upper Secondary Education: Through Irregular Schools?

> … many young people leave school with no worthwhile qualifications, others are placed in various forms of special provision away from mainstream educational experiences, and some simply chose to drop out since the lessons seem irrelevant to their lives (Ainscow and Miles 2008:16).

Faced with such challenges, the authors argue that there is evidence of an increased interest in the idea of inclusive education. However, the term inclusive education is characterised by confusion and conceived in a myriad of ways. Within and across countries interpretations range from inclusion concerned with disability and 'special educational needs', with groups vulnerable to exclusion, to the promotion of a school and education for all. Pertinent to the ambition of an upper secondary School for All, this investigation builds upon the latter conception which advocates that (1) inclusion is concerned with all students; (2) it is focused on presence, participation and achievement; (3) inclusion and exclusion are linked together, so that inclusion involves the

active combating of exclusion; and (4) inclusion is seen as a never-ending process (Ainscow and Miles 2008:20). What, then, does this inclusive turn imply for education policies and practices?

Roger Slee (2011:ix) asserts that inclusive education is a project of ongoing political struggle and cultural change in which the crux is a reconsideration of public education, its foundation and future. In this respect, the future of inclusive education is a continuation of the promotion of a School for All, continually reducing barriers to participation and learning and affirming the rights of all to access, participation and success in education. This task, according to Slee, involves a widening of the scope of educational facilities, thus creating 'the irregular school'. The bottom line of this argument refers to 'the regular school' and how this term is frequently offered as the counterpoint to the term 'special school', and hence marks a clear distinction between the regular and the irregular, i.e. the special. Slee contends this distinction in which some students are offered a subordinate outsider position, and he challenges the policies and practices of ascending and descending values to different students.

In the following we draw on Slee's ideas and investigate how the special or irregular programmes at upper secondary level intersect with the distinction between the regular and the special. Do the irregular programmes perpetuate and harden social division – or do they have a say in the construction of an irregular upper secondary school?

Of particular importance to this investigation, Slee (2011:42) recommends research to reframe and to search for alternative visions of the purpose, character and practice of schooling and to ask provocative questions as to what exclusion is, who is in and who is out, how this happens and inclusion into what?

11.2.2 What, Then, Is the Purpose of Education?

Biesta (2010:2) reminds us that education, be it in the form of schooling, workplace learning or vocational training, is by its very nature a process with direction and purpose. Still, what these processes aim to achieve are difficult and contentious questions. Moreover, the current neo-liberal policy imperatives of standards, accountability and utility maximisation close off debate about educational values and goals (Brantlinger 2006; Skrtic and McCall 2010; Biesta 2010).

Biesta (2009) contests the rise of the measurement culture in education and the ways in which market thinking and competition, instrumentality and standardisation, managerialism and technical practice, have become the order of the day. Contrary to this narrow conceptualisation, he enjoins educational research to re-engage with questions concerning what constitutes good education and what are the aims and purposes of education.

Educational processes and practices generally serve three purposes, he maintains, namely, qualification, socialisation and subjectification. Composed on this closely connected threefold, he proposes an analytical device to explore in what ways educational processes and practices have an impact. Clearly, a major role of education lies in the qualification of students, young people and adults: 'It lies in providing them

with the knowledge, skills and understanding and often also with the dispositions and forms of judgment that allow them to 'do something' – a 'doing' which can range from the very specific […] to the much more general […]' (Biesta 2009:40). Accordingly, qualification is not restricted to preparation for working life. Providing students with knowledge, skills and understandings is significant for other aspects of life (ibid.), for instance, for citizenship and for cultural literacy in general.

Socialisation is about how we, through education, become members of particular social, cultural and political 'orders'. Through its socialising function education inserts individuals into existing ways of doing and being, and in this way education plays an important role in the continuation of culture and tradition, both with regard to its desirable and its undesirable aspects (Biesta 2010).

Subjectification refers to the process of becoming a subject, or an individual, and to the quality, or types of subjectification made possible as a result of particular educational arrangements and configurations (Biesta 2009, 2010). He underlines that '[…] any education worthy of its name should always contribute to processes of subjectification that allow those being educated to become more autonomous and independent in their thinking and acting' (Biesta 2009:41). Moreover, subjectification articulates that being and becoming a subject is thoroughly interactional and social and also thoroughly ethical and political (Biesta 2010:129), and therefore discussions about good education are closely connected with the idea of social justice and democracy (Biesta 2010:92).

When considering the domain of 'irregular programmes', the three purposes of education invoke several provocative questions. What processes or conditions do the irregular programmes offer in terms of qualification, socialisation and subjectification – and how do these processes play into the democratic idea of inclusive education?

11.2.3 Upper Secondary School and Dropout

Notwithstanding the distinct similarities across educational systems in the Nordic countries, substantial differences are apparent at upper secondary school level. At the level of educational policy, governments assert a shared set of objectives. Upper secondary school is to produce the human capital needed by the labour market and hence to secure continued production, efficiency and competitiveness. In addition, governments aim at facilitating conditions for universal access and equal educational opportunities. It is vital that all students, regardless of social origins, gender, culture, ethnicity and attainments, are equally entitled to pursue their educational plans. Differences between the countries emerge when it comes to school structure, access requirements and how the notion of dropout is defined and addressed.

According to Markussen (2010:12), the overall structure of upper secondary education in Sweden, Denmark and Norway constitutes a continuum from an integrated one track model in Sweden to the Danish two track model. In Sweden upper secondary school encloses a variety of programmes of 3-year duration, in which the 'old' classical grammar schools and the 'new' vocational educational training (VET) are combined within a single institution, termed 'the National Programme'.

The Danish upper secondary education, termed 'Youth Education', comprises two tracks, vocational and academic. The vocational track (VET) includes several independent programmes, lasting between 1.5 and 5.5 years, in which students are qualified for different trade certificates (Wiborg and Cort 2008). The academic track, normally of 3-year duration, qualifies for higher education. Positioned in-between these two, the Norwegian model may be described as semi-integrated. Here upper secondary education and training encompasses 12 programmes, three provide academic qualifications for higher education and nine vocational qualifications. The general academic programmes are of 3-year duration, whilst the vocational education and training programmes in most cases follow a two-plus-two-year structure, 2 years of school-based education and training followed by 2 years of apprenticeship provided by an enterprise or public institution.

Sweden, Denmark and Norway each regulates access to upper secondary education differently. In the Swedish structure, access to the regular 'National Programme' requires passed exams at lower secondary level in a number of subjects. Students who fail to meet this requirement are offered a range of upper secondary introduction programmes. In contrast to this selective access regulation, the Danish and Norwegian system do not require passed exams or grades at lower secondary level. Still, students with low academic attainments are subjected to professional/expert assessment which might conclude with transference to an irregular programme.

In all three school systems, the majority of every lower secondary education completion cohort enters upper secondary education. However, only 60–80 % of the cohort completes upper secondary education. This situation has made the issue of school dropout a common concern.

Across European countries there seems to be an understanding of dropout as signifying a person 'who is no longer at school and does not hold an upper secondary qualification' (Lamb and Markussen 2011:5). According to this definition, the term school incorporates both school-based education and workplace training. And this definition is often applied by the European Union to measure and report statistical rates of early school leaving (ibid.). Behind this general consensus, considerable bewilderment remains about how to measure and compare dropout. This is partly caused by the fact that across nations and educational systems, upper secondary education programmes have different durations, different standards and types of differentiated certifications and qualifications, and partly by registration difficulties.

11.3 Irregular Programmes to Meet and Reduce Dropout

11.3.1 Denmark: Schools of Production

Upper secondary education in Denmark has retained a system of two distinct sectors, the vocational and the academic, gymnasium sector (Rasmussen 2002). Approximately 30 % of every lower secondary education completion cohort enters the VET track, whilst 55 % enters the academic (Wiborg and Cort 2008). Both tracks provide access to tertiary-level, higher education programmes, depending on

the programmes' specific entry requirements. At the political level, the goal is that 95 % of every youth cohort will complete a programme of upper secondary education and training.

Due to this 95 % objective, overall efforts against dropout have been strengthened. Schools are required to prepare plans of action with goals and strategies instrumental to increase completion in which guidance, mentoring and teacher-student contact are emphasised (Danish Ministry of Education 2010:13). These measures apply especially to VET programmes, where the highest dropout rates are found.

When young people leave upper secondary education or they are considered not ready for a regular programme, they might be guided into an irregular or so-called individually planned education programme (UddannelsesGuiden 2012). Two options are available: Schools of Production and Youth Education Adapted for Young People with Special Needs.[1] Here we will focus on Schools of Production.

At Schools of Production young people may try out various practical subjects and activities, and they may follow classes in general school subjects at lower secondary level. With reference to content and available experiences, structure and aims, the Schools of Production are said to represent a 'third way of education' (Produktionsskoleforeningen 2007). This implies 'education, neither academic, nor vocational but (a personalized) education tailored to students who are not motivated for the traditional types of education' (ibid.). In general, the individual is entitled to attend the programme for a maximum of one year.

The first Schools of Production in Denmark were established in 1978, and by 1985 the number of schools had increased to 57 (Clemmensen et al. 2000). The first Schools of Production enactment, from 1978, stipulated that the schools were to provide combined teaching and production programmes for 'young people out of work' to improve their opportunities of entering a qualifying education or the labour market. In later revisions of the Schools of Production Act (from 1995 onwards), the target group is changed from young people out of work to young people under 25 who have not completed an upper secondary education. The target group is thus altered from youth in lack of employment to youth in lack of education. The number of schools peaked in the late 1990s and reached about 110 (Clemmensen et al. 2000). Since then there has been a steady decrease to the present number of about 80, which are distributed all over the country.

The recent Act on Schools of Production, issued in 2010, directly specifies the target group of production schools as young people who have not yet initiated, have not completed or have interrupted an upper secondary education. Since 2005 the schools are required only to assign applicants who have been assessed, identified and classified within the specific target group by the local Youth Guidance Centres (at the municipality level), and who accordingly is entitled to a state grant. Further, the law postulates that the aim of the programme is threefolded: to contribute to the personal development of the participants, to improve their opportunities for entering

[1] This is a 3-year special programme for young people who have cognitive and physical disabilities which was established in 2007. Due to its novelty the number of participants is still very limited and there is only a preliminary evaluation of this programme (Jørgensen 2010:50).

the labour market and to contribute to the development of their interest in and ability of active participation in a democratic society. In addition, the law asserts that the programme will prepare socially strained youth for future jobs and education by offering an integration of educational, social and work experiences. In consequence, the programme is required to assure the students' qualifications for both working life and citizenship. However, the schools do not award formally recognised degrees or apply work examinations.

In practice, production is meant to be the entrance to education, and work is to be carried out in an educational setting. For this to function, the work has to be experienced as meaningful and realistic. To this effect, the programmes have to produce various goods and services, preferably tradable on the market. The centre of every school is the workshop, where the students learn through practical work in co-operation with a teacher, who as a rule is a skilled craftsman. The schools usually have a wide range of workshops at their disposal, ranging from traditional workshops of carpentry and metalwork to media workshops and theatre workshops (Pless 2009; Rasmussen and Rasmussen 2009). To make the young people feel responsible for the production, they participate in all aspects from decision-making to commercial dealings.

At the Schools of Production, individual guidance and counselling are essential (UddannelsesGuiden 2012). The participants are required to develop a plan over future choices of work or education, and to support reflections and determinations they are offered daily individual guidance. The consideration of the particular interests and needs of each individual is a highly valued aspect of the content of the programmes. To the students, however, being subjected to close supervision might be conceived as being under constant surveillance and thus restricting autonomy and independence.

In Table 11.1, we present figures on student progression after completing Schools of Production, for the years 2007, 2008 and 2009:

Table 11.1 Student progression after completing Schools of Production

Year of completion/followed by	2007	2008	2009
Regular upper secondary education	29.4 %	31.1 %	36.5 %
Folk high schools[a]	1.6 %	1.6 %	1.3 %
Other education activities	4.4 %	4.9 %	4.9 %
Regular employment	23.3 %	20.2 %	11.7 %
Subsidised employment	2.1 %	2.2 %	2.4 %
Unemployment	18.0 %	17.7 %	19.5 %
Other/dropout[b]	9.3 %	22.3 %	23.7 %
Unknown	11.9 %	0.0 %	0.0 %
Total	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %
Number of participants	**8,851**	**9,500**	**10,261**

Reference: Uni*C Statistics and Analysis (2010)

[a]The Danish folk high school is a boarding school offering non-formal adult education. Regularly, students are between 18 and 24 years old and duration is 4 months. There are no academic access requirements and no exams. A diploma conferring attendance is issued upon completion

[b]The term 'other' refers to a spectrum, for example, military service, maternity leave or foreign exchange

As shown in Table11.1, the majority (56.8 %) of the participants that completed in 2009 went on to regular education, to other types of education or to regular or subsidised employment. The majority of this group (36.5 %) went on to regular education, which represented an increase compared to the two previous years, whereas progression to regular employment (11.7 %) saw a decrease compared to earlier.

In 2010, yet another amendment to the law was passed to narrow the definition of the target group. With this amendment young people that have interrupted a youth education are not automatically eligible for admission to a School of Production. Some students might just leave one regular programme to enter another (Folketingstidende 2010). However, in addition to the previous criteria for access, the individual must demonstrate specific needs for developing both personal skills and 'readiness for education'. Aptly, the purpose of the School of Production is to strengthen the personal development of the participants and to improve possibilities for entering the regular educational system and to carry out a vocational upper secondary education (ibid.).

When the target group is defined by its marginalisation and in practice narrowed, the aims of the programmes might become harder to maintain. Within this segregated group, delimited from the diversity of working life and society, the schools may not provide an ideal laboratory for individuals to develop and prosper. The participants' fairly short stay could also constitute a hindrance, especially when the target group is increasingly characterised by lack of attainment, personal development and readiness for education: 1 year may not be sufficient to promote participation in regular upper secondary education in which access and participation is premised on the norm of normality.

11.3.2 Norway: Alternative Strand of Courses with Extended Workplace Practice

'The School for All' has been a flagship of the Norwegian school system, and the mid-1990s was considered its peak of success when Reform-94 gave all students a statutory right to a minimum of 3 years of upper secondary education and training free of charge (Welle-Strand and Tjeldvoll 2002:673). The reform reinforced integration between the general academic track and the vocational track, and thus strengthened the scholarly aspect of vocational education and training (Mjelde 2008). For students expected to fail under the higher academic achievement standards, counties across the country provide alternative pathways which in different degrees are associated with regular programmes, notably within the vocational track. Generally, this mosaic of irregular programmes, tailored to students who are not keeping pace, or drop out, provides a combination of school-based education and workplace training. A key example is 'Alternative strand of courses with

extended workplace practice'. This programme intends to retain students in school, to increase their participation and progression and to assign recognised basic competencies through adapted vocational education and training (Hernes 2010). In the following we will draw on a study of this particular programme (Ohna and Bruin 2010; Bruin and Ohna 2012).

The Norwegian government's all-inclusive policy holds that 'Education is regarded as means of promoting equity, and for reducing inequalities, poverty and other forms of marginalisation' (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research 2008:6). Instrumental to this end, the Education Act affirms a universal right to upper secondary education based on the principle of adapted education which holds that 'Education shall be adapted to the abilities and aptitudes of the individual pupil, apprentice and training candidate' (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research 1998, section 1(3)). Furthermore, students who either do not or are unable to benefit satisfactorily from regular education have the right to special education (ibid. section 5(1)). Accordingly, the alternative courses with extended workplace practice are firmly positioned within the special education continuum. Student assignment is thus regulated by expert assessments by the Educational Psychological (Counselling) Service. The Act further requires individual subject curricula (an individual education plan, IEP) of decisions concerning contents and aims and pedagogical and didactical adaptations (ibid.). Pertinent to this legal framework, the alternative courses are associated with, yet deviated from, the national curriculum and the two-plus-two-year structure of the regular vocational education and training programmes. Upon completion, or when leaving the course, students are awarded a vocational training certificate, termed Documented partial competence (formerly called Competence at a lower level). This certificate allows students credits for the accomplished education and training.

How the courses operate in practice, how they are designed and carried out is a matter for the counties. School authorities and the individual schools use their ever-increasing discretionary space to develop their distinct alternative courses. The study of Alternative strand of courses with extended workplace practice drawn on in this case presentation is conducted in a county held to exemplify 'Norway in a nutshell' due to its 10 % estimate on any demographic parameter. In 2009 when the project started, alternative courses were offered at 13 of the county's 26 upper secondary schools, and these courses were linked to six of the nine regular vocational education and training programmes. The total number of students attending was 214, and about half of the student body was in their first year.

According to regional policy documents (RF 2009), the alternative courses aim at qualifying students for participation in the regular labour market as skilled or unskilled labourers or for work in sheltered workshops. The course may also qualify for entering regular programmes in upper secondary education and for future work. Further, it is stated that the courses are tailored to students who learn through practical work and who are in need of additional support beyond what is offered in regular classes. More specifically, the target group is formally designated in terms

of difficulties related to learning and social functioning (Vilbli.no 2012). At the county and school level, the students' special needs and how they disqualify for regular programmes are reflected in an extensive use of special needs labels, such as 'complex learning difficulties', 'social and emotional problems' and 'specific subject difficulties'.

To accommodate adapted education and training, the courses are organised in groups with a reduced number of students, eight at the maximum. Some courses are located at the school premises, others take place outside. Moreover, the courses are generously funded by the county administration. Per student this amounts to about three times the resources spent on regular classes.

According to the schools' account of curricular content and activities, they value their freedom to design the courses. There is widespread agreement that local autonomy and flexibility are necessary conditions for the courses' adaptability and responsiveness both to the regional labour market and to the students' situation. Nevertheless, it is apparent that school-based learning predominates. Emphasis is on developing the students' general social competence, on general school subjects and on various practical/theoretical lessons, such as drivers' education, HSE[2] and computer competency. Albeit the workplace is recognised as a central site for learning, the vocational elements are mainly located at the schools, in workshops and school-based enterprises. The schools emphasise their efforts to enable the students for workplace training, and as a result few students are offered workplace placement or training agreements in firms. This relegation of workplace training might suggest devaluation of course elements involving knowledge and skills necessary to qualify for specific jobs. The schools, however, point at reluctance on the part of workplaces. Lack of motivation and enabling structures constitute a hurdle when designing the courses: 'it's hard to find adequate work placement', 'firms are not interested' and 'employers are reluctant to take on any responsibility for the students' learning needs'. Either way, when it comes to workplace training, the study indicates a chasm between what is promised by the official course description and what is actually provided.

Both the county authorities and the schools strongly articulate the value of the alternative courses. The predominating justification is that the courses prevent students from leaving school. To retain students in schools trumps any consideration about vocational qualification: 'we do whatever it takes to keep the students in school', and 'we keep students in school and out of prison'. The students attending value the courses as well, albeit on different grounds. Their narratives underline processes of ascertainment; of their possibilities for learning, talents and interests; and of how experiences of being capable and competent feed into a new sense of self.

The schools' self-reporting maintains that less than 5 % of the students leave the courses. A follow-up of the students who started in 2009 provides a rather different picture. Of the 120 who started in 2009, one third has left upper secondary school 3 years later, one third has transferred to regular programmes and the remaining one

[2] Health, Security, Safety and Environment.

third is still in the programme. Amongst the transferee to regular programmes one third left upper secondary within the subsequent year. This situation seems to be largely ignored by county officials and schools.

At the national level the alternative courses are contested and initiatives to reduce both the number of courses and students have been taken. Conversely, at the county level the number of courses and students attending has increased over the last years. Nevertheless, some schools question the value of the courses: 'Our students are reluctant to be associated with the alterative course – and this makes me wonder…. It is too easy to push students who don't 'function' in regular classes into the alternative courses. And these courses resemble a form of 'After school programme'. It's about removing some students from regular classes because they are a nuisance. Our students are the product of an inadequate compulsory school. Some of them finishes and enters into nothing'.

Evidently, the study of the Alternative strand of courses with extended workplace practice indicates a growing tension between the Norwegian political ideal of 'an inclusive upper secondary School for All' and the reality of programme differentiation, segregation and exclusion.

11.3.3 Sweden: Introduction Programmes

The reform of upper secondary school in Sweden included a shift in the structure of the irregular programmes. Since the early 1990s, the so-called *Individual programme* with a maximum duration of 3 years was the only alternative for students who failed to reach the required educational goals at the end of lower secondary level. In 2011, the Individual programme was replaced by five *Introduction programmes*, regulated in chapter 17 of the Swedish school law (SFS 2010:800). Due to the decentralised school system in Sweden, the actual organisation of these programmes may vary between the municipalities.

However, for both the Individual programme and the Introduction programmes, the prerequisite for enrolment is failure to fulfil the goals and pass the exams at lower secondary school. For entering the Individual programme, failure in the main subjects Swedish, Mathematics and English was the prerequisite. In the context of the new education policy, the eligible requirements for attending regular upper secondary education and training, 'the National Programme', were stipulated stricter. Today, for entering vocational programmes students have to pass 8 subjects, and for entering college preparatory programmes passing in 12 subjects is required. In the years prior to 2011, about 12 % of Swedish students did not meet these requirements. Between 8 and 9 % attended the Individual programme.

The former Individual programme was not synonymous with special needs support. Many of its participants, however, had received such help in primary school. The aim of this programme was to enable students for transition into a regular national programme. Just as its predecessor, today's Introduction programmes do not lead to graduation. As a more tailor-made education approach, they facilitate

access into and participation in a national programme or transition to employment. The Swedish National Agency of Education summarises the aims of the new programmes as follows:

The introduction programmes will give students who are not eligible for a national programme an individually adapted education, which satisfies students' different educational needs and provides adequate educational routes. The introductory programmes will lead to a firm ground on the labour market and provide a foundation, as good as possible for further education (Skolverket 2012a:30). Both students' qualification and socialisation are stressed more firmly in the goals affirmed by the new Introduction programmes.

Without questioning the upper secondary school's selection mechanism, the five Introduction programmes will result in a greater organisational differentiation of students. At present it is unclear how the homogenisation of learners – as an attempt to reduce complexity in the regular upper secondary classroom – will affect the teachers' willingness and ability to apply pedagogical differentiation.

The five Introduction programmes are (Utbildningsinfo.se & Skolverket 2011):

- Preparatory Course: This course is for students who wish to attend a national programme but lack one or several passes in the necessary basic subjects […].
- Programme-Oriented Individual Selection – PRIV: This is for students who wish to attend a vocational programme but lack passes in one or several of the basic subjects necessary […].
- Vocational Introduction: This course is for students who wish to attend a vocational programme but do not have the sufficient pass grades in basic subjects to qualify for PRIV or for a vocational programme […].
- Individual Alternative: Individual Alternative is for students who would like a course in order to gain employment or to be able to study at upper secondary school. The student has none or almost none of the pass grades necessary to attend a national programme […].
- Language Introduction: For students who recently have arrived in Sweden, and who have none of the passing grades necessary to attend a national programme and need to learn Swedish […].

In the school year 2011–2012, almost 18 % of all first year's upper secondary school students attended an Introduction programme. This high proportion can be seen as a consequence of the new entry requirements for the regular national programmes. The largest Introduction programmes are Language Introduction (7,600 students) and Individual Alternative (5,500 students). In Vocational Introduction some 3,400 students are registered, 3,100 are in PRIV and 2,800 in the Preparatory Courses. About 1,000 young people were in nonspecified Introduction programmes. Moreover, based on statistics of the Swedish National Agency of Education (Skolverket 2012b), a correlation can be seen between the parents' educational background and the students' enrolment in an Introduction programme. Students whose parents have primary education only are overrepresented in these programmes. The same applies to students with migration background. Due to the novelty of the Introduction programmes, and apart from the above mentioned key

figures, no research on the programmes has been carried out. However, some figures on effect of the former Individual programme are known. In 2005, 44 % of the students managed to enter a regular national programme after one year (Skolverket 2007:4). Of this group, about 20 % graduated from upper secondary school 4 years later. In essence, less than 10 % of the Individual programme cohort graduated from upper secondary education.

In the last decade a number of scholars have carried out qualitative research on the Individual programme. The main focus has been on the young peoples' perception of school and education. Henriksson (2004) describes the students' experience of failure and dropout from school. The narratives reflect feelings of disillusion, shame, exclusion, low self-confidence and loneliness; the young people experienced meaninglessness and boredom. In a longitudinal study Hugo (2007) analysed the changes within the 3-year span of the Individual programme. At the beginning, based on frustrating school experiences, the students showed a negative attitude to education. Hugo identified two main factors for a change towards meaningfulness: first, the teachers' perspective on their students and the interpersonal relations between the two; second, the students' experiences of relevant adapted education. Changes within the duration of the Individual programme are also analysed in a study by Johansson (2009). Depending on the conditions and traditions at the schools, she identified how students create their identity between adaption and resistance and in relation to the educational demands. Johansson maintains that the prevalence of special support was of relevance, as well as gender, social background and ethnicity. The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions has recently published a report on the best practice to reduce dropout in upper secondary education (SKL 2012). Based on interviews the study identifies five key factors to reduce dropout: 'good encounter', 'clear set goals and emphasis on results', 'appropriate programme', 'quality through co-operation and participation' and 'capacity to assess and to meet the needs of the students'. However, best practice research can be inspiring, but its limitation becomes obvious when transfer of results to another context is intended (Biesta 2007).

There is an obvious call for research on the reformed irregular programme in Sweden, especially on how the Introduction programmes affect the opportunities of young people to access and participate in a national programme or in the labour market. Moreover, it is of relevance to examine the effects on the students' self-consciousness, study motivation and co-operation competencies. Last, but not least, research is needed on what consequences inclusive approaches in primary and lower secondary schools will have on upper secondary education (Persson and Persson 2012).

11.4 Discussion

There is an ingrained paradox in the intent to prevent upper secondary school dropout by means of irregular programmes. In terms of the official definition, dropout denotes a person 'who is no longer at school and does not hold an upper secondary

qualification'. Students attending an irregular programme are at school; nevertheless, the moment they complete they do not hold an upper secondary qualification. Indications of some students continuing in and graduating from regular upper secondary school do not obliterate the fact that too many do not. They enter the dropout category. As long as the students are in the programme, they are kept out of the official dropout statistics. They become part of it if they leave or, for most, upon completion. Hence, the intent to prevent dropout by offering irregular programmes is short termed, of low efficacy and dubious. Moreover, considering the target group, the programmes are in peril of sustaining a social reproduction cycle of unequal access to education and social inequality. This challenge of retaining low achieving students in school whilst at the same time avoiding initiatives that might increase inequalities is addressed by Lamb (2011). He contends that '[…] there is little use providing alternatives to deal with pupil diversity if the alternatives simply function to promote stratification by working as sources of relegation and offering only weak returns'.

So, what does a cross-case reading tell us about the irregular programmes and the Nordic School for All? First, following Biesta (2009) we address how the irregular programmes correspond to the purpose of education. What impact do the programmes have on conditions concerning students' qualification, socialisation and subjectification, and are the programmes worth sustaining? Secondly, how do the irregular programmes play into the construction of an upper secondary School for All?

11.4.1 The Purpose of Education in the Irregular Programmes

The educational purpose is clearly the Achilles heel of the irregular programmes; their qualifying roles become blurred and their averred conditions for socialisation and subjectification are encapsulated by structures and discourses of inferior students. Rather than offering conditions for a 'good education', it seems fair to ask if the irregular programmes constitute 'the moment when education retracts'.

As noted, Biesta does not restrict *the qualifying role of education* to formal qualifications enabling access to employment or higher levels of education. Knowledge, experiences, insights and world views imperative for citizenship and cultural literacy apply as well and intersect with conditions for socialisation and subjectification.

The irregular programmes analysed here share a surprising feature; they do not award any formally recognised upper secondary qualifications. The Introduction programmes, in Sweden, operate as gatekeeper to regular upper secondary education by awarding the required lower secondary qualifications. However, the irregular programmes emphasise ambitions of informal qualification in terms of future prospect to enter regular upper secondary programmes, extended work experiences and citizenship. With reference to entrance to regular upper secondary, the irregular programmes have limited impact. In-between one third and half of the students

enter a regular programme. Limited information is available on number of students graduating, but the reported figures, on the Norwegian programme and on the former Individual programme in Sweden, indicate that few do. The claimed currency of work experiences from school-based workshops is contested. The interconnecting trends of a vanishing youth labour marked and rising demands for formal qualifications indicate that such work experiences might not be highly recognised by future employers.

Possible enabling conditions for citizenship and cultural literacy direct attention to the irregular programmes' processes of *socialisation* and *subjectification*. These roles are highly valued by all programmes, in particular by the Danish Schools of Production and the Norwegian courses with extended workplace practice. In school workshops students and teachers co-operate in communities of practice, and the Schools of Production aver that these experiences repudiate the students' prior school experiences of being an outsider and of being subjected to examinations and stigmatising grading. On these matters, studies of the Norwegian and of the former Individual programme in Sweden are ambiguous. Teachers assert that at school, students are reluctant to be associated with the irregular programme in Norway, whilst the students' narratives bear testimony to how experiences of being capable and able build a different sense of self. This ambiguity is captured in findings on how students create their identity between adaptation and resistance in the Individual programme.

Through the lenses of Biesta's analytical framework, processes of socialisation and subjectification insert students into 'existing ways of doing and being'. As proven throughout the reported irregular programmes, they insert students into questionable, deeply ingrained traditions and practices of school segregation, of pathologising and stigmatising student differences and of educationally impoverishing and short-changing those considered different. These structures are not obliterated by the programmes ambitions to provide conditions for students' development, growth and improvement. Rather these 'undesirable structures' of the Nordic School for All constitute the framework for critical analyses of the programmes educational worth.

11.4.2 From Irregular Programmes to Irregular Schools for All?

The irregular programmes in Denmark, Norway and Sweden have a common backdrop. In all three countries the governments promote inclusive educational policies and flag a School for All through primary, lower secondary and upper secondary school. Official policies emphasise high-quality education for all and equality of education opportunities and link schooling to ideas of social justice and democracy. The irregular programmes, however, show that more than one policy approach might be in operation. As noted by Tisdall and Riddell (2006), whilst governments advocate inclusive education, policy approaches might in fact create new quilts of

inclusive and exclusive policies and practices, which may not meet the obligations of a School for All.

Albeit the School for All is an ambitious vision intrinsically linked to societal democratisation, a mixture of vested interests might undermine and jeopardise democratic equality. As noted in the introduction, contemporary neo-liberal tendencies call upon schools to raise standards for economic purposes. The order of the day articulated in national curricula is that competition in the global knowledge economy requires knowledgeable citizens, which in turn requires schools to put in place rigorous quality agendas and vigilant specifications and monitoring of standards through regular testing of students (Gewirtz 2000). Gewirtz asserts that these notions of quality and quality control rest on a narrow, economistic instrumentality which marginalises broader, more humanistic conceptions of quality. Schools are required to mirror the stratified and unequal structure of the market economy, and issues of equality and social justice are effectively downplayed (Gewirtz 2000; Skrtic and McCall 2010).

Following the irregular programmes in Denmark, Norway and Sweden, these mechanisms become apparent. Students who are failing under the higher standards are efficiently removed from regular programmes and channelled into irregular programmes of little or no value.

In Denmark access to upper secondary school, to a 'youth education', is non-selective. In a strongly differentiated upper secondary structure, students who allegedly need to 'develop their personal skills', need to mature or become 'ready for education' are guided into the School of Production. This programme has a maximum duration of 1 year and it invites students into the commercial landscape of production. As evidenced by statistical figures, about half of the students attending continues in regular education (upper secondary school or another educational activity), in regular or subsidised employment, whilst the other half has left school. The programme provides no formal qualifications and is an impasse to labour market and educational qualifications.

In the Norwegian non-selective structure, all students have a statutory right to upper secondary education. Yet, some students are not considered 'able', 'motivated' or 'ready' for regular programmes, and based on expert assessments, placed in Alternative strand of courses with extended workplace practice, which may last for 3–4 years. In line with the applied special education legislation and discourses, the students deviate from the norm and are classified in terms of special needs labels. The programme in itself is a dead end. Under the banner of 'student-adapted education and training', the courses seem to represent low expectations, a watered-down curriculum and surprisingly few options for workplace experiences and training. As indicated by statistical figures, some students transfer to regular programmes but a larger number leave school. To most students, the programme's curriculum, activities and assessment procedures do not provide for any vocational qualifications or educational progress.

In the Swedish selective upper secondary school, students who do not meet the required number of passed exams in lower secondary education are offered upper

secondary Introduction programmes, which might last for 3 years. The main purpose of these programmes is for students to pass the required lower secondary exams. Research suggests that this does not apply for the majority of students attending. They are left with a programme which does not have any currency within regular upper secondary school or within the labour market.

Throughout the three programmes it becomes apparent that the Nordic universal upper secondary school systems which claim to provide inclusive, high-quality education to the plurality of the student population are failing an ever increasing number of students. Some students are considered unfit for regular programmes and put at a disadvantage in irregular programmes. Meanwhile, the status quo of the regular programmes are protected and secured. Students who challenge the golden standard of the regular and its structure, content and pedagogies are rendered 'not qualified' and excluded. Against this background it is fair to ask for whose benefit the irregular programmes are developed. Drawing on Skrtic and McCalls's (2010) institutional analysis of decoupling structures in schools, the irregular programmes seem to serve as legitimating devices for the regular programmes. These programmes curb pressures for change in the regular by signalling compliance with the inclusive mandate, when in fact, no change has occurred. Rather, 'new' irregular programmes are added which are decoupled from the regular; they require no reorganisation of the regular programmes and help to maintain both their stability and legitimacy. Through such mechanisms it is argued that the irregular programmes serve the privilege of the norm setting regular programmes. Students who fail these norms are rendered educationally impoverished. In the School for All, the distinction between the normal and the special and the regular and irregular is sustained and hardened.

A return to Slee's (2011) plea for an inclusive school, in which this distinction is transcended in an irregular school where student differences are recognised, acknowledged and worked with, clearly indicates that inclusive education is a project of ongoing political struggle. Moreover, this investigation of irregular programmes bears testimony to the claim that it is ultimately regular upper secondary education circumstances that must be significantly changed if all students are to have a fair, just, responsive and inclusive education (Brantlinger 2006).

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Chapter 12
Dropout in a School for All: Individual or Systemic Solutions?

Trond Buland and Ida Holth Mathiesen

12.1 Introduction

Norwegian school reforms during the 1990s established an upper secondary school for everyone, guaranteeing a place for all pupils. As a result, nearly 100 % of all pupils in lower secondary school progress to upper secondary school. Over time, local and central authorities realized that this success was only partial. The dropout rate is high; an average of around 30 % of those starting upper secondary school do not complete. Too many of those who do not finish upper secondary school later develop weak interactions in their working lives. During the same reform period, Norwegian local government went through a period of transformation and restructuring, characterized by new public management and a reduction of the number of people working with administration in municipalities and counties. As a part of this, local school authorities reduced their central staff and delegated more tasks to the individual schools.

Studies of various efforts and interventions to reduce the dropout rate show that this is a complex problem; heterogeneous tools are needed, and it is necessary to establish this work in primary and lower secondary schools. Local school authorities often lack resources, expertise, and personnel to implement effective strategies and local policies, therefore resulting in wide variations between schools and between municipalities/counties. How can the school authorities and the schools themselves work toward preventing dropouts in a school intended for all? What can we learn

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from various studies of strategies and interventions aimed at reducing early school leaving? This chapter will argue that local actors need to develop policies aimed at both individual students and at the school system, and that the local "school owners" have an important role to play in this. One important question related to this is how the political changes over the last decades, influenced by new public management, have affected local authorities' ability to play a central role in this work.

The ambitions of this chapter are to summarize some important findings from studies of various public strategies and interventions aimed at reducing early school leaving and increasing school attendance in Norway in the period from 2000 through the present day. The main empirical sources of this chapter are several studies carried out at SINTEF Technology and Society[1] (Buland et al. 2004, 2011; Havn and Buland 2007; Buland and Dahl 2008; Buland and Rønning 2010; Buland and Valenta 2010; Bungum et al. 2010). In addition to these studies, the chapter rests heavily on other academic studies and evaluations of dropouts and interventions to reduce dropouts in Norway and elsewhere.

12.2 Toward a Common School for All

At the end of World War II, Norway could, to some degree, be described as a semi-agrarian society. In 1946, approximately 30 % of the workforce was involved in agriculture, forestry, and fisheries. As late as 1962, approximately 19 % of the total workforce was occupied in the same industries, while the statistics in 1973 revealed 11 %.[2] There was still a considerable demand for unskilled labor in all industries, and a relatively small part of each generation continued their education beyond the 7 years of compulsory school. In 1957, approximately 10 % of the total number of students were enrolled in secondary general school, while 8.5 % were studying in colleges or universities. Today Norwegian pupils complete 10 years of primary and lower secondary school (1–10) and have the right to complete 3 years (4 years in vocational education and training) of upper secondary education. Approximately 70 % complete their upper secondary education. In the age group 19–24, 31 % were enrolled in higher education in 2010.[3] In the population as a whole, 28 % have completed higher education.[4]

The end of World War II marked the start of a rapid evolution, some would say a revolution. As part of the reconstruction of Norwegian society after 1945, the manufacturing industry and the public sector grew, and the primary industries gradually declined.

[1] SINTEF Technology and Society is a multidisciplinary research institute that operates in the fields of science and technology and the social sciences. The institute is based in Trondheim, Norway.

[2] By 1990, this percentage was reduced to 2.6 %. All based on figures from *Statistics Norway: Historisk statistikk 1994* and Ramsøy and Vaa (1975).

[3] http://www.ssb.no/utdanning_tema/. Downloaded 24.05.12.

[4] http://www.ssb.no/utniv/. Downloaded 24.05.12.

New technologies were introduced in all sectors of society, and the demand for formal skills and higher education expanded. At least for some part of Norway, this period marked the real transition from a semi-modern to a modern society. The credo of the epoch was economic growth through productivity, and this was combined with a strong belief in science as a tool for socioeconomic development. Inspired by the wartime experience, central politicians, especially in the Labor Party, wanted to use science as a foundation for social development (Telhaug and Mediås 2003, pp. 145–147). In the words of Vannevar Bush, scientific progress was seen as essential for all social progress, and "…without scientific progress no amount of achievement in other directions can insure our health, prosperity, and security as a nation in the modern world" (Bush 1945). If this vision were to become a reality, the school system had to change in a way that would enable more people to participate in and complete higher education.

At the same time, a more democratic distribution of higher education became a part of the Labor Party's postwar program. To open up the road to higher education for broader social groups was the aim of the ruling social democratic Labor Party, an aim shared by most of the political landscape. As a result of this general process of transition and modernization, Norwegian schools went through a series of transformations. A closer examination of the transformations of Norwegian primary school can be found in the country's report in this book. This section of the book will concentrate on the development of the upper secondary education in Norway.

In 1994, the "Reform 94" established the present system for upper secondary education by giving every pupil completing lower secondary education the right to 3 years of upper secondary education. The system also guaranteed every student the right to a place in one of three chosen study programs and established the present model of vocational education and training (VET). This model, known as the "2+2 model," consisted of 2 years in school and 2 years of apprenticeship in a firm. This model is based on cooperation between the public and private sectors, described by some as a corporatist inspired system (Markussen et al. 2011, p. 255).

In 2006 the government saw the need to reform the whole system of primary school, lower secondary school, and upper secondary education and training through the "Knowledge Promotion Reform" (Kunnskapsløftet). This involved no major changes in the structure of the system.

12.3 Governance of Education in Norway: Between Tradition and New Public Management

Norwegian local and regional authorities consist of two levels, the municipalities and the counties. There are at present 430 municipalities and 19 counties. The municipal sector is marked by many small units. The local economies vary, but a considerable amount of municipalities are struggling with tight budgets due to the falling population and tax income. Inspired by international trends in the organization and ideology of governance in the public sector, development in Norway since 1980 has been characterized by an increased degree of decentralization of local government.

Norwegian municipalities and counties have gone through a period of reorganization inspired by New public management. To reduce bureaucracy, the central staff has been reduced and authority has been delegated to the executing units, the service providers (Kleven and Hovik 1994). The process has also been characterized by a larger degree of target-oriented management. While the state defines the goals, the local authorities have been delegated more freedom of action when it comes to implementing policies in a local context. This model raises some clear requirements and challenges for local government. The municipalities must have the necessary scope for action, economically, politically, and administratively, to be able to establish the necessary priorities and make the appropriate decisions. This scope of action requires that the necessary skilled staff follow up and implement goals defined by the state.

Since the 1980s, a large number of municipalities were transformed into "two-level municipalities," with small or no formal centralized professional divisions. The traditional municipal education committees and chief municipal education officers have, to a large degree, been abolished. Expert knowledge, as a result, has been concentrated in the executing units, in our case the schools, with less specific competence in the administration.

Secondary education in Norway is administered as a three-level system of government: state, county, and municipalities. Municipalities are the smallest unit of local government in Norway and are responsible for primary education (through tenth grade). Upper secondary schools are owned and administered by the counties.

The system today can be described as a mixed system of governance, balancing centralized and decentralized administration and authority. The state defines the goals and provides basic funding, while local and regional authorities are by law responsible for the management and development of their own schools (Dalin 1995). Counties and municipalities are allowed to delegate tasks to the schools (Markussen et al. 2011). This decentralization can be said to have been increased by the reform in 2006, the "Knowledge Promotion Reform" (Kunnskapsløftet). The state has passed on authority to the local level and to the schools while simultaneously increasing the level of audits and inspections/supervision. While the traditional Norwegian system has been described as centralized, the Knowledge Promotion Reform marked a transition from process-oriented state control to a more goal-oriented system, giving a larger degree of local freedom as to how the national goals are to be reached. While the Knowledge Promotion Reform cannot be described as pure New public management, the reform still has some clear traits of this tradition. In addition, the reform has to exist in a local public sector clearly inspired by NPM for the last decades. This defines some of the framework and constraints of the reform and for the work in preventing dropouts in upper secondary school.

12.4 The Success That Faded

Sometime in the late 1990s, it became clear to many that the system did not work as intended in higher secondary education. Reform 94 abolished "the sorting school" and gave everybody the right to attend high school. One result of this has been that

close to 100 % of each age group continues from lower secondary school to higher secondary school. It is also a fact that far more students complete high school today than before the reform. However, the number of students that do not complete or pass the exams is disturbingly high. Although the numbers are uncertain and depend on where and when measuring is done, it appears that some study programs had and still maintain a dropout rate of over 30 % (Gjennomføringsbarometeret 2012).[5] It has become clear that several Western countries also face the same situation (Lamb et al. 2011; Orfield 2006). According to OECD's annual report (OECD 2012), 56.7 % of Norwegian students complete upper secondary school within 5 years. The average for the OECD countries is 69.8 %.

Several studies show a clear correlation between dropping out of high school and the risk of ending up in a marginalized position in relation to the workforce (Hernes 2010; St.meld. 16 (2006–2007)). Jobs requiring little or no requirements for formal qualifications are not as plentiful as before, and therefore the paved roads to the future for young people who do not complete upper secondary school are limited. Young people completing upper secondary school have a stronger connection to the labor marked than young people who drop out. As a group, people having completed upper secondary school work an average of 6 % more weekly hours than the comparable group of people not completing (Falch and Nyhus 2011). Research shows that young people who drop out of higher secondary education are more likely to become dependent on public support than those who complete secondary education (Hernes 2010). This is negative for the individual who risks entering a marginalized position, but this also has major consequences on a national economic level (Rasmussen et al. 2010; Falch et al. 2010, 2011). The overall cost of the present dropout rate has been computed to approximately NOK 5 billion a year[6] (Hernes 2010). Efforts to prevent young people from dropping out of high school are a very important element in the overall strategies to get more people into work and fewer on welfare, and there is great political interest in this issue.

12.5 Dropout and Marginalization

Marginalized groups have many characteristics, but they have all been through a marginalization process, which has gradually brought them into various degrees of social exclusion. Marginalization refers to the various stages between inclusion and exclusion in society. Inclusion refers to a person in steady employment with a stable connection to the community, while exclusion connotes that a person is situated permanently outside the labor market and has a weak connection to the community

[5] http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/KD/Kampanjer/NyGiv/Statistikkprosjektet/barometer2012_1.pdf *Gjennomføringsbarometeret* [The completion barometer] is a biannual statistical overview of the development regarding school completion in Norway, published since 2011, as a part of the NY Giv – New Possibilities strategy, led by the Ministry of Education and Research.

[6] In the USA, economists have estimated the lifetime economic losses from dropouts in a single high school graduating class at $335 billion (Rumberger 2011, p. 255).

(Stjernø and Saltkjel 2008). Indicators of marginalization can be prolonged unemployment, involuntary part-time employment, and unstable working and living conditions. Social marginalization will often involve a process in which a person moves from inclusion to exclusion (Halvorsen 2000; Brynner and Parsons 2002). Dropouts from upper secondary school can for some students be the starting point of the marginalization process that results in a weak attachment to the labor market and important social institutions and a reliance on public support and social welfare (Hernes 2010).

The relationship between completed upper secondary education and stable attachment to the labor market is relatively clear. Young people without upper secondary education are overrepresented in unemployment statistics. Various studies also show a correlation between the dropout/marginalization and health, livelihood, and other social challenges. The likelihood of receiving disability benefits is five times higher for those who do not complete high school as for those who complete, and the suicide rate is twice as high for those who drop out of school (Hernes 2010, p. 7). Various estimates of the social costs show great potential for profit if one manages to reduce the number of early dropouts.

12.6 Preventing Dropout: The Heterogeneous Art of the Possible

The following section will summarize some important findings and lessons learned from various Norwegian projects and interventions aimed at reducing the dropout rate in upper secondary schools. This presentation will serve as examples of interventions and knowledge that should be at the core of further work in this area. Conditions for success, especially in regard to the role of the school owners, i.e., local school authorities in the age of neoliberalism, will also be discussed.

12.6.1 Dropouts: No Single Cause

One important finding from practical work on dropout reduction and the studies of such interventions is that it is difficult to find one single cause for dropping out of school. Early school leaving is a result of the interplay of multiple different factors connected to the individual student and to the system. To quote a study of dropouts in the USA, “It is virtually impossible to demonstrate a causal connection between any single factor and the decision to quit school” (Rumberger 2006a, p. 132).

Some informants have emphasized that consciousness-raising of those involved is possibly the most important step in all interventions in this field. “It doesn’t matter what you do, as long as you do something” was the conclusion of one of the actors involved in the first national Norwegian strategy against early school leaving (Havn and Buland 2007). His point was that the important step was to make all actors in school accept and realize that dropouts are a problem, not a solution to a

problem, in the sense that dropouts tend to reduce the number of students perceived as problems in the learning environment. When that important step is made, effects are likely to follow from a wide spectrum of interventions.

The same conclusion is made by a meta-study of interventions to increase school attendance, made at Loyola University in Chicago:

> Because interventions did result in a moderate effect on student attendance, it is recommended that practitioners and policy makers do take steps and intervene with students who are exhibiting problematic absenteeism/truancy. Doing something is better than doing nothing. (Maynard et al. 2011, p. a5)

12.6.2 Factors of Presence and Absence

To understand the complex phenomenon of dropouts in upper secondary school, the concepts of *factors of presence* and *factors of absence* are clarifying. This frame of analysis is borrowed from the social studies of working life and research on prevention of sickness absence at work (Aarvak et al. 1980; Svarva 1991; Karasek 1979). These concepts can also be linked to Gambetta (1987) and his concepts of "push" and "pull." Gambetta used these concepts in an analysis of young people's choice between getting into the labor market early or getting a higher education and the factors that affect this decision. He distinguishes between "push-from-behind," which includes the expectations of parents and social background, and "pull-from-the-front" that involve various degrees of rational choice based on the young person's own wishes. Gambetta also refers to "jump," a high degree of rational choice and an active decision-making process into which individuals "take the plunge themself" (Gambetta 1987).

When studying the degree of sick leave in various firms, one noticeable finding has been that workers seem to respond differently to illness and challenges in the workplace environment. Exposed to the same medical and/or workplace challenges, employees in one firm will choose to report sick, while in another firm the same group of employees will choose to continue working. Crucial in understanding this phenomenon is to identify the heterogeneous factors influencing and shaping different actors' strategies for coping with challenges related to health and the workplace environment. Such factors may be factors of presence, i.e., different factors contributing to individual's choosing to remain at work. Factors of absence, on the contrary, are different factors drawing or pushing the individual out of work.

Translated to the context of dropouts in upper secondary school, the factors of absence are the immediate reasons why students choose to leave school. Similarly, the factors of presence are the immediate reasons why students choose to remain in school. The important point is the complexity of push and pull factors at work in a young people's life and their relationship to school and formal education.

The factors of absence can be found both inside and outside of school, and especially in the large border areas in which the students' lives and world outside of school meet and merge in a seamless web.

In school, factors of absence may include issues such as the experience of having chosen the "wrong" study program, based on insufficient or inadequate knowledge, or not having been able to get their first choice of study program. Poor learning environment, a low degree of adapted learning processes, frustration over his or her own poor performance, and level of mastery will for some be important factors of absence. To others, a low degree of adapted learning environment and adapted learning can be key factors that help to understand a dropout. For still others, the frustration/problems connected to the transition between schools, classes or levels of education, poor classroom environment/noise/social issues in class, bullying, racism, language problems, poor physical working environment, poor personal relations to with teachers, etc., can be the factors contributing to an individual's decision to leave school.

Outside of school, the factors of absence may be a wide score of elements affecting a young individual's life and situation. Poor housing, challenges connected to having to live away from home, tiring/long travel to school, difficult family relations, economy, drugs/alcohol, mental health problems, physical illness, and other interests/job that takes the focus away from school are mere examples of factors that can contribute to drawing an individual student away from school.

Factors of presence can be situations in which the student experiences mastery of his or her situation, adapted learning environment or processes, feelings of belonging and friendship, individual focus, the feeling of being visible/being seen by the system, perceived safety, the absence of bullying, academic mastery and progress, participation, and safe, predictable frames of life, both inside and outside of school.

Among the early warning signs related to early school leaving, low/poor learning outcome and/or high degree of unauthorized absence in lower secondary education are among the most prominent. Students with low marks and/or a high rate of absenteeism are more likely to leave school in early upper secondary education than students with high marks and low degrees of absence.

While both learning outcome and absence from school can be seen as causes of later dropout/early school leaving, the same factors are results of the students' earlier school history. The degree of motivation for school and learning is a crucial factor behind the students' decisions to drop out or stay in upper secondary school. Research indicates lower secondary school is an important period, related to students' motivation. For a considerable group of students in Norway, there is a significant drop in motivation for learning and schoolwork, from grade four and up into lower secondary school (Skaalvik and Skaalvik 2011). For some students, an important factor of absence, low motivation, therefore is established during lower secondary school. One of the main conclusions of Rumberger's study of dropouts in high school in the USA confirms that students start disengaging themselves long before they actually enter high school. Therefore, effective prevention strategies must target the vulnerable students as far back as the early elementary grades (Rumberger 2011).

Having a clear goal/aim seems to be an important motivating factor for many. Making an early decision about future education and work seems to motivate students. Students who have made a decision about a future area of study and/or occupation as early as lower secondary school seem to better meet the challenges in

upper secondary school as compared to those who have not made any clear decisions about their educational or occupational future.

In understanding both factors of absence and factors of presence, the teacher is a key factor. "All real living is meeting," wrote Martin Buber, accentuating the dialogic core of social interaction (Buber 2004, 2010), and surely this is the case in education, maybe more than anywhere. The crucial meeting between student, mentor, and task is a key relational element in all learning. To understand why and how people learn and why choices are made, it is important to study this triangle, this crucial "betweenness" between student and teacher. This is also true when talking about the dropout situation. The presence of a good teacher, seeing and understanding the individual student and giving needed support at the right time, will in many cases be the crucial factor behind the choice of staying and completing school. Likewise, the experience of a poor teacher, a teacher that is perceived as uncaring/indifferent and or academically weak, can be the key element in an individual student's choice to drop out as a personal solution.

The main point is that the challenge of early school leaving is complex and heterogeneous. The ultimate determining factor behind an individual student's decision to stay on or drop out of education may be a combination of different factors. It is difficult to identify one single cause explaining the phenomenon. Every single dropout can be seen as unique, and the story behind every single dropout can be seen as the interplay of a set of heterogeneous push and pull factors on different levels surrounding the individual, as illustrated in Fig. 12.1.

It is in this context, between individual and systemic factors, and especially in the liminal zones where the individual's life inside and outside of school meet and sometimes crash, that the decisions to leave or remain in school are made. The answer to the question, "Were they pushed or did they jump?" (Gambetta 1987) in the Norwegian context seems to be, "Yes, they were pushed and jumped." The individual student makes her or his decisions influenced by push and pull factors, the proportion of the mixture being crucial for the outcome.

Classical sociology describes three archetypical individual strategies of mastering situations marked by conflicts, situations, or institution in conflict with the individual's desires, needs, and personality. These three strategies are exit, voice, and loyalty. The strategy described as "loyalty" involves the individual's subordination to the system. The individual will adapt and remain loyal to the institution. "Voice" describes the strategy of change, where the individual speaks out and by various means tries to change the situation or system, to become more in line with the individual's own wishes and needs. In the "exit" strategy, the individual will try to solve the untenable situation by removing himself/herself from the situation or system. If you find yourself unable to adapt to the situation and are unable to change it, the remaining solution is to leave (Hirchman 1970).

Students dropping out or never starting in higher secondary school can be perceived as having chosen the exit strategy of coping with a problematic situation. Faced with overwhelming factors of absence, dropping out of school can be a logical consequence, a rational choice, and the only viable strategy for mastering one's own life.

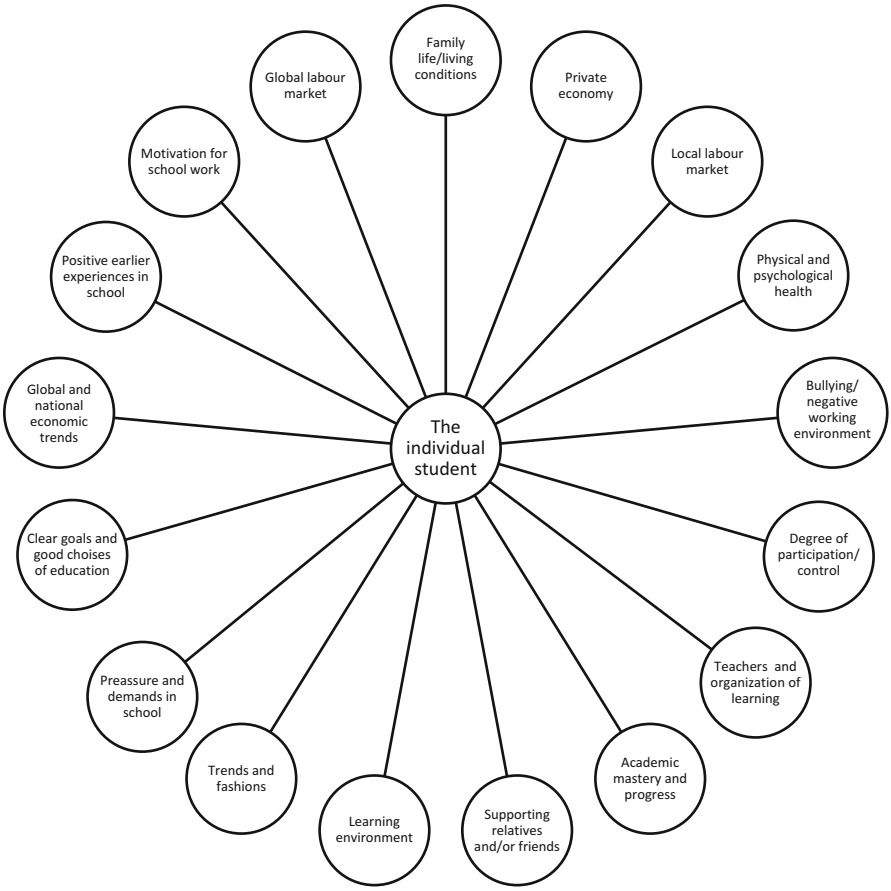

Fig. 12.1 Factors influencing the individual student's choices

Given this perspective, the main challenge in a sustainable strategy of dropout prevention would be to develop and change the frames surrounding the individual students, combining systemic and individual actions and interventions. The aim of such interventions must be to change the students' situation characterized by few and weak factors of presence and many strong factors of absence. Efforts and interventions must concentrate on developing a context marked by strong factors of presence, situations where exit no longer is perceived as the only viable strategy by and for the individual student. The challenge in this work can be that every individual responds differently to many factors and a factor of presence for one student can be a factor of absence for another. Friendship can be an example of this: If the friends are in school and share ambitions regarding school, they can be an important factor of presence. However, if friends have a negative relationship with school and denigrate it, this can be an important factor of absence.

Since factors of presence and absence are complex and heterogeneous and can be found both inside and outside of school, a sustainable effort in dropout prevention must be developed on a broad scale, focusing both on the individual student *and* the system, the school *and* the surrounding society. Dropout prevention must focus on the complexity of the student's life and the systems surrounding and co-shaping it. It is necessary to develop a totality of efforts and actions, more than isolated "good ideas" and universal solutions. Holistic approaches, not quick fixes, must be the cue.

The necessary factors of presence are shaped by a diversity of tools and actions and deliberate, focused combinations of actions. Broadscale and long-term efforts are important conditions of success. This is one of the main lessons from work on dropout prevention in Norway, and research in other national contexts points to the same conclusion:

> If dropout prevention strategies are going to be effective, they must be comprehensive by providing resources and supports in all areas of students' lives. And because dropouts leave school for a variety of reasons, services provided them must be flexible and tailored to their individual needs. (Rumberger 2006b, p. 243)

Two main categories for classification and interpretation of interventions to prevent dropout/marginalization are the distinction between *prevention* and *follow-up actions*. The main element of *prevention* is the challenge of creating the general framework and conditions for establishing the necessary factors of presence for all students. The general school life, learning environment, and the social environment surrounding the students must contribute to preventing dropouts.

Effective prevention is about developing good routines and systems to detect early warning signs and responding to them before it is too late. *Early effort* is one of the key terms in all interventions against dropping out. Early effort is crucial to success. Effective interventions and strategies for building viable learning environments adapted to all students must start early to create the motivation and mastery needed in the individual students. More students must experience education and learning as something of importance, something of relevance for them. This is essential for future participation in training. Early efforts must then be followed up with continuous, system anchored work over time.

In the *follow-up* part of viable interventions against dropouts, it is also important to establish good routines and systems, to respond and act on the basis of the warning signs observed in the individual student. Thus, one can identify students early who are at risk, before the situation has developed for a long enough time for dropping out to become inevitable. If the student can be reached before their school life is affected, they may choose to continue in school. Further efforts must also be made to bring those who have already dropped out back into a planned and systematic course of training, job, or other meaningful activity.

The right choice is, of course, essential in reducing the dropout rate. Many students make their choice of upper secondary education on an uninformed basis. Awareness and information that can contribute to good choices is essential. Therefore, it is important to focus on strengthening the way school can aid the student's choice of further education (Buland et al. 2011).

Much focus and interventions in the fight against dropouts and marginalization have been aimed at students who for various reasons are not able to reach the standard goals of the Norwegian educational system, which are university and college admissions certification or a trade certificate.[7] Work focused on partial qualifications, partial competence, or lower levels of qualifications has been an important part of this. Establishing alternative courses of learning, leading to realistic goals for the individual, may contribute to giving the students a greater experience of mastery and fewer defeats, thus encourage greater accomplishments (Markussen et al. 2006, 2008). The primary need of some groups of students is an education that can serve as a step toward a secure place in the labor market. What is needed to achieve this the basic knowledge of working life, knowledge of what is required in order to participate in working life, and basic professional skills. Attitudes and basic social skills are essential in this effort. It is important that this alternative is something that students must be able to actively choose and enter, and not something that is only available after a number of failures to attain the formal competence at the end of the so-called normal model, as may too often be the case.

12.6.3 The Difficult Transitions

Much work related to the reduction of dropout and marginalization has focused on the various transitions in the education system as critical points, transitions that for some students may trigger a dropout. "The thirteen-year training course," well known from political statements and principal speeches, is not a continuous course, but rather characterized by a series of transitions that for many young people is perceived as large and sometimes dramatic (Orfield 2006; Havn and Buland 2007). Starting at a new school and the transition between different levels of school, between the basic course and advanced courses, and between schools and in-service training has, therefore, been a priority in many planned interventions. Better adapted or tailored school starts for those individuals who need it, and better systems of information exchange between lower and upper secondary schools are examples of that kind of strategy/intervention (Buland and Valenta 2010).

The "Transition Project" (Overgangsprosjektet) in the Ny GIV – New Possibilities,[8] the present government's ongoing commitment to dropout prevention, focuses on this issue by offering voluntary additional training through the 10th grade to give students with weak or low learning outcomes a better academic base on which to start upper secondary school. A main challenge in this intervention is to recruit the "right" students, the individuals in the target group. Since this is the group of students with the weakest learning results, they will often also lack the necessary motivation to volunteer for participation. If school

[7] The certificate awarded on successful completion of a vocational training course and entitling the holder to practice the trade concerned.

[8] http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/kd/campaign/ny-giv---new-possibilities.html?id=632025

is seen as a problem for these individuals, additional schooling may not be seen as an adequate solution.

Some of the work related to transitions has focused on better utilization of experiences from lower secondary school at the start of upper secondary school. Research has shown that the danger signs associated with dropping out are clear as early as middle school, and that it is possible with a reasonable degree of certainty to identify students who are at risk of dropping out of upper secondary school. It is, therefore, important to be able to utilize this information when students change schools, in order to tailor-make transitions and learning environments for those in need of such adaptations. Without these early warning signs, it is harder for upper secondary schools to intervene early in the student's new learning environment (Buland and Valenta 2010; Markussen et al. 2011).

A number of interventions and work on dropout prevention in the Norwegian context have focused on creating factors of presence by creating a better school experience for students (Havn and Buland 2007). Focus in many local projects has been on customized/adapted training in order to create mastery experiences for the individual student. The goal is to create clear structures in the learning situation, thus providing security and greater opportunity for mastery.

In those parts of the country where many students, due to great distances and dispersed settlements, are compelled to live away from home, much work has also been focused on problems related to living away from home (Havn and Buland 2007; Buland and Valenta 2010). Interventions of this type focus on what is referred to as the interface between the student's life inside and outside school, the important liminal zones in the student's life. These interventions seek to establish the necessary factors of presence in a student's life outside the school gates.

Some students obviously need training options outside the school to achieve their planned target of competence. For some, the classroom clearly is not the optimal arena for learning. More practice-oriented learning can be a good tool for improved learning for all groups, not only for the weak students but also for the strong (Buland and Dahl 2008; Buland et al. 2004). It strengthens this work if the schools have relatively fixed networks of companies and training offices for cooperation, counselors in career planning, and learning arenas for students who need alternatives to the classroom. Good collaboration across organizational boundaries is a key success factor in such work. This is challenging and requires both time and space to be developed. The Follow-up Service (OT)[9] and local businesses are in many areas actively participating in such interventions, and establishing solid networks of cooperation between these and other relevant agencies and stakeholders in the community is very important (Bungum et al. 2010; Havn and Buland 2007).

Parents/guardians are a key part of the support network around the individual student, and measures that can contribute to increased parental involvement are essential. Important work was carried out with the aim of creating systems and arenas for parental involvement, to draw parents in more closely to follow up on their

[9]The public agency in charge of following up young people (between 16 and 21 years) who are neither in school nor at work and helping them to get back into school or in work.

own children and to better utilize the parent group's major skills (Havn and Buland 2007; Einarsson 2006).

Much of the work against dropouts can be characterized as the construction of complex and solid support networks around the students. These heterogeneous networks must consist of actors with different competencies and roles, which together can help to give the student the opportunity to experience the necessary mastery within and outside of school, thereby making the choice of completing school a viable option for more students.

12.7 The Role of Local Authorities: The "School Owner" as a Driving Force in Development

A key factor in the broad strategy against dropouts is the role of the "school owners." In the context of the mainly public Norwegian schools, the school owners are the local authorities in municipalities and counties. The municipalities are responsible for the primary and lower secondary schools (years 1–10), while the counties are responsible for the upper secondary schools. As previously mentioned, the transitions between lower and upper secondary schools are crucial in understanding and preventing early school dropouts. The distribution of responsibility between the municipal and county levels is potentially problematic, because it can pose a challenge to the efforts of creating good and effective transitions between schools. In some cases, this is a critical factor in establishing effective dropout prevention.

Much experience has demonstrated the need for a "development agent" situated outside and above the individual schools to be able to implement a targeted, systematic effort for school development and for building a working coherent strategy/intervention against dropouts. By law, this role of "development agent" is given to local school authorities. This dimension has been central in several white papers on education, including the most important White Paper behind the reform "Knowledge Promotion Reform," St.meld. nr. 30 (2003–2004) *Kultur for læring.* In this document, the crucial role of the school owners as a condition for the development of good schools was repeatedly indicated.

The post-1990s Norwegian school system is among other things characterized by many small municipalities in charge of developing their own schools. Due to the widespread reorganization of local government described earlier, a majority of local communities are today without any centralized municipal education department. The local schools are directly placed under the chief municipal executive, the latter often lacking both the competence/expertise and the will to become heavily involved in school matters.

An evaluation made by the OECD pointed out the challenges connected to the important role of the school owners:

> In many parts of Norway, it is unrealistic to expect that individual school owners would be able to develop robust local quality assurance systems on their own and follow up with schools accordingly. It is likely to make more sense to build larger scale 'shared service'

> approaches, which offer school improvement services, including external evaluation, coaching and consultancy, to groups of schools and school owners across a region. The County Governors could play a key role in promoting and supporting strategic partnerships between school owners and key sources of support. (Nusche et al. 2011, p. 15)

The evaluation of the reform Kunnskapsløftet has also pointed to the fact that the reform has been particularly challenging for the smaller municipalities, due to differences between municipalities with regard to both capacity and expertise needed to play an active role in the implementation of the reform (Aasen et al. 2012).

A lot of local expertise and authority is delegated to individual schools, emerging as autonomous units within the local municipality. Local politicians will be interested in questions regarding budgets and large-scale structural changes, and apart from that tend to leave schools on their own. In a decentralized system like this, success and failure in school development and dropout prevention will, to a large degree, be dependent on the ability and willingness of individual schools to build working local strategies over time. The dissemination of good practice is more difficult, as is the capability of goal-oriented, long-term efforts.

This may be most important today in lower secondary schools. The county authorities, being in charge of upper secondary education, are generally better equipped when it comes to centralized competent staff being able to perform the role of school developing agents. Where county authorities have chosen to keep up the pressure on dropout prevention over time, dropouts have been shown to decrease more than in counties where school authorities have chosen a more distant role. Long-term sustainable improvements in school completion rates require a focused, long-term effort from the school owners.

We have observed a process characterized by a partial atomization of the public school systems, where school owners are unable or unwilling to perform the duties of the Education Act given to them. Local freedom and room for development are not utilized to the necessary degree. Greater differences between individual schools within the same municipalities/counties may be the result if this process is allowed to continue. Skilled actors working in development-oriented schools led and assisted by focused and competent school leaders/principals may be able to achieve good results, while other schools in the same community may not achieve similar results. The result of this will be a school system where sheer luck will play an important role in the individual student's road toward completion or dropping out of upper secondary school.

12.8 Close-Up Action, Early Interventions, and Heterogeneous Tools

Several years of work and research on dropout prevention have presented us with some important lessons. To the disappointment of more than a few, it has not given us a magic wand, no universal solution, or no quick fix that will solve the problem once and for all or for all students regardless of local context.

The following section will address some important lessons learned from this research. As a starting point for understanding the following important points, we would like to quote Gudmund Hernes and his insight from 1974 on the school system's tendency to reproduce social inequality: "If you want children from different environments to get similar skills and somewhat equal life chances, they must be treated differently" (Hernes 1974, p. 25). By this Hernes emphasizes that children from different social backgrounds have different starting points and unequal possibilities to succeed in school and education. If the system meets and treats all individuals equally, this will tend to reproduce the differences. The school system needs to be able to treat each student according to his or her abilities and individual resources, to give them equal opportunities, and thereby contribute to reducing social inequalities. In the context of efforts to prevent early dropouts/non-completers, the emphasis is on the need to develop *the school system* in a way that makes possible both systematic *and* individual measures to prevent early school dropouts.

What are the main experiences and the important lessons to be learned?

First, it is clear that *diversity is a key factor* in interventions. As shown, the reasons behind dropouts are complex and heterogeneous. Each and every dropout can be perceived as unique, and even if there are some factors in common, this heterogeneous background must never be forgotten. Therefore, the approach to dropout prevention must be based on heterogeneous and diverse strategies and interventions. In the work to further school completion, as always in life, it is important to think several thoughts at the same time and be able to follow different strategic paths simultaneously. This is the first lesson from 10 years of work on dropouts and school completion in Norway, as elsewhere in the world:

> Early school leaving is not reducible to this or that factor. Early school leaving is a process that occurs in the context of all the things that are happening in a young person's life. (Smyte et al. 2004, p. 29)

The second lesson learned is that *early effort is a key factor*. Initiating dropout prevention once students have already started their upper secondary education will in many instances prove to be too late. The real psychological dropout occurs earlier, and prevention must begin early in lower secondary school, if not even earlier than that. Studies show that the motivation of a considerable group of students decreases sharply during lower secondary school. During the 3 years supposed to prepare them for upper secondary school, a considerable group of young people instead, through a series of negative experiences, establish a personal perception or notion that education and training is not something suited for them. This opinion travels with them into upper secondary school, where they for the first time are free to leave school. "Their only reason for starting in upper secondary school is because they want to drop out," as an experienced school counselor once explained.

Here, during these three crucial years, the important, focused, and conscious work aimed at reducing dropouts must be started and strengthened. It is here, in lower secondary education, that the motivation for learning and thereby a positive relationship to further education must be established in larger groups of students in danger of dropping out.

The third important lesson learned is that it is necessary to *work on both a system level and an individual level*. Dropouts are a result of both individual and systemic factors:

> These factors may be related to the characteristics and experiences of the students themselves, as well as the characteristics and features of their environment – their families, their schools, and the communities in which they live. (Rumberger 2011, p. 143)

Effective approaches to dropout prevention must therefore be multileveled and multifactored by nature. Defining dropout as a problem related only to the qualities and conditions of the individual student is insufficient. To work isolated with factors related to the system can be just as erroneous. To quote an Australian study of dropouts:

> We don't believe that any long-term sustainable improvements in school retention rates will be possible unless the complex interacting factors that interfere with successfully completing school are adequately understood and addressed. (Smyth et al. 2004, p. 15)

Long-term actions must be implemented focused on individual students *and* the broader system surrounding the individual. Complex *support networks* involving heterogeneous actors both inside and outside school must be established on a broad scale. All actors in school, down to the individual teacher, must be conscious of their role as a dropout prevention agent, of their place in the broader network. In this network, the school owners have an important role to play as agents for development, supporters of the individual schools, and builders of the local strategy.

The fourth lesson learned is that *there is a need to establish a more continuous course of schooling, a system where the many challenging transitions between levels are made more streamlined*, especially for those students who need it the most. The 13-year training course established through the 1980s and 1990s was characterized by a lot of transition, and these transitions are crucial when it comes to understanding and preventing dropouts. It is necessary to build a better support systems connected to those transitions. The system of counseling in schools must be strengthened throughout secondary school to help students make better informed and qualified choices for future education. Different levels of school teams must cooperate better in regard to the transitions of students than traditionally has been the case.

Last but not least, the work done during the last years demonstrates *the need to think more flexibly about the different tracks the individual students are supposed to follow through secondary school*. Reform 94 removed the "sorting school" and gave everyone the right to a secondary education. At the same time, that reform created a "normal model" for the course to follow – a normal model, according to some, adapted to a normal student who hardly exists. In order to give larger groups of students a better chance at completion, it may be necessary to adjust the system by creating more individually adapted trails through school and more adapted targets for the individual student or groups of students. The system must be more ready to adapt to alternative learning arenas and alternative approaches to learning. More practice-oriented training can be a tool that can help both weak and strong students toward reaching higher goals. The traditional classroom should not be the only

arena for learning. A heterogeneous student population calls for a more heterogeneous and diverse school system.

It is important that such efforts toward more flexible and adapted learning environments do not take place in at completely decentralized, atomized environment. It is important that the individual schools, while being central in the practical work, are not left on their own. Locally rooted work must take place within a working system involving actors and institutions on all levels, from the governmental level to the individual schools. Locally based action does not exclude a holistic working system of governance. On the contrary, active, competent, local, and central authorities can be a requirement for effective local development, tied to and not cut off from regional and national development.

Only through such diverse, long-term, and sustained effort and intervention, and not through any single, concentrated all-out effort or dramatic, heroic remedy, will it be possible to create a school and a learning environment dominated by factors of presence, eliminating more of the factors of absence, and thereby increasing completion in upper secondary school, and reducing the group that ends up in danger of entering a marginalized position in relation to employment and social life. The local school authorities can and must play an important role in this work to prevent students from dropping out of school. Are they able to fulfill their role? Some evidence suggests that the answer to this question is no. The process of decentralization characterizing the last decades of Norwegian school may have weakened local authorities' abilities to effectively intervene, supporting and strengthening their own school's efforts to prevent dropouts.

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Chapter 13
Schools for All: A Nordic Model

Ulf Blossing, Gunn Imsen, and Lejf Moos

13.1 What Happens to the School for All?

The main questions in this volume are as follows: How has the Nordic educational model fulfilled its promises, and what transformations have operated within the Nordic school system during the last two decades in the wake of the global neoliberal movement? How can our findings be understood in the light of historic, cultural and environmental conditions in the Nordic countries?

13.2 Historic Similarities

The country reports show similarities and differences in the historical preconditions of the Nordic model, although the common values are the most striking feature. Generally, the development of a comprehensive school system, in the frame of a School for All, was debated in most countries during the beginning of the twentieth

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century. The debate intensified after World War II and accelerated during the 1960s and 1970s. Social democratic political parties, sometimes in coalition with centre and liberal parties, were concerned with a normative value base for the School for All being comprehensive, inclusive, with no streaming and with easy passages between the grade levels. This value base of a School for All was closely related to building the Nordic welfare state in the twentieth century, especially after World War II. In practice, it meant abolishing parallel educational systems for different social classes and building an integrated educational system with minimal system differentiation. The intent was also, as described in the country reports, to minimise organisational differentiation by avoiding streaming of student groups based on ability. Instead, pedagogical differentiation was advocated, which urged teachers to develop a varied learning environment in each classroom to enhance learning for all students.

In other words, the main structural patterns at the systems level were quite the same. All Nordic countries built a welfare state from the middle of the 1900s on, which was mainly based on strong social democratic governance, particularly in Sweden and Norway. In Denmark, local governance was also manifested in a parental right to choose and organise schooling for their children. In Finland, nation-building was a driving force for school reform besides the building of the welfare state. Due to Finnish history, questions arose about educating the cultural elite to shape national identity. Iceland, as the last of the Nordic countries to address the notion of a School for All, felt an urge to catch up with educational development in the beginning of the twentieth century. However, there was disagreement on compulsory schools. Therefore, local authorities could decide whether or not to establish formal or ambulatory schools.

These parallel processes resulted in decisions on comprehensive Schools for All happening around the same time. Denmark realised comprehensive schooling from 1958 to 1993. Sweden did so in 1962, after a 10-year trial period; Norway did so from around 1960 to 1974. Finland started the process in 1970, although it did not reach urban areas until 1978. Iceland ended ambulatory schools in 1974. The length of the policy process to create School for All programmes in the Nordic countries indicates careful trial processes and developmental work over several years. Whether this has strengthened or weakened the vision of a School for All system depends on an array of circumstances.

The educational reforms intended to build a School for All included several meanings of equality and equity (cf. Sect. 1.4). The formal equality with the right for every child to have a common education was a main objective, as was the resource equality to make it a reality for all children. Competence and result meanings of equality are more controversial and are subject of ongoing debate. There has been bipartisan agreement that comprehensive schools should be legislated by giving children the formal right to education and minimising system differentiation. This has been the main strategy to obtain formal and resource equality. When it comes to the question of allocating and distributing resources, there is more political disagreement, but all Nordic countries have an inclusive special-education system where resources are directed to those children who have special needs.

13.3 The Questions of Inclusion and Differentiation

Differentiation inside the comprehensive school is a recurring issue in the Nordic model of education. The Nordic countries have chosen different solutions in regard to grouping of students by abilities.

Building an integrated educational system with low system differentiation has been the most evident part of the implementation of the Nordic vision. Consequently, the number of students in special schools is low. Country reports show that approximately 1 % of Swedish students attend special schools. Approximately 0.3 % of Norwegian students attend special schools. In Denmark, approximately 6 % of students attend special-education classes, which may be organised within regular school buildings. In Finland, children with special needs are traditionally taught in segregated special-education classes. The number of special-education schools recently decreased by one-third to 129, while the number of students provided with other kinds of special needs education increased by 45 %. Iceland has only 1 % of its students in special schools.

Taking a closer look at how the organisational differentiation was implemented before the neoliberal era is interesting from an institutional theory perspective since it focuses the coupling or decoupling at organisational level to institutional regulations and consequently to the value base of a School for All. The idea has been to avoid organisational differentiation and rather organise teaching and learning in mixed-ability student groups and hold these classes together throughout the school system up to age 16 years. This was an explicit idea in Swedish politics that aimed to promote solidarity between different classes in society and build a foundation for democracy.

However, the country reports reveal that holding mixed-ability student groups together has not been an easy goal to achieve. Organisational differentiation prevailed long after decisions for comprehensive reforms. Research shows that it still exists at local schools. Despite explicit regulations in Sweden, organisational differentiation prevailed until 1980, with ability grouping in core subjects. Norway ended organisational differentiation in lower secondary schools in 1974, but legislation in 1998 allowed temporarily teaching of students in homogeneous groups. Finland abolished organisational differentiation in 1970, but this was delayed until 1978 in urban areas. Iceland ended organisational differentiation in 1974, although reports seem to indicate that 75 % of special-education students get support outside the classroom. Denmark abolished organisational differentiation in 1993.

The large proportion of special-education students in Iceland getting support outside the classroom indicates difficulties with pedagogical differentiation. In other words, teachers are reluctant to use variation in learning methods to avoid organisational differentiation. This difficulty is seen throughout the volume, especially in the chapters such as Dovemark's "One School – Different Worlds: Segregation on the Basis of Freedom of Choice" and in Blossing, Imsen and Moos' "Progressive Education and New Governance in Denmark, Norway and Sweden". We can conclude that the School for All system has fulfilled its promises

very well with regard to system differentiation by creating an integrated school system. However, it did not fulfil the same high ambitions concerning pedagogical differentiation supporting the learning of every child. This has to some extent led to informal streaming in local schools.

The Nordic school systems are not as uniform at the upper secondary education levels (16–19 years) as at the lower level. Nevertheless, education for the majority of students up to 19 years is an extension of the idea of education for all, even though more organisational differentiation is necessary at that level. While Denmark still has separate vocational and academic education systems, Norway and Sweden have integrated academic and vocational tracks. Regardless of structural solutions, there is a serious problem with student dropout at this level. Several measures have been taken to solve this problem. Nevøy, Rasmussen, Ohna and Barow (Chap. 11 in this volume) report about the attempts to include students with special needs into the system by establishing the so-called irregular programmes. These programmes may take different forms in the three countries studied: Denmark, Norway and Sweden. Some have had success in aiming at a broader educational scope of personal growth like socialisation and subjectification and not only qualification. The irony is that these courses protect the regular programmes from structural and pedagogical changes and may work against necessary pedagogical development of the education for this age group. The dropout problem is very complex and starts at middle or lower secondary school levels, as Buland and Mathiesen report in Chap. 12. This demonstrates that the School for All is not just a question of bringing education to all children but also giving them a meaningful education that can take them through secondary education and into a self-supported life as independent citizens.

This also disputes the participative and democratic features in the value base of Schools for All. An important part of pedagogical differentiation has aimed to include students in the learning process. This was a keystone in motivational theory during the 1960s and 1970s, when the comprehensive school concept was shaped. Letting students participate in planning classroom work and learning activities engage them in the learning process. This was an important part of the progressive educational movement, seen for example, in cross-disciplinary project work. More important, in the shadow of the devastating effects of World War II, important parts of the rebuilding of the states were fostering democracy and securing welfare. However, as research shows, the ideals of pedagogical differentiation and student participation are loosely coupled. They are expressed and valued in policy documents but realised to a less degree at the local level.

Discrepancies between intentions and practice may be conceptualised within the language of new institutionalism (Scott 2008). As mentioned in Chap. 1, a main explanation of institutional behaviour is a need to maintain legitimacy in the social and cultural environment and not efficiency and rational choice. At system levels, the vision of a School for All is supported by a deep cultural heritage that promotes equity of formal rights to education for all children. At the implementation level, the School for All is confronted with other deep structures in society. First, the folk concept of the traditional pedagogical whole classroom model probably prevails.

The legitimising power is situated among ordinary people, as well as politicians and media forces. Second, there may be conditions within the teaching profession that support a traditional "translation" of the School for All vision into practice, such as interpretations of national curriculum plans and routines in the technical core. Resources such as textbooks and funding also play an important role. Thus, there are different cultural discourses that are not sufficiently interconnected in the making of a School for All.

Discussion about constancy and change in education has many facets, and there are many explanations for inertia in school practice (e.g. Cuban 1996). Blaming the teachers is one perspective. Institutional theory and the need for legitimacy is another perspective, along with the decoupling phenomenon. As Spillane and Burch (2006) pointed out, the coupling of institutionalised rules to classroom practice is complex and needs more differentiated analytical tools. Classroom practice, or the "technical core", is a multidimensional issue where some elements are coupled, while others are not. For instance, there may be variations between school subjects as to what degree they are operationalised according to central regulations. Related to our question of inclusion and differentiation, more detailed investigations are needed to conclude about practical realisation of pedagogical differentiation.

13.4 The Neoliberal Turn

All country reports reveal that neoliberal educational policy dominated the debate and policy-making beginning in the 1980s, accelerating in the 1990s and strengthening its position in the 2000s. The centre of neoliberalism is the belief in peoples' ability to make rational choices on the basis of known alternatives in education. In order to make these alternatives known, they must be compared. The basis for transaction in the market place is privatisation, competition and comparison. The main features of the neoliberal policy are decentralisation, outcomes, competition, strong leadership in combination with accountability policies and centrally imposed quality indicators and quality assurance. Securing formal equity at the system level of a School for All still holds true in the Nordic countries. According to the Salamanca Declaration, school laws and national curriculum plans determine every child's right to inclusive education. All Nordic countries have decentralised their school system, making the schools or municipalities accountable for school results and pupils' learning outcomes. This is most obvious in Sweden, which has implemented a control system, the School Inspection, which does not exist in any of the other Nordic countries. The other countries have control systems such as national student tests or final exams that show the learning outcomes of the schools.

Choice is one of the cornerstones of the neoliberal policy. As a result, free choice of public school is debated in all countries. In Norway, the municipalities decide about the opportunity to choose freely between public schools, restricted by all children's right to go to their neighbouring school. In Finland, which introduced free public-school choice in 1990, approximately 40 % of students in bigger cities

go to a non-neighbouring school. There is a polarisation of schools in regard to socio-economic background, even though results of national tests are not published. Sweden also introduced free public-school choice in 1990, but for almost two decades most parents chose their neighbourhood school. It was not until the growth of the independent schools that a shift in choice became apparent. Since the mid-nineteenth century, parents could choose public or private schools. Since the early 1990s, parents have been allowed to choose freely between public schools within the municipality. The municipal border was abolished in 2005, so now parents have full free choice.

Private schools have a special tradition in Denmark, rooted in the Grundtvig movement from the middle of the nineteenth century. Around 15 % of students go to private schools, and Denmark has always had free choice of school. Finland and Iceland have very few private schools. Norway has only 2.6 % of its pupils in private schools. Only a few private schools were operating in Sweden before 1992. This has changed radically during the last two decades, after the Swedish legislation of profit-based private schools in 1991. The result is a quite large sector of independent schools in addition to public ones.

The Swedish case is interesting. It has taken the neoliberal educational system much further than the other Nordic countries. This policy has been supported by right wing as well as social democratic governments. This is difficult to explain according to the egalitarian Nordic cultural heritage, especially the strong social democratic traditions in Sweden. Volckmar and Wiborg (Chap. 7 in this volume) explain it by the great social democratic concern for the welfare state. This is a concern in all Nordic countries: The public costs must be reduced for the welfare state to survive. In this situation, cooperation between public and private sectors was seen as a "third way" policy solution. Sweden also borrowed policies such as national tests, voucher systems and inspection systems. In new institutional theory, this may be explained as a way of protecting the most fundamental societal values, such as welfare and economic security. Ironically, education, the most powerful tool to rescue the welfare state, is put at risk. In this way, Sweden is perhaps shooting itself in the foot.

Learning outcomes are one of the most prominent indicators in the OECD quality system, whereas the PISA tests are the most famous ones. Except for Finland, the Nordic countries perform averagely on PISA and other international tests such as TIMSS. Media attention to these tests varies among the Nordic countries, being probably strongest in Norway. Danish PISA results are also mediocre, except on democratic competences. The former liberal-conservative government placed a great deal of importance on PISA, and it remains to be seen if the subsequent, social democratic-liberal government will continue this political line.

Analyses show that *social differences*, in terms of learning outcomes, are increasing, most apparently in Sweden but also in Finland. The socio-economic background gains greater importance due to free choice, which also creates socio-economic homogenous groups, where the so-called peer effects affect the outcome for all students. In Norway, increased social differences in learning outcomes cannot be explained simply by free choice. A possible explanation is increasing encouragement

for parents to follow up and take part in their children's school work. This policy is promoted by increasing individual rights legislation in schooling. The best-educated parents are also best qualified to support their children's learning in theoretical subjects. However, in neoliberal logic, most quality concepts of schooling are stated only in terms of quantitative learning outcomes in academic subjects. Most practical and aesthetic competence fields, which are also subject to supporting the welfare-state ideology and economic condition, are not examined.

The different adoption of neoliberal tools in the Nordic countries implicates that system differentiation has increased. Sweden is the country that has gone the furthest in the development of market-oriented policies. Although we do not know all the mechanisms at work, and empirical evidence is skewed towards pure academic fields, it is a worrying fact that social differences seem to have increased in some of the Nordic countries.

13.5 The Encounter

The neoliberal turn has challenged the institutional value base of a School for All in all Nordic countries except Iceland, which learned its lesson in the global finance crisis in 2008. Especially in the Scandinavian countries, it was claimed that the vision had not fulfilled its promises and that the individual could not trust the system to deliver schooling, and the market could not trust schools to deliver a qualified work force. From the formal equity standpoint, the neoliberal policy seems to have strengthened the vision of a School for All by strengthening the child's individual right to inclusive and adapted education. In the same way, one can argue that the different control systems throughout the Nordic countries also strengthen formal equality, since schools are controlled if they obey the law and follow the national curriculum. However, there is an underlying ruling ideology about individualism and free choice that says every citizen has the same possibility and power to choose. The empirical results presented in this volume indicate that this possibility is not evenly distributed in society. It seems that equality is being reduced. Reports are sending alarming messages, particularly from Sweden, which has most adopted the neoliberal policy.

We reach the conclusion that competition and free choice has somewhat legitimised the difficulties in pedagogical differentiation, which seems to have deepened informal organisational differentiation. Country reports and theme articles show a number of examples of this. The neoliberal turn put a harsh end to progressivism and school-based development in general. The teacher is certainly in focus again. However, it is not the teacher's pedagogical role in the democratic society that is in focus, but rather whether the correct instruction model or evidence-based product is used in the market society.

Surely, there are differences between the Nordic countries. Iceland shows a pronounced scepticism after the bank crises, resulting in low market trust among its citizens. Sweden has a long history of social democratic welfare building, with

collective solutions to almost all societal problems. This probably paved the way for legitimising more individual space and neoliberalism. Finland acts more cautiously, despite increasing social differentiation. It holds the system together and carefully recruits high-performing students to teacher education, while guarding nation-building more than many of the other Nordic countries. Danish politicians and administrators seem to be more inclined to neoliberal thinking than other Nordic actors, embracing the competitive tendency more wholeheartedly than their colleagues. At the same time, many Danish progressive features are preserved in educational thinking, such as project work; the class group as a basic entity; and developing new test forms that provide better information on learning progress to students, teachers and parents. In Norway, there are increasing differences at the system level due to the decentralisation policy of the last two decades. Decentralised, school-based curriculum plans is one problem, and identical behavioural objectives for all pupils in the national curriculum is another problem. National educational policy is being consolidated by an extensive evaluation system that is replacing some of the formal regulations. The new rhetoric talks in a language of student mastery, visible learning, teacher competence and evaluation. There is also a policy for early intervention, inspired by Finland, which seems to be successful.

We live in a world of competition and policy borrowing (Steiner-Khamsi 2012). Politicians and educational practitioners have travelled worldwide to borrow policy ideas to improve their national systems and make their educational practices more efficient. However, the effect of the borrowed receipts will not be the same across systems and cultures. According to new institutional theory, the acceptance of "travelling ideas" (Røvik 2007) depends on historic, national and local values. This will vary with legitimacy in the environmental conditions. The point is legitimacy, rather than efficiency (Meyer and Rowan 2006; Scott 2008). While politicians are looking for prescriptions to make their schools more efficient, they should rather ask what measures will work in their own cultural context.

This provides hope for the Nordic model. In spite of the worrying indications, it is not likely that neoliberal policy will dominate the Nordic educational model at the system level and erase the ideal of a School for All. The democratic vision is still there. Every individual's right to free public schooling, regardless of geographic location and learning conditions, is still deeply rooted in Nordic culture. This is a strong societal and cultural value that becomes even clearer when looking at the development of the Nordic model from the outside. In many countries, a School for All is still a goal in progress. At the same time, one may speculate how a School for All can sustain in a global neoliberal era, both at the system and practical levels. A more serious question, which is beyond the scope of this volume, is how the egalitarian culture is changing as the Nordic countries become members of a global society that has become much smaller in the period we have investigated.

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